

# **Meant to be Ours: The Uses of Fate in the Narratives of Adoptive Parents**

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How do adoptive parents legitimate their status and achieve a sense of parental entitlement? Interviews with 20 parents conducted as part of the Adoption, Infertility and the Life Story Project suggest that they do so in part by invoking fate to explain the presence of their children in their lives. Current social structures send conflicting messages regarding the basis for adoptive parents' entitlement and legitimacy. Courts still terminate the rights of biological parents before according them to adoptive parents, yet social work practice encourages openness between adoptive and biological kin. Invocations of fate by interviewees range from being part of a larger, well-defined religious ideology to a superstitious catch phrase, suggesting that notions of fate are part of our cultural toolkit and that adoptive parents use fate to construct workable schemas in the absence of a clear cultural message regarding their legitimacy. Fate and the lack of control it implies makes their achieved status more like the ascribed status of biological parents. Fate, rather than another construct, may be invoked because it helps parents explain both the suffering they felt from infertility and the joy they feel as parents, allowing them to sustain their belief in a just world.