

Finding the Father Heart of God: Examining the Scientific and Theological Argument for the
Application of an Attachment-Based Parenting Approach for Foster and Adopted Children
within the Church

Christina Jones

25 March 2016

Northwest University

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	3
Background.....	3
Methodology.....	8
Part 1: The Problem.....	10
Part 2: Attachment Theory and Trauma.....	13
<i>2.1 Organized Attachment Styles.....</i>	<i>13</i>
<i>2.2 Disordered Attachment.....</i>	<i>14</i>
<i>2.3 Parenting Disordered Attachment.....</i>	<i>16</i>
Part 3: How Foster and Adoptive Parents Become Secure Attachment Figures for the Children in Their Care.....	24
<i>3.1 Access Information and Support.....</i>	<i>30</i>
Platform 1: Large-Scale Conference Setting.....	30
Platform 2: Online Community Setting.....	31
Platform 3: Small-Scale, In-Person Support Groups.....	32
Conclusion: Regardless of the Platform, Communities of Support are Ideal for Information Sharing.....	33
<i>3.2 Developing Their Own Security of Attachment through Relationships with Other People and with God.....</i>	<i>34</i>
Part 4: God as a Secure Base for Both Parents and Children.....	38
Part 5: A Brief Theological Argument for the Use of an Attachment Based Approach to Parenting Foster and Adopted Children	43
Conclusion.....	45

Introduction

Forming a secure attachment with one or more caregivers lays the foundation for healthy development and recovery from trauma for children who have been adopted or are in foster care (Marcus; Thomas et al. 57) However, because of the trauma these children have often experienced, it can be extremely difficult for them to develop healthy attachments, particularly with parental figures. Attachment insecurity and disorder expresses itself in behaviors that can make it even more difficult for foster and adoptive parents to connect with the child, particularly when the parents themselves may have unresolved attachment insecurity. Therefore, it is important for foster and adoptive parents to form secure attachments with other people, and especially with God as a 'father figure', to help their child form a secure attachment style as well. Providing foster and adoptive parents who are in a church community with opportunities to form a secure attachment with God as a parental figure and each other as a support group will develop an effective base from which they can learn attachment based parenting techniques, and model and support appropriate attachment and security for their child. The best way for Christian parents to care for foster and adopted children is to understand and address their own attachment needs, and those of the children in their care.

Background

Outcomes for foster children are discouraging. A substantive study by Casey Family Programs examining outcomes for foster care alumni in the Northwest found that 22% of foster care alumni experienced homelessness for one day or more within a year of leaving foster care. The employment rate among the alumni who were eligible for work was 80%, compared to the national average of 95% for those ages 20 to 34 (37). Alumni struggle to find jobs that pay living

wages and 33% lived in households that were at or below the poverty line, which is three times the national poverty rate (37). The study also found high rates of mental illness among alumni with significantly lower than national average recovery rates from said mental illnesses. For example, at the time of the study, 54% of the surveyed alumni had mental health problems compared to 22% of the general population (33). The most significant mental illnesses among alumni are post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, and social phobia. PTSD occurred at a rate of 25% among foster care alumni, compared to 4% of the general population. Major depression was another prevalent mental illness at a rate of 20% within the 12 months prior to the time of the study, compared to 10% of the general population (32). It is apparent that these mental health outcomes are a significant factor in other issues alumni face, such as substance abuse, difficulty finding employment, difficulty completing higher education, and relational issues that impede the formation of healthy community.

However, despite these troubling statistics, those surveyed in the study are considered fortunate, having found themselves within the safety net of Casey Family Programs. Outside the support provided by such programs, outcomes could be much worse. In fact, according to the research and education branch of the nonprofit California Against Slavery, in 2012, studies estimate that between 50 and 80 percent of commercially sexually exploited children in California are or were formally involved with the child welfare system. Additionally, within the first couple years of graduating the state child care system, about 25% of former foster youth are incarcerated (Krinsky 324). This correlates with research which indicates that the risk of delinquent behavior is nearly 50% higher for victims of abuse and neglect, which foster children, and children adopted out of the foster care system and international orphanage situations, often are (Krinsky 325). Children who are adopted, particularly at a younger age, generally fare better

than those who spend time in the foster care system because many of the risk factors leading to prison, homelessness and trafficking are mitigated by family support received through adoption. However, high rates of mental health and behavioral issues prevail among internationally adopted children, although internationally adopted children fare better in this regard than their domestic counterparts (“Behavioral Problems and Mental Health Referrals” 2513; Keyes et al.). In particular, “Children who experience multiple changes in caretaking environments, as well as neglect and abuse, before being placed for adoption are significantly more likely to experience adjustment difficulties, including adoption disruption” (Brodzinsky 159). These issues can impact these individuals for a lifetime.

For almost as long as there have been Christians, the Church (defined as the historical and current body of people who identify as followers of Jesus Christ) has expressed concern for children separated from the protection of parental care (Aloisi 1-3). Today, many Christians are still involved in the care of children separated from the care of their birth parents. This involvement often takes the form of adoption. One recent example is found in the evangelical adoption movement which gained significant traction after the Haiti earthquake of 2010, but began a few years earlier in the mid-2000s:

A number of U.S. evangelical leaders began to expand their social engagement beyond traditional “social values” ... Motivated by the idea of the orphan crisis — the argument that there are hundreds of millions of orphans in the world, and that Christians are called by God to care for them — evangelical leaders, including culture-makers like Rick Warren and groups like Focus on the Family, started to trumpet the message that adoption and “orphan care” were uniquely Christian callings. (“The Problem with the Christian Adoption Movement”)

Many of the children adopted in the midst of this movement have come from overseas¹. Others are adopted domestically as infants or, at older ages, out of the foster care system. Many Christians also serve as foster parents.

The recent Christian interest in adoption is theologically motivated by the analogy presented in the Bible for salvation through Christ as an adoption into God's family. Proponents of the adoption movement claim that this example of adoption established by God should inspire Christians to adopt children as a visible expression of an important Biblical narrative.² Kathryn Joyce, author of the controversial book *The Child Catchers: Rescue, Trafficking and the New Gospel of Adoption*, explains the beginnings of this recent phenomenon in an article on the same subject:

As leaders crafted a strong "adoption theology," they described the earthly institution of child adoption as a perfect reflection of Christians' own salvation experience: evangelicals adopting children, just as God had adopted them. Hundreds of "orphan-care" ministries sprung up in local churches, and conferences and small-scale meet-ups proliferated around the country. The result of all this was the creation of what people within the movement called a contagious "adoption culture": large numbers of people within a congregation feeling called to adopt within a few years, often changing the

¹ China is the country most widely pursued for international adoption. In 2013, over 2,000 children were adopted from China by families in the United States. Ethiopia is the second country most commonly adopted from, with celebrities such as Angelina Jolie and Brad Pitt drawing attention to the area with their own adoptions. In 2013, almost 1,000 Ethiopian children were adopted to the United States. 438 Ukrainian children were adopted to the United States in 2013, making Ukraine the third most common country for international adoption in America ("Top Three Countries for International Adoption in America").

² Many Christian organizations dealing with adoption make this claim. For example, Christian Alliance for Orphans (CAFO) explains on their website that "To act upon God's call to care for orphans is not merely a matter of duty, guilt or idealism. It is first a response to the good news, the Gospel: that God, our loving Father, sought us, adopted us, and invites us to live as His sons and daughters (John 1:12, Galatians 4:6, Ephesians 1:15; I John 3:1). We love because He first loved us. (1 John 4:19)".

complexion of their church as they did. (“The Problem with the Christian Adoption Movement”)

The initial intent of this thesis was to apply this same theological approach to promote attachment based parenting of adopted and foster children. However, in addition to Kathryn Joyce’s concerns, the theological foundations of this new Evangelical interest in adoption have recently come under fire by theologians and former adoption proponents such as David Smolin, who claim that this theology overlooks the context of adoption that would have been understood by the original readers (Smolin 6-8). Instead of adoption as we know it now, the Biblical narrative, Smolin argues, should inspire Christians to support the poor and defenseless within their own families (8). This is an important point, but it has been noted by defenders of the movement and adoption in general that the father heart of God – a theology that is less contentious - can and should serve as both motive and model for Christians seeking to adopt parentless children or care for foster children (Medefind 10).

Therefore, the primary question for Christian families raising adopted or foster children that will be addressed in this thesis becomes: How can we best care for these children in a way that reflects the father heart of God? The answer this thesis presents is that applying an attachment based parenting approach is the best practice for adopted and foster children in the care of Christian caretakers in light of two primary factors: 1) the vital role of secure attachment for children to recover from trauma and thrive, and 2) that the priorities of attachment based parenting best reflect God’s approach in dealing with his adopted children, who are the church. This thesis will also address barriers that Christian parents face in implementing attachment based parenting techniques, and how the Church can support foster and adoptive families in

overcoming these barriers to care for their children in ways that reflect God's heart for all people, both parents themselves and, especially, the vulnerable children in their care.

Methodology

As explained in the previous section, this thesis was initially intended to be an exploration of the theology behind the recent adoption movement among Christians. However, as I encountered the movement's critics in the literature and began conducting interviews with those who had experience with foster care and adoption, I realized that the issues the literature referred to as potential problems arising from the flawed theology of adoption, seemed to be playing out in the stories of the people I was talking to. My interview with Michelle Schneider was particularly influential in turning my attention to the need for attachment based parenting approaches in a Christian context. From there, the majority of my research centered on books, journal articles and speaking events on the subject. I also continued interviewing primary sources – individuals who had experienced or were experiencing foster care and/ or adoption. Some of the interviews took traditional interview form. These interviews lasted between one and two hours, and were unscripted. I asked these individuals to share their stories of foster care and adoption with me, and asked for clarification or greater detail at different points throughout the conversation. I recorded these interviews and took notes on the recordings at a later time. Most of these primary sources (in fact, all but one) were people who I knew personally. My personal relationships with these individuals allowed them to share on a deeper emotional level given our foundation of trust. Therefore, I also gained permission to use stories and experiences shared outside of set interview times. In fact, certain case studies did not involve any set interview times and are built on years of conversation with, and observation of, the individuals profiled. During the process of writing

the case studies in their current form for this thesis, I asked for clarification from these sources as needed over the course of writing and analyzing their stories. These stories are also used as case studies with permission.

In conjunction with this thesis, and as a research source, I also started and continue to run a support group for foster and adoptive families at Timberlake Church in Redmond, Washington. Four families attend regularly, and were informed of my research purposes at the beginning of the group meetings. I told them I would be referencing observations from the group in my thesis, and invited them to decline to be included in the research process if they would rather not participate. None of the group attendees expressed any objections. Some of the experiences shared in the case study examples below were shared in the context of this group and are used here with specific permission from the individuals referenced. My general observations of group interactions are also referenced within this thesis with permission by group members.

It should be noted that the case studies utilized in this thesis are subject to the singular perspectives of the individuals who shared them, and, in some cases, my own observations of the individual or group of individuals. In this thesis I have compared these personal stories to the research on childhood attachment and its application to fostering and adoption, and found areas where the personal experiences shared seem to illustrate concepts and research outcomes found in the literature. Therefore, these case studies should not be understood as stand-alone evidence of the thesis statement, but serve instead as compelling illustrations of the case made by the literature sources and professionals referenced in this thesis.

Part 1: The Problem

The following case studies illustrate how foster and adopted children who have suffered trauma act out in ways that parents do not understand and do not know how to address.

Case Study: JJ

When Courtney and her husband Jeremy found out they would not be able to have children, they turned to adoption as an alternative. They chose to adopt through foster care, hoping to give a home and family to a child who would not otherwise have one. JJ, a one-year-old boy surrendered by his schizophrenic mother in hopes that he would be adopted, was their first foster placement, and Courtney and Jeremy hoped to adopt him. However, a week after JJ's placement, his birth mother changed her mind and, for a year, Courtney, Jeremy and JJ waited to see if she would be able to become a parent that the state felt was safe enough to raise a child.

On his first day with them, Courtney remembers, JJ was very happy. However, as time passed and he realized he would not be going back to what was familiar, JJ seemed sad, although the sadness too seemed to fade in time. Visits with his mother continued regularly until parental rights were terminated a year later. Courtney remembers trying to explain to a then two-year-old JJ that they would not be visiting his birth mother anymore. She didn't think JJ really understood, especially considering his delayed communication skills. However, on the days when they would go see his mother, JJ would cry. Like his initial sadness, Courtney remembers, these expressions of grief would fade with time.

A year later JJ began having trouble at daycare. He started acting out in violent ways, hitting children and teachers and urinating in class. Courtney and Jeremy, who were both working full-time, decided someone would need to stay home with JJ. Jeremy took a job at Amazon, and the family moved to Seattle so that Courtney could stay home with their troubled

son. However, the chaos of the move sent JJ into a tailspin, and the behaviors that had begun to manifest at the daycare center grew more serious and became a part of Courtney's new life at home.

It has now been two years since JJ's behavior prompted Courtney and Jeremy to move to Seattle, and JJ's behavior has not improved. They have tried many different therapists, counselors and medications, but none have been effective. In fact, a recent attempt with Ritalin affected JJ in such a profoundly negative way; the psychologist who prescribed it suggested in-patient care for JJ after witnessing one of his violent episodes.

Case Study: Joanna³

Joanna's mother was schizophrenic, she struggled with other mental illnesses and addictions. At a very young age, Joanna experienced neglect and trauma because her mother's lifestyle exposed Joanna to abuse. Sometimes when Joanna's mother was in prison or in treatment, Joanna would go stay with her classmate Lily⁴ and Lily's family. Even when her mother moved – which she did frequently – Joanna would go back for two weeks in the summer to stay with Lily's family and attend summer camp. Every year, the week before camp there were thunderstorms and the whole family would sit in the garage or on the porch and watch them.

When Joanna was thirteen, her mother moved across the country to Maine. This move was particularly hard on Joanna, and on her mom. After a few months, Joanna's mother called Lily's parents and asked if they would take Joanna. They agreed, under the condition that

³ Name has been changed.

⁴ Name has been changed.

Joanna's mother would sign legal documents giving them complete custody of Joanna. Her mother agreed, and put Joanna on a plane back to Washington State.

Lily's parents loved Joanna, but they didn't know anything about trauma. When Joanna hid food in her room and cut holes in the window screens, they were angry. They worried about how Joanna's appearance. When Joanna was seventeen, Lily's father, Dan⁵, a military reservist, was activated for the Iraq war. Joanna began to struggle even more, but in her grief and lack of understanding about the effects of trauma, Lily's mother, Joy⁶, did not notice. By the time Dan returned 13 months later, Joanna had essentially detached from the family and was participating in risky behaviors with her friends. At the age of 18, she left home and had little to no contact with the family for years to come.

The common Christian narrative found in the contemporary evangelical adoption movement (the emphasis by Christian leaders in recent years on a perceived faith-based imperative to adopt) teaches parents to think that by simply loving a neglected and/or traumatized child, the redemptive quality of adoption itself and their traditionally, faith-informed parenting, an adopted child will flourish like any other child in those circumstances. However, this line of thinking isn't consistent with the reality experienced by many families. These stories are far from uncommon, illustrating that, despite the best intentions of foster and adoptive parents, more support is needed to effectively parent children who have suffered trauma.

The trauma and neglect suffered prior to placement in foster care and adoptive families, the trauma of removal and placement itself, and the constant insecurity caused by the legal system created by shifting placements and the attempted reconciliations and conflicts with

⁵ Name has been changed.

⁶ Name has been changed.

placement families, all contribute to the mental health struggles of children and youth in care (Bruskas). Attachment theory offers one explanation for how this kind of childhood trauma can impact the developing brains of children. Attachment theory takes account of mental health issues and the subsequent struggles suffered by children from difficult situations and the families who love them. In the next section, I explain the precepts of attachment theory and how it accounts for behavioral issues and explains the unique needs of foster and adopted children.

Part 2: Attachment Theory and Trauma

2.1 Organized Attachment Styles

From birth, an infant begins to internalize beliefs about herself and others based on the relationship with her mother, or with another primary caretaker. According to attachment theory, the importance of the bond between a young child and her mother (or another caretaker) is extraordinarily important (Maltby et al.). Bowlby describes the ideal relationship between mother and child as one that is “warm, intimate and continuous...in which both find satisfaction and enjoyment” (27). Ideally, a child learns that when she cries, her needs will be met. She learns that other people will respond when she expresses need. Through these interactions she learns that she is worthy of care, and that other people are trustworthy to provide that care. A child who grows up in conditions that nourish these beliefs about her and others develops what is called a secure attachment style (Clinton et al.). The early relationship with her mother provides “a framework of expectations that shape future relationships” (Miner 115). As she grows, this safe attachment with her mother becomes a secure base from which she is able to explore and learn about the world, and return to safety when faced with something overwhelming. Because she knows that she is cared for, she is able to develop in a healthy way (Clinton et al.). Research

indicates the important role attachment plays in the quality of life a child experiences, and their ability to reach their full potential, “Children with a history of secure attachment are independently rated as more resilient, self-reliant, socially oriented, empathic to distress, and with deeper relationships than those with insecure attachment histories” (Miner 115).

Unfortunately, many infants are not born into situations that nurture secure attachment. There are three attachment styles classified as “insecure” -- avoidant, ambivalent and disorganized. Avoidant attachment style is developed from insensitive parenting. Avoidant parents often fear “spoiling” their child and will practice “tough love” parenting techniques. This type of parent might perceive a young child who is crying as manipulative and/or attention seeking. From this parenting style, the child internalizes the belief that other people cannot be trusted for emotional support. The ambivalent attachment style on the other hand arises from overprotective parenting and the use of rejection as behavior modification. When the child is very young, an ambivalent parent might be over involved, forcing the child to play with certain toys or to focus on the parent herself, and expressing personal offense if the child is more interested in something else. From this type of parenting style, a child internalizes the belief that she cannot depend on herself. She fears abandonment and is a people-pleaser in order to keep the people she feels that she needs nearby (Clinton et al.).

2.2 Disorganized Attachment

While less than ideal, the previous insecure attachment styles are classified as “organized”, meaning they orient somewhat appropriately around the individual's environment (“The Importance of Parenting” 263). Even though they are likely to create some psychological development problems, individuals with these attachment styles can still function

well. Disorganized attachment, on the other hand, is “characterized by the absence or breakdown of an organized strategy, hence defined as disorganized. ... is predictive of problematic stress management, externalizing behavior problems, and dissociated behavior in adolescence” (“Behavioral Problems and Mental Health Referrals” 263). Disorganized attachment is a serious issue which, when developed in infancy, precedes later in child psychopathology.

A child who is disorganized has internalized the belief that neither others nor self are dependable. This relational model is developed from parenting which vacillates between avoidant and ambivalent and may take the form of physical abuse, verbal abuse, and/or neglect. The parent is not the “secure base” that the child needs on any front, and is instead the very source of the fear and anxiety that a parental figure is meant to protect the child from (Clinton et al.). This causes a breakdown of the child’s internal relational structure toward self and others. Clinton et al. describes this process based on their experience counseling attachment-disorganized clients in this way:

Their parents are both the ‘source of and the solution to’ their fear and anxiety.

Which simply means there is no solution, there is no safe haven, no place to go that’s calm and reassuring. Yet, in their hearts they know there ought to be.

Parents ought to be the safe haven. God programmed these children to believe, *they ought to love me. And I should love them, not dread them.* But no matter what *ought* to be, there is still no solution for them when anxiety calls. And because there isn’t, these children become disorganized and emotionally fragmented during stressful times (Clinton et al. 99).

This is the attachment style commonly found among children who have suffered trauma,

neglect or abandonment which often leads to placement in foster care and/or adoption (“The Importance of Parenting” 264). The effects of this disordered attachment are what confronts foster and adoptive families, whether they are aware of it or not. Unchecked, disordered attachment can have devastating impact on a child’s future. The good news is that attachment style is not set in stone, and with new experiences, particularly at a young age, healing and restoration are possible. In the next section, I illustrate through research and narratives, shared by adults who were adopted as children, how healing can take place through the establishment of a secure attachment relationship, despite past trauma.

2.3 Parenting children with disordered attachment

The following case study offers an example of one woman’s experience both overcoming disordered attachment through the formation of a secure attachment with her adoptive parents, and experiencing its lingering effects. This story is based on the individual’s account of her own experiences and is therefore to be understood as an illustrative narrative in the context of attachment theory, rather than as conclusive evidence of how attachment needs present themselves or how they can be resolved.

Case Study: Donna

Donna was adopted out of an orphanage when she was eight months old. She spent her first few months of life, for the most part, alone. When her parents brought her home, she didn’t want to be held. Her mother told her later how she had wanted to interact with Donna in the usual ways, but Donna had preferred being left alone in her crib. Many years later while holding her own granddaughter, Donna had a revelation about how different her infancy in an orphanage must have been from that of a child raised in a loving family. “Mom,” she said, turning to her mother next to her, “This was who I was when you got me,” indicating how developed her

granddaughter was and how much she had learned already from interacting with her family, “You wanted this relationship from me but I couldn’t give it to you.”

At the time of her adoption, Donna’s attachment model was clearly disorganized: she didn’t know how to respond to a nurturing parental figure. However, Donna remembers from the beginning of their relationship what it felt like to be held by her parents. Donna claims to remember being carried out of the hotel where her parents received her, and the warmth and the love of that moment⁷. From the beginning of their relationship, even though she didn’t know how to respond to it, she knew that her parents loved her. That love served to counteract the message of disordered attachment Donna had begun to internalize in the orphanage regarding her own value.

I asked Donna if she ever doubted that she was loved. We talked about her father, and Donna reflected on the fact that he had never actually told her that he loved her, and yet, she had always known that he did. As we talked, she realized that, although he had never said the words, “I love you,” both of her parents had often reiterated to her that they had chosen her, that she was special and how they had always wanted her.

“I have big ears,” Donna shared, “The people at the orphanage thought my parents would want another baby because of my ears, but my parents wanted me, even with my big ears.” To Donna, this was an indication of her value – that they had wanted her in spite of perceived imperfections. Through years of communicating to Donna that she was chosen and worthy of love, and by experiencing how her parents were themselves dependable and worthy of love, Donna’s attachment re-organized around a sense of value about herself and the potential in

⁷ Scientifically, it is highly unlikely that Donna is actually able to remember this event given her age at the time of her adoption (Howe et al. 480). However, it seems to be an event Donna’s parents have described to her in great detail and may offer another example of how their assurance of wanting her and expressions of happiness to have her in their lives has been a powerful source of comfort and strength for Donna, allowing her to resolve attachment issues developed in the orphanage setting.

others to be trustworthy.

However, the months in the orphanage left their scars. Donna recounts an incident she experienced as an adult when she felt that a group of friends she was on a day trip with had left without her. Her reaction toward the perceived abandonment was immediate, visceral and, according to Donna, wholly irrational. She was so angry in the moment that she very nearly got in her car and drove away, despite the fact that the entire group had arrived together in her car. If she had been thinking rationally, Donna explained, she would have realized that they could not have left her. Her friends eventually found her and were able to reason with her.

By her own admission during our interview, this is an example of Donna's continuing struggle to trust others, and seems to reveal that while Donna's attachment status is no longer disorganized as it was, it would likely be classified as avoidant rather than secure. However, according to Donna and based on her perception of the certainty her parents gave her about her own value, Donna seems to have learned to trust herself. From that secure base, she can learn to trust others too.

In her article "I Love to tell the Story: Reshaping the Narrative of Adoption," Kirstin Johnston Largen recounts her experience as an adopted child. She shares that her parents always spoke positively and in detail about her as a person and how she had come into their lives: through adoption:

Right away, my parents began telling me the story of my adoption, singing and saying the word to me in a positive context, so I would associate it with words I loved, like *mommy* and *daddy*... I was raised to think that adoption meant that I was special, I was loved, and God had created my family. (Largen 285)

She quotes Jeanne Stevenson-Moessner to further describe her experience, “The healthy adoptive family moves through experience into an informed position called ‘acknowledgment-of-difference.’ In this way, the adopted child, surrounded by loving nurture, is free to become herself,” (qtd. in Largen 287). In seminary, Largen was able to fully integrate her adoption experience into the narrative of the Christian faith, and her appreciation of her own adoption, and of the value of adoption in general, only deepened. It is worth noting that Largen, unlike Donna and many other adopted children, spent her infancy prior to adoption in the care of experienced and loving foster parents. The security of attachment provided by this couple in Largen’s earliest days almost certainly curtailed much of the developmental trauma that often complicates the ability of adopted children to process their experiences and develop a positive sense of self and others. However, the acceptance, love, and positivity of Largen’s adopted family from an early age also played an important role. Miner explains that:

Through repeated experiences with caregivers infants develop internal working models that are cognitive-affective representations of attachment experiences, operating outside conscious awareness and becoming generalized and resistant to sudden change. These working models are foundational in the sense that they provide a framework of expectations that shape future relationships. Secure adult attachment is related to positive models of self and others, whereas insecure attachment is related to negative models of self and/or others. (115)

Multiple studies indicate that attachment disorder can be improved and even resolved in childhood through the establishment of a secure relationship with a primary caregiver (Thomas et al. 57, Dozier et al. 1475, “The Adolescent Brain” 27). A research study examining the attachments of children in foster care found that:

Remnants of old attachments (with natural parents) remain but children begin re-forming bonds with present caregivers, who then become more important. The current data support an interpretation of a modest continuity of attachment to natural mothers that does not disappear but becomes overshadowed by newer relationships. (Marcus)

Therefore, foster and adoptive parents who want to help the children in their care overcome past trauma can best do so by seeking to establish themselves as a secure attachment figure in their child's life. In the book *Fostering a Child's Recovery: Family Placement for Traumatized Children* the authors explain that parenting in a way that provides this secure connection allows the child's development to normalize. A normal child is able to explore and develop because of the secure base offered by her caregiver that she can return to (Clinton et al. 21), and learns to value both herself and others based on the way the caregiver responds to her needs ("Better Understanding Our Children"). Therefore, establishing that connection is of utmost importance. Thomas summarizes this point well:

An essential part of this work is the opportunity for a child to develop a primary attachment with one person, her key [care giver]. It is through this primary attachment that child will be able to experience a level of preoccupation (akin to the maternal preoccupation normally associated with infancy) through which her recovery can take place. (Thomas et. al. 57)

However, parenting in a way that promotes attachment requires a major shift in parenting priorities. Michelle Schneider is the director of the orphan care ministries at Overlake Church. Her ministry is composed of three main focus areas: prevention, transition, and permanence. The ultimate goal in each of these areas is for children to be in a permanent, safe and caring environment. However, Michelle knows very well that adoption and /or placement in a Christian

home is not the guaranteed happy ending as it is sometimes perceived. Stories like Joanna's are familiar to her. In fact, she has seen entire families fall apart in their well-intentioned attempts to bring hurting children into their home. Michelle sees many of these failures as the result of misplaced parenting priorities colliding with the effects of trauma: "That is probably our biggest need in foster adoptive community; to change their parenting paradigm. If we can get a parent to acknowledge that what they're doing isn't working, then they'll be ok. But most parents refuse to do this and that breaks the family apart," (Schnidler).

According to Schneidler, the defining difference she has seen between families that manage and families that fail is in the way they approach parenting. Typical parenting approaches, in particular much of mainstream evangelical teaching about parenting, is often behavioral based—focused on forming the behavior of a child to suit the Christian model in accordance with an interpretation of the Biblical mandate to "raise up a child in the way he should go..." (Prov. 22:6, *New International Version*) and focused on corralling the child's "sin nature" (Bunge 4). This emphasis placed on the theological idea of a "sin nature" also inclines parents to view their children's trauma-induced behavior simply as "sinful" rather than looking deeper to understand and address its underlying causes. For traumatized children this kind of parenting doesn't work. Disordered attachment renders parenting techniques developed for ordered attachment children not only ineffective, but even harmful ("Better Understanding Our Children"). This happens because "the traumatized child whose internal working model does not recognize secure relationships within a family will not be able connect or respond to ordinary parenting methods, which can then become punitive because of the lack of reaction given or progress made" (Thomas et. al. 117). Put simply, "rules without relationship lead to rebellion" (Clinton et al. 103), and children who have a disorganized attachment style have immense

difficulty accepting and forming relationships with new caregivers due to abuse or neglect at the hands of past caregivers (Schofield et al. 5). Additionally, it is the disordered attachment itself that is causing the problematic behaviors and so long as the underlying reason for the undesirable behavior goes unaddressed, the behavior will continue. If the parents' natural response – which is often consequences and punishment -- continues, the child's internal psychological model is reinforced and they are unable to form the secure attachment with their parenteral figure. These children need to recover from past trauma and normalize developmentally, otherwise the negative behavior will continue (“Better Understanding Our Children”). Therefore, the priority in parenting traumatized and attachment insecure children must be on addressing the underlying, attachment-based causes of the undesirable behavior in the interest of providing the child with the ‘safe haven experience’⁸ they did not have with their past primary caregiver. As the child learns to form a secure attachment with their new caregiver, many of the undesirably behaviors can resolve on their own with time.

Karen Purvis is an outspoken researcher, advocate and practitioner of attachment based and trauma-informed parenting. In her books and lectures, she speaks to foster and adoptive parents struggling with children who, like JJ, act out in extreme ways that are difficult to understand and control. She explains that a child who is attachment disordered has not learned how to have their needs met in appropriate ways. As a result, when the child feels a need - whether that be physical hunger or a need to feel safe brought on by circumstances-- they will act out in ways that seem irrational. This acting out is an expression of a felt need that the child is unable to communicate. Purvis encourages parents to look past the behavior to identify (or help

⁸ Clinton et al. explain that “One of the parents’ fundamental roles is providing a safe haven for their children when the children are distressed. As the children mature, they internalize this safe haven as a feeling, a sense of *felt* security. This felt security becomes a template for understanding how close relationships work” (99). In the case of foster and adopted children, regardless of the child’s apparent age at the time they come into care, the foster/adoptive parents are essentially tasked with providing the child this experience that they lacked in infancy.

the child find the words to identify) the need that they are feeling:

When a child is really out of control it's hard to understand that they're saying something because it's so obscured by the behavior. But it's Jesus who taught us to look at the heart. And it was the Pharisees who looked at the actions and missed the heart. So it's our goal as parents to be explorers and detectives and to be present for that child so that they feel heard, so they feel their preciousness, they feel the power they have by telling us what they need. That is the route for us to begin to understand. But it's going to take us stopping, slowing down our world, coming front and center...What they are saying is not what it looks like...you have to understand what's under the behavior. ("Better Understanding Our Children")

Parenting foster and adoptive children in the way Purvis describes works directly against the message of disordered attachment which in the minds and hearts of affected children tells them they are not capable of having their needs met and that others cannot or will not meet their needs. (Clinton et al. 96). In fact, in a study examining the attachments of children in foster care, researchers discovered that a secure attachment in foster care can overshadow (but not replace) previous disordered attachment with birth parents. The quality of attachment to foster parents is important to the child's overall adjustment, more so even than the quality of attachment to birth parents (Marcus). Therefore, by opening the door to forming an attachment with the traumatized child by demonstrating an understanding of the child's needs and a willingness to meet those needs, foster and adoptive parents can help children break down the message of disordered attachment and form secure, healthy attachments. From this secure base, other developmental doors are opened in the future as children experience healing from the trauma of the past.

In this section I have established the need for foster and adoptive parents to form a secure

attachment with the child in their care outside of traditional parenting paradigms to help the child overcome disordered attachment. In the next section I will explore what foster and adoptive parents themselves need to be able to practice these important, attachment-prioritizing parenting techniques in order to become secure attachment figures for the children in their care.

Part 3: How Foster and Adoptive Parents Become Secure Attachment Figures for the Children in their Care

The continuation of JJ's case study below illustrates the difficulties parents face in implementing parenting approaches that encourage attachment, even when equipped with the knowledge of such approaches and their potential benefits.

Case Study: JJ

Last year JJ's parents began attending a new support group for foster and adoptive parents that I began at Timberlake church in Redmond, Washington in conjunction with the research and project requirements of this thesis. The group worked through a study guide by the aforementioned Karen Purvis titled, "Empowered to Connect". The curriculum was excellent and well-supported by research, but as we moved through the material week by week, there seemed to be an undercurrent of frustration from the participating families, and from JJ's parents in particular. I realized fairly quickly that many of them already knew all the right answers as we worked through the study guide questions. Finally, Courtney (JJ's mother) explained, "It's just so hard to put into practice in the moment." Her husband explained in turn that the hardest part for him is seeing the way the wife he loves is treated by their child, and accepting what feels like a lack of respect from his son. Even though he understands in theory why JJ acts the way he does and how he should respond, Courtney's husband has difficulty doing so because of the emotions

JJ's behavior stirs up.

Courtney has read Karen Purvis' book, *The Connected Child*⁹. She attends training and support sessions offered by Michelle Schneider's ministry that emphasize the importance of connecting with traumatized children through seeing and meeting the needs they can't express in appropriate ways. Through all of these important resources, Courtney understands, at least in theory, why JJ might be acting out the way he does. But two weeks ago JJ flew into a rage. While Courtney tried to hold him still, JJ threw his head back into her face, injuring her eye. Understandably, this kind of consistent behavior is very difficult to respond to with affection and an expression of desire for connection.

Understanding the impact of trauma on foster and adopted children is an important step for parents to understand the need to change the way they parent. However, even when parents understand the needs of their child and the best way to respond to those needs, doing so can be incredibly challenging because of the extremity of the behaviors expressed by the child, and the way the child's behavior interacts with the parents' own background. Therefore, parents need both knowledge and understanding of their child's attachment needs *and* the outward support of community and inward support of their own secure attachments to put these techniques into practice, even under such challenging circumstances.

The continuation of Joanna's case study below includes her caretaker Joy's background to illustrate how Joy's childhood of insecure attachment impacted her relationship with Joanna.

Joy shared her story with me over the course of many conversations, and I have observed extensively her interactions with both her own attachment figures and with Joanna. Based on

⁹ *The Connected Child* is a foundational book on attachment parenting for foster and adoptive parents written by Karen Purvis, a well-known practitioner of attachment based, therapeutic treatment and parenting of children impacted by trauma.

Joy's own stated perceptions of her story and observed interactions interpreted through attachment theory as explained earlier, I draw conclusions about how joy's relationships with her primary attachments figures impacted her relationship with Joanna.

Case Study: Joanna and Joy

Joy remembers that when her mother was angry over a cluttered room, she would throw everything on Joy's dresser onto the floor. Joy's father was an alcoholic, and when he drank he was verbally abusive to Joy in particular, whom he seemed to resent. This resentment was passed on to Joy's siblings who imitated their father's verbal abuse toward their sister. Joy struggled with self-esteem issues that culminated in an eating disorder in her teens and early adulthood. Joy's parents divorced, and Joy joined the military, put herself through college and met a kind man from a stable and committed family. They got married, and Joy's father, who she hadn't seen since the divorce, declined to attend. Her mother warned her not to depend too much on her new husband in case they ended up getting divorced too.

When Joanna's mother called to ask Joy and her husband Dan to take Joanna full-time, they quickly agreed. They believed that because God had taken them into his family, they should do the same and care for Joanna as their own¹⁰. They loved Joanna, and wanted her to have a stable childhood, so they asked Joanna's mother to legally give up her parental right to Joanna to ensure that she would not be uprooted again if her mother changed her mind.

At first, Joanna was eager to help around the house and happy to be a regular part of the family that had cared for her in short, intermittent spurts over the years. But Joanna had never had the kinds of boundaries or expectations Joy and Dan had for their own children, and as time

¹⁰ This understanding of the act of God commonly referred to as "salvation" as an act of adoption is grounded in Ephesians 1:4-5 which states that, "For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love, he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will" (*New International Version*).

passed, this caused tension. Joanna also exhibited behaviors common among children who have experienced trauma, including hiding food in her room, cutting window screens in her bedroom, difficulty sleeping, and lying. When Joy and Dan confronted Joanna about these behaviors she dropped her eyes and was largely unresponsive. Joy and Dan didn't yet know about trauma's impact on the brain, so they didn't understand Joanna's behaviors or how she responded when confronted. Worried that these behaviors were predictors of worse to come, Joy cautioned Joanna on going down the same path as her highly dysfunctional mother. Joy's context led her to believe that Joanna's behavior was sinful, and that these small "sins" would lead to more serious one in the future. She also felt that these behaviors were not respectful of the opportunity Joanna had been given by being brought into Joy and Dan's family, and Joy felt that perceived lack of respect and consideration personally.

Years before she met Joanna, two significant figures appeared in Joy's life and took the place of the shattered attachment with her verbally abusive father: 1) God who she met at a Chuck Smith rally in Southern California as a teenager, and 2) her loving husband who she met in college¹¹. Joy recalled the first couple years of her marriage, every time they fought she felt, deep down, that the marriage was over. But eventually she realized that her husband, coming from a family of deep commitment to one another, had no intention of ever leaving her.

When Joanna was sixteen, Dan – an army reserve officer – was activated for the Iraq war. He was gone for thirteen months, and during his absence Joy struggled immensely. At the same time, Joanna began to disconnect from the family, seeking out friendships and increasingly risky behaviors instead. She was rarely home. By the time Dan returned, Joanna had cut herself off

¹¹ Joy references both of these relationships as being the most influential in her life and in her ability to overcome her father's abuses.

from the family.¹² She was suspended from school for stealing from a classmate, snuck out at night, partied with friends, and lied consistently. The relationship with Joy – already somewhat strained from misunderstood behaviors over the years – shattered. Joanna left the home when she turned eighteen.

Joy and Dan loved Joanna deeply, but their lack of understanding about the effects of Joanna's past trauma on her behavior and, as a result, how to respond to her behavior, laid the foundation of disappointment and pain that culminated when Joy's separation from her own secure attachment figure rendered her incapable of connecting with Joanna. At the same time, Dan too was a secure attachment figure in Joanna's life, and without either of them available to her during those thirteen months, Joanna sought out other relationships to insulate herself and engaged in risky behaviors as an expression of her inner insecurity.¹³

A person's internal working attachment model has profound impact on the way they relate to others, especially as parents since, "Adults who value attachment and are coherent in processing their own attachment experiences are classified as having autonomous states of mind. As parents, these adults are most likely to have infants who are securely attached to them," (Dozier et. Al. 1468). This carries over into the foster and adoptive realm as well. A study found that only 21% of foster mothers with autonomous states of mind had children with disorganized

¹² These conclusions about Joanna's behavior and the reasons behind them are based on Joy, Dan and Joanna's accounts of the time period, and on my own observations of the family at that time.

¹³ Joy and Dan have since learned more about the effects of childhood trauma and how it may have impacted Joanna's behavior. In recalling the events now, Joy in particular regrets that they did not have access to that information at the time. Joanna has trouble explaining her behavior when Dan left, which is consistent with behaviors motivated by childhood trauma ("Better Understanding Our Children"). However, she does remember feeling that she had been given up on by the family, and therefore gave up on the family. It is consistent with attachment theory that an individual with disordered attachment will seek out alternative attachment figures as a survival mechanism when they perceive that they have been or will soon be abandoned by primary attachment figures. A history of neglect and abandonment such as what Joanna experienced will also pre-dispose an individual to interpret the actions of other as indicative of future abandonment, triggering detachment and survival mechanisms ("Better Understanding Our Children"). Therefore, I am drawing these conclusions based on what Dan, Joy and Joanna have shared of their experiences around these events, observations of the family interactions, and on the implications of attachment theory and effects of trauma.

attachments, while 62.5% of foster mothers with non-autonomous states of mind had children with disorganized attachments, regardless of the child's age at placement. These percentages are comparable to rates among those of biological mothers and children (Dozier et. al. 1474). The results of this study indicate that, in spite of past trauma including neglect, abuse, and up to five changes in caregivers, "when placed with autonomous caregivers, these children often formed secure attachments" (Dozier et. Al. 1474). Therefore, the foster and adoptive parents' own attachment is bound to have an impact on the relationship they build with the children in their care. Put simply, for foster and adoptive parents to become the secure attachment figures their children desperately need, in addition to (and perhaps even more important) understanding the impact trauma has had in the development of the child in their care. The parents' own attachment status must be secure and past incidences of attachment insecurity resolved.

In this section I have shown that foster and adoptive parents must have an understanding of the way trauma has impacted their child, and the unique parenting needs called for because of these effects. I have also shown the importance of the parents' own attachment security in their ability to implement this knowledge. So the next question becomes, how can foster and adoptive parents best learn about the impact of trauma? Secondly, how can parents learn and develop the practical skills of attachment-prioritizing parenting, and thirdly how can they develop secure attachment status for themselves when it is lacking in order to implement this knowledge most effectively? The answer to these three questions would require additional space and research. Since this study is primarily concerned with supporting families from a Christian faith background, I will focus on how the Church can support parents in these areas both through providing a theological basis for this type of parenting, and through practical support measures. In the next sub-section (3.1) I address best practices for disseminating knowledge and training of

attachment-based parenting, and how these measures can be best applied in a faith community. In the sub-section following (3.2) I discuss how parents can address their own attachment needs in the interest of applying the knowledge and training they receive, and how the faith community can support them in this pursuit.

The theological argument for the implementation of attachment-based parenting of foster and adopted children will be explained in Part 5, as it is too broad a subject to cover in a sub-section.

3.1 Access to Information and Support

There is a wealth of resources and training available for parents, they need to know how to access these sources. Bringing foster and adoptive parents into a community with one another gives opportunity for parents to realize that their children's behaviors are expressions of past trauma rather than simple misbehavior. Through the course of my research I have observed three platforms where these kinds of communities are created, and how churches are ideally situated to support these platforms. In the following paragraphs I will explain each of these platforms.

Platform 1: Large-Scale Conference Setting

Every year Overlake Church in Redmond, Washington holds a conference for foster and adoptive parents called *Refresh*. The conference spans two days, and offers parents fun, relaxing activities like massages, haircuts, quiet spaces and even a nap room. The conference also hosts numerous professionals and experienced foster and adoptive parents who hold breakout sessions on parenting techniques specific to issues faced by traumatized children such as sensory processing disorders, violence, developmental delays, reactions to past sexual abuse, and

attachment disorder. In the bookstore, a variety of resources that also talk about these issues are sold, and parents are given opportunities to interact and share with each other as well. Based on my own observations, these breakout sessions give parents a wealth of opportunities to learn both from professionals and from each other about the importance of practicing trauma-aware parenting and specific ways of doing so. The conference is very popular with parents, and draws attendance from out of state. Similar conferences are held as well, including the Tapestry Adoption & Foster Care Conference, and Empowered to Connect Conference.

Platform 2: Online Community Setting

JJ's mom, Courtney, introduced me to Facebook group she has found particularly helpful called *Parenting with Connection*. In this forum, parents are able to share struggles and victories and hear from each other on how they should respond. Numerous parents in this group have expressed the positive role the group has played in their abilities to self-regulate and respond better to their children in spite of the strain of the moment when the child is acting out. Parents in this group also share resources with each other such as books, lectures, and articles. The Refresh Conference also sparked a flurry of online community groups. Several of the breakout sessions created community groups at the end of their meeting times for session attendees to stay in touch and support each other through struggles common to the specific session topic, such as parenting children with fetal alcohol syndrome, fatherhood issues, and leading support groups for foster and adoptive families. The online community setting seems to allow parents facing similar issues to network for resources and support among themselves regardless of physical location.

Platform 3: Small-Scale, In-Person Support Groups

Support groups as well can be an important source of shared information, and provide

opportunities for parents to encourage each other in using the information effectively. This has been the case in the support group at Timberlake Church I started in conjunction with this project. In the context of this group, I have observed participants sharing knowledge, resources and encouragement with each other.

When I first began the support group at Timberlake Church, I spoke with Michelle Schneider who, as mentioned earlier, is the director of a large orphan care ministry at Overlake Church and runs a support group for foster and adoptive parents as part of that ministry. Schneider is also a director of the Refresh Conference. Her advice to me for the support group was to put parents in community with one another and create an environment of vulnerability where parents are able to be open and honest with one another without fearing judgment. The topic of vulnerable children is itself a catalyst for a healthy and enriching community according to Groody in his book *Globalization, Spirituality, and Justice* since, as he explains, “Only when we begin with the excluded can we speak in terms of a society of mutual enrichment, interconnectedness, and interdependence that enhances the lives of all members of the human family,” (48).

For a regular source of support, I believe the small group setting like that offered by Timberlake is ideal for two reasons: 1) ability to address practical needs, and 2) because of the opportunity for continuous community it offers. On a purely practical level, an advantage I have observed of the small support group model is that families are able to support each other in very practical ways. Within my own support group at Timberlake church, families often work together to coordinate childcare among themselves and to share information about community resources. A small group setting located in the same geographical area is ideal for these kinds of interactions, while larger and online communities may not be able to offer this same practical

support. Sharing practical support also helps deepen the sense of community and belonging among group members, which in turn opens the door for an even more genuine community as group participants both feel cared for by the community and in turn care for other individuals within the community.

In his book *Exclusion and Embrace*, Volf explains that this was God's intention for community, as revealed in his holding Cain accountable for the well-being of his brother, "God's question (to Cain) made clear that life in community means sharing a common social space and taking responsibility for the other," (Volf 103). Cain's unwillingness to do so led him to a place of loneliness and exclusion from the community. Likewise, outside of a community of support (although, unlike Cain, through no fault of their own), foster and adoptive parents can also feel very alone. However, the local church is the ideal candidate to offer a place of community for the lonely as an expression of Christ himself who, as Volf explains, "embraced" the lonely and ostracized Cain through his work on the cross (Volf 103). Likewise, a group rooted in the church – the body of Christ – can embrace the lonely and ostracized through creating a community in the way God has called for – through togetherness and responsibility for one another. By embracing foster and adoptive parents in this way, the church can better equip parents to embrace the lonely and ostracized child in their own homes. The support group model is ideal for this purpose.

Regardless of the Platform, Communities of Support are Ideal for Information Sharing

The Refresh conference offered an experiential representation of community and vulnerability at work through an ongoing exercise throughout the conference weekend. Participants were given a small plaque with the words "me too" written on it in their welcome packets on the first day.

During breakout and general sessions, parents were encouraged to lift the plaque up when they heard something they could relate too. Statements like, “sometimes I have trouble loving or even liking my child” and descriptions of the speakers’ struggles with their child’s behavior earned a wave of “me too” plaques from the audience.

In the three platforms described above community and vulnerability are at work. Parents share answers and solutions, they do so with compassion and credibility having faced the same struggles; they also share a common understanding of the challenges and feelings those challenges generate. When information is shared in the context of horizontal relationships and shared experiences, parents are better able to accept their situations, and to believe that they can apply lessons learned to themselves. Therefore, sharing trauma-informed parenting information and application strategies is best done in the context of a community of foster and adoptive parents who are able to be vulnerable with one another without fearing judgment.

3.2 How Parents Develop Their Own Security of Attachment

Just as attachment disorganization due to childhood trauma is resolved through the development of a secure attachment for foster and adoptive children, the formation of a secure attachment also lays the groundwork for foster and adoptive parents to resolve their own attachment insecurity and become autonomous. For foster and adoptive parents, attachment figures can be found in other people, and often through these relationships, to God.

Research indicates that a relationship with God can also be described as an attachment bond, with God functioning as a secure base the way a parental relationship does for a young child. Kirkpatrick argues that this application of attachment theory is viable because the God attachment relationship reflects the four criteria put forward by Bowlby to define the relationship

between caregiver and infant: proximity maintenance (the child's desire to be close to their caregiver), separation distress (the child's anxiety when apart from the caregiver or unwillingness to be separated from), safe haven (the child's associated of the caregiver as a source of safety), and secure base (the child's felt safety to explore his or her environment when the caregiver is accessible). Kirkpatrick explores how each of these criteria can be applied to an individual's relationship with God as caregiver (Beck 125, Kumari et. al. 119).

Based on Kirkpatrick's reasoning, there are two theories of how individuals form an attachment to God. The first is called "compensational", in which an individual compensates for broken, insecure attachments through forming a secure attachment to God. The second is called "correspondence", and this theory proposes that an individual projects whatever their working attachment model developed in childhood onto their relationship with God. According to this theory, if an individual's primary attachment figure was distant and unresponsive, they will expect God to be the same way implicitly, regardless of their explicit understanding of God (Miner 115-116, Maltby 307). Research indicates that both theories may be true. In discussing the findings of their own study of these theories, Beck and McDonald explain:

Individuals with deficient childhood experiences and attachment bonds may be attracted to seek out an attachment to God to fill an attachment void (compensation)... however, once this relationship is initiated, previous working-models may begin to assert themselves in this new relationship (correspondence). (100)

Therefore, the best way to establish a relationship with God may be to also nurture a secure attachment with another person or people, through which the individual can better understand the love of God.

Therapist Lauren E. Maltby, in her article titled *Trauma, Attachment, and Spirituality: A*

Case Study relates her experiences with client who had suffered severely traumatic experiences as a child. As the client's therapist, Maltby describes how she became a secure attachment figure in the client's life, and how their relationship enabled the client to work through her traumatic experiences utilizing Maltby as a secure base, and reform her understanding of God to establish a secure and trusting relationship with God as Father as well. Maltby explains:

It is certainly possible and not uncommon for clients to have corrective attachment experiences with God directly, thereby changing their attachment filter; however, God often mediates His love for us through people. Therefore, it seems more probable that the client's attachment filter, after being changed through a new and corrective relational experience with the therapist, will also extend into their relationship with God. (307)

Maltby goes on to describe how she was able to speak value and worth into the client's life by insisting to the client that no matter what, Maltby would continue to care and be available to her, even in the face of resentment and anger from the client. The client was later able to reflect on how this experience illustrated for her the way God loved her. Maltby records a section of the transcript from her meetings with client in which the client says:

I felt like me and you were, for a second, this replication of what God does for me, how here you are and I am not the greatest and you're here with me in this. And then I turn, and I leave. I literally left. I left. But then you looked for me! Not only did you look for me, then I called you and you're like, 'it doesn't matter, I'll still be here no matter what' ... I felt like for the first time I had a tangible example and experience of what that looks like. (308)

1 John 4 offers support for Maltby's proposition that God's love and reliability as an attachment figure is made apparent in the way Christian's are called to love others. In verse 11

and 12 John writes, “Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us” (*New International Version*).

As in the illustration of Maltby’s client, for foster and adoptive parents, attachment restoration might involve seeking out a faith-based therapist among other possible solutions. At the aforementioned Refresh conference, several foster and adoptive parents referred to how the issues they faced with their children and the responses their children’s behaviors motivated them to seek out therapy for themselves. In addition, the opportunity for compassionate and genuine relationship offered by the vulnerability and community of a regularly meeting support group can also be a source of secure attachment for foster and adoptive parents. Additionally, for married couples, ideally they can function for one another as secure attachment figures. However, as Michelle Schneidler has observed, and as parents at the Refresh conference shared, and as I have seen in my own support group, the strain fostering and adopting puts on a family can severely strain the marriage relationship. Therefore, it is important for fostering and adopting couples to have opportunities to renew their relationships with each other, and to understand the importance each plays in the life and coping ability of the other. To this end, as part of the support group at Timberlake Church, I suggested a “date night” once a month. Instead of a regular meeting, parents are encouraged to bring their children to the church to take advantage of free childcare, and spend time together as a couple.

If foster and adoptive parents understand their own need for an attachment figure, they have the option to seek one out, and through that relationship grow in a deeper understanding of how much God loves them. This step may help adoptive parents to relate to God as a secure attachment figure in place of any past examples of broken attachment relationships. Self-

reflection is a daunting task, especially for those who have suffered trauma. However, it is essential to reach a state of inner equilibrium to seek healing and, from that stability, to function as a secure base for someone else. In *Globalization, Spirituality, and Justice* the authors explain,

Recollection helps ground the intensity with which we can interact with the world and helps us mellow our response to the accelerating pace of contemporary society...recollection is a way of 'collecting' our scattered lives around a spiritual center, which helps renew our lives by bringing us to a place of inner peace and wholeness. The more we practice this discipline, the more we can anchor our lives in the truth of our existence as it unfolds before God. (Groody 307)

In the following section, I will explore the importance of God specifically as a secure attachment figure in the life of foster and adoptive parents to enable them to practice trauma-based parenting, and to serve as a bridge for their child to relate to God.

Part 4: God as a Secure Base for Both Parents and Children

Earlier in this thesis I explored the weaknesses of many traditional, faith-based parenting techniques to the parenting of children with a history of trauma, which is the case of the vast majority of foster and adopted children. I also related Michelle Schneider's observation of the difficulty parents seem to have in doing so. At a breakout session at the Refresh Conference, a panel of four foster and adoptive parents reflected on their own shifts from traditional to therapeutic parenting. One mother reflected on the conflict she felt making the switch, sharing that she felt that her new way of parenting was at odds with how faith leaders she respected said was the right way to parent.

My research and work with the case studies indicates that the difficulty evangelical

Christians have with an alternative form of parenting may also stem from an insecure attachment to God, which creates a dogmatic, unyielding religious practice that is resistant to change.

Therefore, if a certain parenting paradigm is perceived as part of a religious system, parents with an insecure attachment to God will be unwilling to move to more therapeutic models of parenting. In a study on the relationship between attachment security and the development of faith, researchers found that,

Lower levels of faith development are marked by concrete, literal thinking and general acceptance of understood authoritative stances, and typically involve a resistance or lack of initiative to question traditional or societal constructs. High levels involve self-reflection and often conflict with the status quo. In these levels, individuals possess more receptive attitudes towards new ideas or ways of conceptualizing issues and a desire to externalize their faith in a way that helps further others' faith development (Hart et al. 126).

Therefore, foster and adoptive parents who are securely attached to God will be more open to new parenting paradigms, especially if those paradigms have greater potential to help their children and move them toward a place of understanding how God loves them, and what that love means about their intrinsic value in spite of what their internal working models may be telling them. Eugene Cho in his book *OVERRATED* emphasizes the apparent impact a proper understanding of the Christian faith ought to have on the way those who subscribe to it live. He explains that, "you will show evidence of where you are rooted if you produce fruit that is close to the heart of God" (26). Foster and adoptive parents firmly rooted in their relationship with God as an attachment figure in such a way that he is to them a source of security may have the freedom to adjust their behavior to better produce outcomes in their children's lives that reflect

the character and will of God.

As she describes therapeutic parenting, Karen Purvis too reflects on the difficulty many foster and adoptive parents have with switching to a way of parenting that emphasizes building connection over shaping behavior:

This is irrational for some parents because [they think] ‘we’re going to teach them the character of Jesus’, right? So I have to mush this behavior. But if you look at how Jesus dealt with the adulterous woman or the women at the well of other misbehaving people, you’ll find out that he gave them voice and he spoke to what was really going on.

(“Better Understanding Our Children”)

Purvis suggests a way of understanding Jesus’ approach to people’s behavior that is rarely heard in traditional evangelical churches. However, she presents a Biblical foundation for her position, and challenges her listeners to search the Bible themselves and see how Jesus interacted, and perhaps it might even be said, parented, those with whom he interacted. But for parents to be open to this new way of understanding parenting and God’s heart for people, they must know him, and this knowing is developed through building a secure attachment. With God himself functioning as their secure base, parents are able to explore their faith and doubt without fear of punishment or judgment and gain a more complete understanding of God and ways of parenting that are in line with his nature and teaching, often outside traditional teaching on parenting. In a study which measured security of attachment to God and willingness to explore theologically, Beck comments,

For many Christian’s *orthodoxy* (right belief) is as important as *orthopraxy* (right practice). Thus, many Christians believe that failures of orthodoxy can produce a rejection by God. Given that theological inquiry is a game played with potentially

ultimate stakes, it should come as no surprise that the insecurely attached might be less inclined to question or critique the prevailing notions of their faith community. (Beck 130)

It is important for foster and adoptive parents to develop a secure attachment to God. A secure attachment to God allows parents to modify their parenting paradigms and interact with their children in ways outside the teachings of traditional parenting commonly found in faith communities, but completely in line with character and demonstrated heart of God.

The continuation of Joanna's case study involving Joy illustrates how a parental figure's security of attachment can impact how they interact with the child, which in turn allows the child to form a secure attachment with both the parental figure and God. This example should be understood as a compelling illustration of a concept explored in the research, rather than as conclusive evidence.

Case Study: Joanna and Joy

For a few years after she left Joy and Dan's home at eighteen, there was little to no contact between Joanna, Joy and Dan. Eventually, Joanna was the first to extend an olive branch, with Christmas cards delivered on Christmas Eve and the occasional visit. As the relationship between Joy, Dan and Joanna improved, Joanna began to visit more regularly. Joy and Dan found out that Joanna was continuing to struggle with different psychological disorders and low self-esteem that culminated in self-sabotage and other behaviors dangerous to herself and her well-being.

Eventually, Joy and Joanna were able to talk about their past conflicts. Joy apologized to Joanna, and told her she was proud of her, and heaped praise and support on Joanna. Joanna apologized as well, and from then on she joined the family for holidays and would visit their

house for meals. Rather than reprimand or attempt to shape Joanna's behavior in any way, Joy and her husband praised and supported Joanna consistently, making encouraging statements like, "we're so proud of you," and "you're doing so well," even when Joanna participated in behaviors they disapproved of. About a year after the first conversation with Joy, Joanna excitedly told Dan and Joy that she'd realized God loved her, and that he had always been with her¹⁴.

Joanna now participates in Bible studies and ministries in her free time. She re-registered for college, and is on-track to become a substance abuse counselor. When she talks about her future she is hopeful, and she says that things that used to make her feel stressed out and depressed don't anymore. She's is able to recognize when she is on the verge of self-sabotage, and can choose different behaviors.

The stability of the love Joy was able to offer Joanna arose from her long term security with her husband and her faith which in turn opened the door for Joanna to understand God's love for her, and through that understanding, to form a similar relationship with him. Supported by these secure attachments, Joanna is able to overcome life challenges and pursue a hopeful future¹⁵.

Part 5: A Brief Theological Argument for the Use of an Attachment Based Approach to Parenting Foster and Adopted Children

In the previous section I explored how parents can be confined to traditional parenting paradigms

¹⁴ It would not be appropriate to attribute Joanna's newfound faith wholly to her relationship with Joy and Dan given the limitations of the narrative. However, it is compelling that, in agreement with the literature discussed above, only after the formation of a secure and supportive relationship with parental attachment figures did Joanna enter into a similar relationship with God.

¹⁵ These conclusions are based on Joanna's attributing the positive changes in her life recently to her new relationship with God and her rebuilt relationship with Joy and Dan.

that do not work for their trauma-impacted child by an insecure attachment to God. This insecure attachment limits their ability for deeper theological exploration and their openness to new ways of thinking. This is especially problematic because the body of traditional teaching among evangelical churches regarding parenting is rooted in the sinfulness of children rather than the fatherhood of God, as Marcia Bunge explains in *The Child in Christian Thought*:

Protestant and evangelical and conservative churches ... have established practical programs to address the needs of children and their families. However, their theological reflection on children often overemphasizes a narrow selection of biblical passages and focuses on the sinfulness of children, their need for obedience and instruction, and the protection of the rights of parents to raise children without governmental intrusion.

(Bunge 4)

Bunge goes on to explain that this kind of thinking about children and an emphasis on the examples of God in the Bible punishing his people, leads to a punitive approach to parenting (5). While there is argument over whether this kind of parenting works well with children who have not experienced trauma, as discussed earlier, it is clear that children who have experienced trauma are not able to respond to this kind of parenting (“Understanding Our Children”).

To establish a different theological basis for parenting, I believe we must start with the idea that all people are spiritually in a state of disordered attachment. The Bible explains in Genesis that God created people to be in a very close relationship with himself¹⁶. However, when sin entered the world, all people became spiritually separated from God.

Next, we must take into account that God is presented as an adoptive parent in the Bible (*New International Version*, Romans 8:15-17, Romans 8:23, Romans 9:4, Ephesians 1:5, 2

¹⁶ In Genesis 2-3 it appears that, prior to sin entering the world, God, Adam and Eve enjoyed a very close and personal relationship.

Corinthians 6:18, John 1:12-13, Galatians 4:5). Then, with people in the role of the traumatized child and God in the role of the adoptive parent, God's approach to parenting can now be seen as an example.

From this perspective, God's parenting priorities become apparent. The Gospel shows that God has gone through great pains to reestablish the connection between us and him we were created to have (*New International Version*, John 3:16). In fact, he did (and continues to do) this before requiring any sort of behavioral change from us, and the offer of son-ship itself takes the place of punishment (*New International Version*, Romans 5:6-8). The entirety of the Gospel tells us that God's first priority toward us, was and is, the establishment of a relationship with him, even at great cost to himself. Behavioral change always come later – after the relationship with God has been established. In fact, changed behavior is the *result* of a right relationship with God, not its cause.

In *The Father Heart of God*, the author reflects on how God loves people, and the ways people misunderstand the love of God, often because of relationships with parental figures that have given them a wrong idea about what God wants from and for them. As he describes changed behavior the author explains, “We should obey His laws because He loves us and because we want to respond to His love by pleasing him with our words and actions. Obedience should be a *love response* to God,” (McClung 72). According to McClung, people change their behavior as a natural response to knowing they are loved by God. This mirrors attachment parenting, which strives to assure a child that they are loved by and safe with the parent before expecting behavior to change.

Therefore, parenting priorities that seek attachment over correcting behavior can be seen as a reflection of God's priorities as an adoptive parent, as revealed in the Gospel. Offering foster

and adoptive parents this theological understanding of their role as parents of traumatized children can free them to care for their children in ways that offer more promising outcomes for both the child and the family as a whole.

Conclusion

The modern epic movie series *Star Wars* centers on the orphaned character Luke Skywalker. Frodo Baggins, the central character of the *Lord of the Rings* is also an orphan. The archetypal superhero, Superman, aka Clark Kent, is an adoptee. Countless stories center on the story of the fatherless child. What is it about the orphan that puts her at the center of our epics? Could it be that the broken relationship with God that plagues humanity, and broken relationships with the people around us, call forth an orphan voice inside us? The Bible tells us about a moment when Jesus – the only begotten Son of God according to John 3:16– experienced a moment of separation and rejection from His Father as he died¹⁷. Through that moment on the cross, not only does our God in the person of Jesus understand the orphan ache of the human soul, he made a way to heal it¹⁸. Only through hearing and healing the orphan inside ourselves can we hope to do the same for others.

The Bible describes God’s act of uniting people to himself in what is commonly referred to as “salvation” as an act of adoption (*New International Version*, Romans 8:15-17). Therefore, those within the church, as adopted children of God, can learn from God’s care of us how he would have us care for the orphans he puts into our lives and homes. The central tenant of trauma-informed parenting, which I advocate for in this thesis, is its priority in establishing a

¹⁷ In Matthew 15:34, while Jesus was dying on the cross he is recorded as saying, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (*New International Version*).

¹⁸ The Bible explains of Jesus that, “He himself bore our sins’ in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; ‘by his wounds you have been healed.’ For ‘you were like sheep going astray,’ but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls” (*New International Version*, 1 Peter 2:24-25)

safe a secure relationship with the child, rather than on shaping behavior. As we draw near to God, we realize that for him too, the relationship with us is his first concern as he works to overcome our orphan state. In fact, the Gospel of the cross itself – Christ dying while we were yet sinners (*New International Version*, Romans 5:8) – reveals the extent of God’s desire to establish a relationship with us, regardless of our behavior toward him. We see in this act, and in the daily experiences of our faith, how God woos us first with his love, and from the security of that love we learn how to act in right ways. I have proposed in this thesis that churches and the foster and adoptive parents within them recognize in themselves the orphan ache, and find in their relationship with God both healing for themselves and a model for parenting their hurting children.

Primary Sources

- Anderson, Karen. "Successful Families with FASD." Refresh Conference. Overlake Church, Redmond, WA. 27 February 2016. Conference Presentation.
- Buege, Courtney. Personal Interview. 28 January 2016.
- Burke, Donna. Personal Interview. 10 December, 2015.
- Chapman, Mary Beth and Emily Richards. "Walking Out: Learning How To Do Hard." Refresh Conference. Overlake Church, Redmond, WA. 26 February 2016. Conference Presentation.
- Cho, Eugene. "Tenacious Together." Refresh Conference. Overlake Church, Redmond, WA. 27 February 2016. Conference Presentation.
- Collins, Tricia and Mike Berry. "Don't Grow Weary." Refresh Conference. Overlake Church, Redmond, WA. 27 February 2016. Conference Presentation
- Dan, Joy and Joanna. Personal interviews and observations. 2008-2016.
- Dennis, Wendy. "Getting Unstuck: Moving from Traditional to Therapeutic Parenting." Refresh Conference. Overlake Church, Redmond, WA. 27 February 2016. Conference Presentation.
- Dennis, Wendy. "How to Create a Support Group." Refresh Conference. Overlake Church, Redmond, WA. 26 February 2016. Conference Presentation.
- Foster and Adoptive Family Community Group. Group interviews and observations. Timberlake Church, Redmond, WA. 27 October 2015 and 3 November 2015.
- Guckenberger, Beth. "The Only Sword You'll Need." Refresh Conference. Overlake Church, Redmond, WA. 26 February 2016. Conference Presentation.
- Lee, Jennifer. Personal Interview. 22 January 2016.

McDowell, Ed. "Unmet Expectations." Refresh Conference. Overlake Church, Redmond, WA.

26 February 2016. Conference Presentation.

Schneidler, Michelle. Personal Interview. October 27, 2015.

Schooler, David and Jayne Schooler. "Seeing Beyond Behavior: Looking Through the Lens of a Wounded Child." Refresh Conference. Overlake Church, Redmond, WA. 27 February 2016.

Swinth, Yvonne. "Why Don't Typical Behavior Strategies Work with My Child?" Refresh Conference. Overlake Church, Redmond, WA. 26 February 2016. Conference Presentation.

Winter, Carolyn. Personal Interview. 7 January 2016.

Works Cited

Aloisi, John. "Orphan Care, Adoption, and the Church: Historical Reflections and Contemporary Challenges." *Detroit Baptist Theological Seminary*. Web.

"Assessing the Effects of Foster Care: Early Results from the Casey National Alumni Study." *The Foster Care Alumni Studies*. The Foster Care Alumni Studies, 20 January 2004. Web.

Beck, Richard and Angie McDonald. "Attachment to God: The Attachment to God Inventory, Tests of Working Model Correspondence and an Exploration of Faith Group Differences." *Journal of Psychology and Theology*. 32.2 (2004): 92-103.

Beck, Richard. "God as a Secure Base: Attachment to God and Theological Exploration." *Journal of Psychology and Theology*. 34.2 (2006): 125-132. Web.

Bruskas, Delilah. "Adverse Childhood Experiences and Psychosocial Well-Being of Women

- Who Were in Foster Care as Children.” *The Permanente Journal*. 17.3 (2013): Web.
- Bunge, Marcia J. *The Child in Christian Thought*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. 2001. Print.
- “*Children and Youth in Adoption, Orphanages and Foster Care: A Historical Handbook and Guide*. Westport: Greenwood Press, 2006. Print.
- Cho, Eugene. *Overrated: Are We More in Love with the Idea of Changing the World Than Actually Changing the World?* Colorado Springs: David C Cook, 2014. Nook file.
- "Core Principles - Christian Alliance for Orphans." Christian Alliance for Orphans. Web. 02 May 2016.
- Clinton, Tim and Gary Sibcy. *Attachments: Why You Love, Feel, and Act the Way You Do*. Brentwood: Integrity Publishers, 2002. Print.
- Cole, Susan A. “Foster Caregiver Motivation and Infant Attachment: How do Reasons for Fostering Affect Relationships?” *Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal* 22:5-6 (2005): 441-457. Online.
- Cole, Susan A. “Security of Attachment of Infants in Foster Care.” Diss. Case Western Reserve University, 2001. Online.
- "Core Principles - Christian Alliance for Orphans." Christian Alliance for Orphans. Web. 02 May 2016.
- Daniels, Clara. “A Mother’s Story.” *Journal of Christian Legal Thought* 2:1 (2012): 23-25. Online.
- De Roos, Simone A., et. Al. “Influence of Maternal Denomination, God Concepts, and Child-Rearing Practices on Young Children’s God Concepts.” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 43:4 (2004): 519-535. Online.

- Dozier, Mary, K. Chase Stovall, Kathleen E. Albus, and Brady Bates. "Attachment for Infants in Foster Care: The Role of Caregiver State of Mind." *Child Development* 72.5 (2001): 1467-1477. Online.
- Fisher, Philip A. Hyoun K. Kim. "Intervention Effects on Foster Preschoolers' Attachment -Related Behaviors from a Randomized Trial." *Society of Prevention Research* 8 (2007): 161-170. Online.
- "Foster Care & Human Trafficking." *CAS Research and Education*. Web. 25 Jan. 2016.
- Granqvist, Pehr. Constantini, Alessandro. "Mothers' attachment security predicts their children's sense of God's closeness." *Attachment and Human Development* 15:1 (2013): 51-64. Online.
- Groody, Daniel G. *Globalization, Spirituality, and Justice*. Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2011. Nook file.
- Harris, Nadine Burke. "How childhood trauma affects health across a lifetime." TEDMED. Sept. 2014. Lecture.
- Hart, Jonathan T., Alicia Limke and Phillip R. Budd. "Attachment and Faith Development." *Journal of Psychology and Theology*. 38.2 (2010): 122-128. Web.
- Howe, Mark L., Mary L. Courage, and Shannon C. Edison. "When Autobiographical Memory Begins." *Developmental Review*. 23 (2003): 471-494. Web.
- "Improving Family Foster Care: Findings from the Northwest Foster Care Alumni Study." *The Foster Care Alumni Studies*. The Foster Care Alumni Studies, 14 March 2015. Web.
- Jackson, Lovie L., et al. "Exploring Spirituality among Youth in Foster Care: Findings from the Casey Field Office Mental Health Study." *Child and Family Social Work* 15 (2010): 107-117. Online.

Joyce, Kathryn. "The Problem with the Christian Adoption Movement." The Huffington Post.

TheHuffingtonPost.com, 02 June 2013. Web. 01 May 2016.

Joyce, Kathryn. "The Trouble with the Christian Adoption Movement." New Republic. 11 Jan.

2016. Web. 01 May 2016.

Juffer, Femmie, Marian J. Bakermans-Kranenburg, and Marinus H. Van IJzendoorn. "The

Importance of Parenting in the Development of Disorganized Attachment: Evidence

from a Preventive Intervention Study in Adoptive Families." *Journal of Child*

Psychology & Psychiatry 46.3 (2005): 263-274. Psychology and Behavioral Sciences

Collection. Web. 9 May 2016.

Juffer, Femmie & Van IJzendoorn, Marinus H. "Behavioral Problems and Mental Health

Referrals of International Adoptees: A Meta-analysis." *The Journal of the American*

Medical Association 293.20 (2005): 2501-2515. Online.

Kim, JaeRan. "Some Children See Him: A Transracial Adoptee's View of Color-blind

Christianity." *Journal of Christian Legal Thought* 2:1 (2012): 15-17. Online.

Krinsky, Miriam Aroni. "Disrupting the pathway from foster care to the justice system – a

former prosecutor's perspective on reform." *Family Court Review* 48:2 (2010): 322-337.

Online.

Kumari, Anupam and R.S. Pirta. "Exploring Human Relationships with God as a Secure Base."

Journal of the Indian Academy of Applied Psychology 35: Special Issue (2009): 119-124.

Online.

Largen, Kristin Johnston. "I Love to Tell the Story: Reshaping the Narrative of Adoption."

Dialog: A Journal of Theology 51.4 (2012) : 284-293. Web.

Maltby, Lauren E. and Todd W. Hall. "Trauma, Attachment and Spirituality: A Case Study."

- Journal of Psychology and Theology*. 40.4 (2012): 302-312. Web.
- Marcus, Robert F. "The Attachments of Children in Foster Care." *Genetic, Social and General Psychology Monographs* 117:4 (1991): Online.
- McClung, Floyd Jr. *The Father Heart of God*. Eugene: Harvest House Publishers, 1985. Print.
- Medefind, Jedd. "In Defense of the Christian Orphan Care Movement." *Journal of Christian Legal Thought* 2:1 (2012): 23-25. Online.
- "Mental Health, Ethnicity, Sexuality, and Spirituality among Youth in Foster Care: Findings from the Casey Field Office Mental Health Study." *Casey Family Programs*. Casey Family Programs, 17 September 2007. Web.
- Miner, Maureen. "The Impact of Child-Parent Attachment, Attachment to God and Religious Orientation on Psychological Adjustment." *Journal of Psychology and Theology*. 37.2 (2009): 114-124. Web.
- Miner, Maureen H. "Back to the Basics in Attachment to God: Revisiting Theory in Light of Theology." *Journal of Psychology and Theology*. 35.2 (2007): 112-122.
- Ponciano, Leslie. "Attachment in Foster Care: The Role of Maternal Sensitivity, Adoption, and Foster Mother Experience." *Child Adolescent Social Work Journal* 27.97 (2010): 97-114. Online.
- Purvis, Karen. "Better Understanding Our Children." Tapestry Adoption & Foster Care Conference. Irving Bible Church, Irving, TX. 2008.
- Purvis, Karen, Donald F. Dansereau, and Sheri R. Papris. "Trust-Based Relational Intervention (TBRI): A Systemic Approach to Complex Developmental Trauma." *Child and Youth Services* 34 (2013): 360-386.
- Purvis, Karen. *The Connected Child*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 2007. Print.

- Ross, Thomas. "Attachment and Religious Beliefs - Attachment Styles in Evangelical Christians." *Journal of Religion and Health* 46:1 (2007): 75-84. Online.
- Schofield, Gillian and Mary Beek. "Providing a secure base: Parenting children in long-term foster family care." *Attachment and Human Development* 7:1 (2005): 3-25. Online. 2016. Conference Presentation.
- Smolin, David M. "Of Orphans and Adoption, Parents and the Poor, Exploitation and Rescue: A scriptural and Theological Critique of the Evangelical Christian Adoption and Orphan Care Movement." *Journal of Christian Legal Thought*. 2.1 (2012). Web.
- Sroufe, L. Alan. "Attachment and development: A prospective, longitudinal study from birth to adulthood." *Attachment & Human Development* 7:4 (2005): 349-367.
- "Statistics - Christian Alliance for Orphans." *Christian Alliance for Orphans*. Web. 08 Feb. 2016.
- Thomas, Mike. *Fostering a Child's Recovery: Family Placement for Traumatized Children.* London, 2009. Print.
- "The Adolescent Brain: New research and its implications for young people transitioning from foster care." *Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative*. Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative. 2011. Web.
- Lerner, Richard M., Jason B. Almerigi and Christina Theokas. "Positive Youth Development: A View of the Issues." *The Journal of Early Adolescence*. 25.1 (2005): 10-16. Web.
- Trumper, Tim J. "The Theological History of Adoption I: An Account." *Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology*. Philadelphia. Web.
- Volf, Miroslav. *Exclusion & Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996. Nook file.

White, Catherine Roller, et al. "Depression Among Alumni of Foster Care: Decreasing Rates Through Improvement of Experiences in Care." *Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders* 17:1 (2009): 38-48. Online.