

BOOK OF ABSTRACTS



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Keynote

Adoption as a form of generativity: the Relational-Symbolic Approach

Tuesday, 6th July - 12:00: - Keynote speech

Eugenia Scabini (Family Studies and Research University Centre, Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, Milano)

The relational-symbolic model sees adoption as a radical form of parenting and the oldest form of human generativity. Adoption reveals the true nature of the challenge inherent in the family relationship: how to turn something that is different (in this case from a different origin) into something literally familiar, a part of the family. Author will discuss the specific aspects of this family transition by providing theoretical as well as empirical research evidence.

Adoptees' social competence from childhood to emergent adulthood

Tuesday, 6th July - 14:30: - Keynote speech

Maria Barbosa-Ducharne (University of Porto)

The ability to adaptively function in social contexts and to engage in positive social relationships, establishing and maintaining friendships and close relationships has been labelled social competence. There is multiple evidence showing that this ability can be hampered by early adversity. Experiences of abuse and neglect, poor and unstable affective ties, multiple care placements, separations and losses, which characterize many adoptees' preadoption stories, contrast with positive, affectionate and stimulating post-adoption familial and social environments. This makes the study of adoptees' social competence development particularly interesting. Nevertheless, research on the development of social competence in adoptees is recent and the field is characterized by both consistent findings and research disagreements. The diversity of theoretical approaches and methods of study, together with the heterogeneity of samples, help to explain some of these problems. At the same time, there is enough research available to make a review of the main findings feasible. This review will include cross-sectional as well as longitudinal information, studies on children, adolescents and young adults, meta-analytic as well as single studies information. Although to some extent still incipient, research on adoptees' social competence illustrates the power of adoption research to illustrate fundamental issues of human development, the specificity of adoption and the need of sound information to refine the understanding of adoptees, as well as policies and practices to improve their lives.

The effects of early institutional care on children's development

Tuesday, 6th July - 17:00: - Keynote speech

Megan Gunnar (University of Minnesota)

This presentation will cover a series of studies of children adopted internationally from institutions. Outcomes covered will include executive functions, reward sensitivity, brain systems, and attachment. Participants in these studies were from many countries around the world. Effects observed were not particular to country but rather to the duration and quality of care received prior to adoption. Children showed resilience in some domains of development and sensitivity to early deprivation in others.

Fostering family connections: Practices for open adoption and permanent care

Wednesday, 7th July - 13:00: - Keynote speech

Amy Conley Wright (University of Sydney)

Openness in adoption is an expectation for Australian domestic adoption, including adoptions from out-of-home care, and adoption orders feature contact plans outlining visitation with birth relatives. Similarly, there is an expectation that children on permanent legal orders for guardianship or long-term foster care with kin or foster carers will also have regular contact with birth relatives. Adoptive parents and permanent carers are generally expected to organise communication and visits independently after legal orders. Yet there can be challenging dynamics for making these relationships work well, requiring caseworker support. The Australian Research Council funded project, 'Fostering lifelong connections for children in permanent care' aims to promote practice change in the out-of-home care sector, by translating research into specific casework practices to keep children connected to their birth families. Through action research, four regional groups constituted of caseworkers and caseworker managers are trialling and evaluating practice changes over a two-year period and informing development of practice tools and professional training. The project is grounded in principles of cultural respect and safety, trauma sensitivity and reflective practice. Practice learnings from two action research cycles will be shared, highlighting how the practices of debriefing, family time at a distance, co-regulation and carer coaching can support positive relationships.

Doing ethnicity and race in everyday life

Wednesday, 7th July - 17:00: - Keynote speech

Richard Lee (University of Minnesota)

This presentation will address the psychological science of growing up and living life as a transracial and transnational adopted person. Using a critical adoption and critical race framework, I will present qualitative and quantitative research findings on the ethnic identity development and perceived discrimination experiences of Korean adoptees who were raised in White families and are now raising children of their own.

Child's right to identity in intercountry adoption (ICA)

Thursday, 8th July - 13:00: - Keynote speech

Cecile Jeannin (Child Identity Protection), Mia Dambach (Child Identity Protection)

Article 8 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) notes that a child has a right to identity including a name, a nationality and family relations. Whenever a child is deprived of one of these elements, States have an obligation to restore the child's identity speedily. At the heart of any intercountry adoption (ICA) is the modification of a child's identity given at birth. This article explores the conditions that justify such a modification is in the child's best interests as the paramount consideration. Secondly the article then examines what mechanisms must be in place to record the modification, including the reasons behind the change, to ensure that the adoptee can access information about their origins. Thirdly the article focuses on how to prevent the falsification and possible sale of the child's identity when it is modified through an ICA. The article concludes by examining promising practices on how different States have taken up their responsibility to re-establish the child's identity when it is incomplete and/or sold and options for those seeking redress when States abdicate.

Language challenges in orphans and vulnerable children: contributions to understanding language development

Thursday, 8th July - 15:30: - Keynote speech

Elena Grigorenko (University of Houston)

In this presentation, Dr. Grigorenko will review the existing literature on language development in orphans and vulnerable children (OVC), reflect on what is established in this work, and introduce completed and ongoing research on language acquisition in OVC unfolding in her laboratory.

Studying adoptive families beyond childhood: what do we know about adoptive families when adoptees become parents?

Thursday, 8th July - 17:00: - Keynote speech

Elsbeth Neil (University of East Anglia)

It is important to consider the lifelong impact of adoption, but many studies focus on families during childhood and adolescence. What happens later on in the adoptive family life cycle when adopted people become parents themselves, and adopters move into grandparenting roles? How do adopted adults view their life histories and identity when they become a parent? Do early adversities experienced by adoptees affect them as parents, and does becoming a parent mark a turning point in their lives? What is it like for adoptive parents to become grandparents and what role do they play in supporting their adult children and their grandchildren?

This presentation will explore questions such as emerging findings from a new in-depth qualitative study of 40 adoptees (20 men, 20 women) who are parents, and 43 adopters (20 men, 23 women) who are grandparents. The research uses life story interview methods to learn about how adopted men and women (who are now mothers and fathers), and adoptive parents (who are now grandmothers and grandfathers) experience and make sense of their lives when the next generation arrives. With a focus on people who were adopted or who adopted a child in England in the last 30 years, the study shines light on the longer term outcomes of domestic adoption via the child protection system.

Effects of early undernutrition

Friday, 9th July - 13:40: - Keynote speech

Laurie Miller (Tufts University)

One of the most common findings among institutionalized children is undernutrition. Lack of adequate calories, inappropriate nutrients, feeding difficulties, and inadequate nurture contribute to this problem. Many newly adopted children therefore arrive with signs of undernutrition. Most rapidly show catch-up growth; the degree and quality of this growth recovery is not consistent. Moreover, the impact of early undernutrition on young children is profound, with long-term impacts on growth, development, emotional regulation, and behavior. Some of these effects may be life-long. In this session, these pathways will be reviewed.

Effects of improving caregiving among young children during and following institutional care

Friday, 9th July - 14:10: - Keynote speech

Rifkat Muhamedrahimov (Saint Petersburg State University)

Institutional settings, usually characterized by inadequate caregiving environment, are associated with dramatic delays in children's development. The St. Petersburg-USA Institutional Intervention Project implemented and maintained in St. Petersburg's institutions for children aged 0-4 years (Baby Homes, BH) showed that the improvement in sensitivity, responsiveness and stability of the caregiving environment led to substantial improvements in institutionalized children including those with disabilities. Results of the follow-up study of children exposed to intervention BHs and transitioned to post-institutional families confirm previous reports demonstrating negative consequences of institutionalization with a few significant differences between children from the intervention and non-intervention institutions. The intervention and follow-up projects helped to improve the Russian Federation national practices and policies in the field of early childhood and intervention, including for children left without parental care. For the last decade, significant changes associated with the reduction in the number of institutions and the transfer of most of these children to substitute families occurred in the Russian Federation child welfare system. At the same time there is lack of evidence-based intervention programs for accompanying substitute families, and the percentage of children that were returned to institutions is substantial. The evidence-based Attachment and Biobehavioral Catch-up home visiting intervention was adapted to help substitute parents to interact with their post-institutionalized children sensitively. The team of researchers from St. Petersburg State University and University of Delaware have started the pilot study of the effectiveness of this program for substitute families for children with the aim of its future implementation in Russian Federation.

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD): fostering better health by adopting a clinical model to assess children who are prenatally drug and alcohol exposed

Friday, 9th July - 15:00: - Keynote speech

Judith Eckerle (University of Minnesota)

Children who are domestically or internationally adopted are at higher risk for prenatal drug and alcohol exposures. Delays in appropriate screening for Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) and often seen misdiagnoses can delay medical, developmental and behavioral referrals and can have serious, long-term effects on children's health and well-being. Based on research on FASD, clinical care for this population should be preventive and multidisciplinary in nature— a collaborative, evidence based model that will be described in this session.

Adoption programs and resources

Friday, 9th July - 15:30: - Keynote speech

David Cross (Texas Christian University)

Over the past 30 years our field has grown from almost zero programs suitable for adopted children with backgrounds of relational trauma, to a relatively large number of programs and resources. In this presentation I will provide an overview of such programs, focusing primarily on those that seem to be most effective, or most promising. When selecting programs to highlight, I have been guided, conceptually, by Bowlby's "Environment of Evolutionary Adaptiveness" (Narvaez et al, 2013), notions of "Complex Developmental Trauma" (D'Andrea et al, 2012), and Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Model (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). The large number of programs and resources reviewed vary on a number of dimensions, including (a) the ecological context of application or implementation, e.g., home, school, or clinic, and (b) the focus of the intervention, e.g., parent-child attachment, challenging behaviors, intrusive memories. The purpose of the presentation is not to evaluate the programs and resources (although there is an evaluation implicit in the selection), but to display the wide range of programs and resources available, in such a way that promotes informed decisions and discussion.

Invited Symposia

Adjustment and well-being of internationally adopted adolescents and their families in four European countries

Tuesday, 6th July - 13:00: (The Ice-House) - Invited Symposia

Laurie Miller (Tufts University)

Between 2004 and 2014, nearly 12,000 children per year arrived in countries of the European Union (EU) for international adoption. International adoptees face many challenges after arrival, such as differences in languages and customs, maintenance of ethnic identity, discrimination, and special needs in the new country. Such challenges may become increasingly difficult during adolescence. However, there are no cross-national European studies which examine the adjustment of internationally adopted adolescents nor the experiences of their parents in different receiving countries. The European Adoption Research Group conducted a study in 4 European countries to evaluate the adjustment and well-being of internationally adopted adolescents and their parents. In this symposium, some of the preliminary results of this study will be presented, focusing on: psychosocial development and interpersonal relationships (Spain), family functioning and communicative openness (Italy), child mental and physical health and parent adoption satisfaction (France), and school adjustment (Norway). The symposium will highlight the varying outcomes of international adoptees and their families in these 4 receiving countries.

Discussant: Jesús Palacios

School victimization and psychosocial adjustment among Eastern European adopted adolescents

Tuesday, 6th July - 13:10: (The Ice-House) - Oral

Maite Román (University of Seville), Isabel Caceres (University of Seville), Pablo Carrera (Department of Developmental and Educational Psychology (University of Seville)), Andrea Fuentes (University of Seville), Carmen Moreno (University of Seville)

Introduction: The topic of school victimisation in adopted adolescents has not received much attention in adoption research. The few studies that have addressed this topic suggest that school maltreatment and bullying might have a significant incidence and a significant impact in their adjustment and wellbeing.

Aim: To explore the prevalence of bullying and victimization and the psychological adjustment in international adoptees from Eastern Europe.

Method: The participants were 199 internationally adopted adolescents adopted in France, Italy, Norway and Spain. *The revised Olweus Bully/Victim Questionnaire* (Olweus, 1996) was applied to examine experiences of bullying and victimization at school and *The Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire* (SDQ; Goodman, 1995) was used to explore the psychosocial adjustment. Both measures were administered to adolescents.

Results and implications: The study showed that 37.2% of adoptees reported having been bullied at school once or twice in the last months, with 19.6% having been bullied at school at least two or three times a month. The percentage of psychological difficulties is higher than in non-adoptive same age peers. Differences by gender, age and countries in which teens lived were analysed. Finally, the analysis of the relationship between dimensions showed that the adopted teens who were victims of bullying had significantly more psychological difficulties than non-victims. The collaboration of school becomes essential to prevent and intervene in bullying situations and to improve the adjustment and integration of adoptees.

Family functioning and adoption communication openness in adoptive families with adolescents

Tuesday, 6th July - 13:20: (The Ice-House) - Oral

Sonia Ranieri (Catholic University), Laura Ferrari (Catholic University), Elena Canzi (Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore di Milano), Francesca Danioni (Catholic University), Rosa Rosnati (Catholic University)

Communicative openness about adoption could be considered as a crucial challenge for adoptive families' members. Empirical research supports the general notion that adoptees who experience open and direct communication about adoption with their adoptive parents are more likely to show a positive adjustment not only in childhood, but also during adolescence and adulthood. Despite the relevance of these processes, little is still known on the factors contributing to communicative openness in adoptive families, especially with regard to the promotional role of family functioning. The empirical evidence among non-adoptive families showed that communication is associated to some characteristics of the family as a whole, such as cohesion and flexibility. Family cohesion has been defined as the affective bond between family members, whereas flexibility is the family's capacity to change its power structure and rules to respond to the family's developmental needs. This study was aimed at exploring the association between family functioning, adoption communication openness, and adolescent adoptees' psychosocial adjustment. Participants were 134 Italian families with internationally adopted adolescents (13-17 years), recruited through the collaboration of agencies and professionals working in the field of international adoption. An on-line questionnaire including FACES-III, the Adoption Communication Openness Scale, and the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire was administered. Results will be discussed in relation to recommendations for further research as well as for professionals working with adoptive families.

Special needs of internationally adopted adolescents in 4 European receiving countries: relation to mothers' adoption satisfaction

Tuesday, 6th July - 13:30: (The Ice-House) - Oral

Laurie Miller (Tufts University), Marie-Odile Perouse de Montclos (GHU St Anne, Paris), Jacques Chomilier (Mouvement pour l'Adoption sans Frontières), Marie Garidou (APAER), Jacques Fedafa (Enfance et Familles d'Adoption), Frédérique Delatour (Mission Adoption Internationale), Nathalie Parent (Enfance et Familles d'Adoption)

Introduction: Most SN in international adoptees are diagnosed after arrival, often during school age. Little is known about the extent and nature of SN among international adoptees in different RC or the relation of SN to mothers' adoption satisfaction (M-AS) in different RC.

Aims: (1) determine the prevalence and type of SN among IAA ages 11-18 years in 4 European RC; (2) relate SN to M-AS.

Methods: 771 mothers of IAA (58%M, arrival age:52.0±39.7 months, current:14.99±1.71 years) in four RC (France n=306, Italy n=330, Norway n=70, Spain n=65) completed on-line surveys including (a) child's medical, behavior, psychological, or school problems, (b) Pinderhughes' Adoption Satisfaction Questionnaire.

Results: The percentage of mothers reporting >1 SN in their child varied by RC (France 54%, Italy 43%, Norway 87%, Spain 77%, χ^2 73.64, $p < .0001$), as did the frequency of specific SN (developmental delay, ADHD, behavior/psychiatric problems, learning disabilities, FAS [but not speech/language problems]). M-AS did not differ significantly between RC; the presence of ADHD, behavior/psychiatric problems (but not other SN) consistently related to mothers' ASQ. For French, Italian, and Spanish mothers, the presence of any SN negatively predicted M-AS, after controlling for child gender, current/arrival ages, and Eastern European origin.

Conclusions: SN prevalence and pattern of diagnoses differed in 4 European RC. Differences in the profiles of children placed in these RC versus RC-specific differences in interpretations of children's problems cannot be distinguished. SN represent an additional stress on adoptive families; further work is needed to understand how RC characteristics may impact post-adoption adjustment.

Language development and school outcome among international adopted teens from Russia and Eastern Europe

Tuesday, 6th July - 13:40: (The Ice-House) - Oral

Steinar Theie (University of Oslo), Anne-Lise Rygvold (University of Oslo), Monica Dalen (University of Oslo)

Introduction: Internationally adoptees are vulnerable for delays in many arenas – including schooling. There are limited knowledge about the language development and school situation of international adopted teens from Russia and Eastern Europe.

Aim: to examine the level of adoption age and school outcome among adopted teens in Norway, France, Italy, and Spain based on the mothers' assessments.

Method: An online-survey about different topics was conducted, with data from teens and their mothers in the four countries, including information about adoption age, language skills and grades in mother-tongue language and mathematics.

Results: The adoption age is high, with a significant higher adoption age in France, Italy and Spain compared to Norway. There are significant correlations between grades in mother tongue language and language skills such as “semantic skills” and “receiving messages” both for the whole sample and for the Norwegians. Regression analyses shows that “semantic skills” predicts grades in mother tongue language for the total sample. For Norwegian teens, languages skills such as “passing on a message” also predict the grades in Norwegian. Language skills does not predict grades in mathematics.

Conclusions: Adoption age varies in the four countries. Different aspects of language skills seems to be of importance in predicting grades – such as “semantic skills” and “passing on a message”.

Measuring the effectiveness of adoption clinical competence training

Tuesday, 6th July - 15:30: (The Ice-House) - Invited Symposia

David Brodzinsky (Rutgers University), Debbie Riley (Center for Adoption Support and Education), Anne J Atkinson (Policy Works Ltd), Emily Smith Goering (Research Associate, Kaye Implementation and Evaluation)

This symposium focuses on the effectiveness of two adoption clinical competence training programs created and implemented by the Center for Adoption Support and Education (C.A.S.E.), along with its partners – one classroom-based, providing 72 hours of training, and the other web-based, providing 30 hours of training. As the chair, David Brodzinsky, will present opening remarks regarding the need for adoption clinical competence among mental health professionals and, as the discussant, will address the implications of key points raised by the presenters.

In the first presentation, Debbie Riley will review the history of C.A.S.E.'s efforts to develop adoption clinical competence (ACC) training curricula. She will highlight the principles, values, and core competencies that are foundational for ACC and briefly review the classroom and web-based training programs. Based on over 1,200 clinicians who have taken the ACC classroom-based training, Anne Atkinson will then present data on training outcomes related to knowledge gains and practice changes of participants versus non-participants, as well as the influence of ACC training on client's satisfaction with therapy, therapeutic alliance, and family outcomes. The final presentation by Emily Smith Goering will focus on outcome data related to the newly developed web-based ACC training. Over 2,400 professionals who have taken the training showed significant gains in knowledge across all competency areas and reported high levels of satisfaction with training content, technology platform and relevance of training. Implications of ACC training for mental health professionals will be explored by the presenters and discussant.

Discussant: David Brodzinsky

The Need: Quality, Adoption-Competent Mental Health Services

Tuesday, 6th July - 15:45: (The Ice-House) - Oral

Debbie Riley (Center for Adoption Support and Education)

This presentation focuses on results of C.A.S.E.'s efforts to produce adoption clinical competence training curricula and to specify competencies on which training is based. The process to specify adoption clinical competencies was initially undertaken to inform development of Training for Adoption Competency (TAC), a 72-hour advanced clinical training model. An advisory group of nationally recognized experts, including parents, reviewed relevant research and practice literature and specified competencies through an iterative process of review, revision, synthesis, and consensus building. This produced agreement to 181 discrete knowledge, values, and skills competencies in 18 domains and a definition of an adoption competent mental health professional that was subsequently vetted in a survey of adoption kinship network members who registered a very high level of agreement with competencies defined through expert consensus.

Subsequently, within the context of curriculum refinements and development of a 30-hour web-based foundational curriculum, competencies specified earlier were reexamined and refined, informed by the growing body of knowledge from research and clinical practice. Again, the process engaged advisors in an iterative process of review, revision, and synthesis producing expert consensus on core competencies and the subsequent development of Practice Principles that will be shared.

Increasingly, the competencies defined by C.A.S.E. are seen in published articles, clearly being used by researchers to conceptualize and measure adoption competent practices. In December 2020 TAC was accredited by the Institute of Credentialing Excellence and is the only assessment-based certificate program of its kind in the U.S.

The impact of training for adoption competency on clinical practices and family outcomes

Tuesday, 6th July - 16:00: (The Ice-House) - Oral

Anne J Atkinson (PolicyWorks, Ltd.)

Since its inception, Training for Adoption Competency (TAC) has been subject to an ongoing rigorous external evaluation that examines training delivery, effectiveness and outcomes, and has produced a substantial body of evidence that TAC is a high quality curriculum, delivered with fidelity, and produces not only gains in knowledge superior to those of non-participant clinician comparison groups but, importantly, changes in clinical practices consistent with intended training outcomes. More than 18,000 narrative descriptions illuminate effects of TAC on a broad spectrum of clinical assessment and intervention practice and have informed development of a set of practices principles. Findings to be presented are from a study that goes beyond evaluating TAC as a training program to examine impacts on day-to-day practice and therapeutic outcomes. Data from 89 families seen by 34 TAC-trained clinicians were compared to data from 70 families seen by 36 comparably qualified clinicians who had not completed TAC. Families seen by TAC-trained clinicians were significantly more satisfied with treatment and outcomes and formed stronger therapeutic alliances; they also reported more positive family and child outcomes across all aspects measured.

Findings not only add to the evidence of TAC's effectiveness but also contribute to greater understanding of the relationship between adoption clinical competence, client engagement and perseverance in the therapeutic process, and family outcomes in terms of relationships, communicative openness, daily functioning and overall well-being.

Evaluating an Online Adoption Competency Training

Tuesday, 6th July - 16:15: (The Ice-House) - Oral

Emily Goering (Center for Adoption Support and Education), Tony Bonadio (University of Maryland, Baltimore)

Building an adoption competent mental health workforce is a critical need but limited training opportunities for professionals exist. To increase training reach and availability C.A.S.E. was awarded federal funding from the Children's Bureau to develop and implement state-of-the art web-based training for a broad range of mental health professionals, called the National Adoption Competent Mental Health Training Initiative (NTI). Curriculum were implemented and evaluated with 2,403 mental health (MH) professionals across 9 pilot sites over a 6-month period in 2018. The evaluation employed a mixed-methods design to assess knowledge gains, changes in perception to adoption competent skills and abilities, satisfaction with the training, and impact on practice. On average participants failed pretests for all 10 training modules indicating knowledge gaps in all competencies, with the lowest mean pretest scores on: 1) attachment, child development and mental health, 2) impact of race, ethnicity, and diversity, and 3) identify formation. In contrast, participants achieved passing scores and statistically significant knowledge gains on post-test measures. Qualitative findings revealed practice changes in specific areas, including but not limited to, involvement with birth families, grief and loss work, and attachment. High levels of satisfaction were found with the training content, technology platform, and training relevance, with 93% describing themselves as "extremely" or "somewhat satisfied." The pilot findings revealed the effectiveness of web-based training for increasing adoption competency in MH professionals. In addition to the pilot findings, the presentation will highlight training and outcome data collected from a more recent cohort of MH professionals.

COVID-19 and adoption

Wednesday, 7th July - 14:30: (The Ice-House) - Invited Symposia

Peter Selman (Newcastle University)

This symposium deals with the challenges and the outcomes in the adoption related field due to the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic. In the first presentation, Peter Selman and Howard Altstein will outline the decline of the number of international adoptions recorded by key receiving States in 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic, this comparing with data from 2015-2019. The presentation by Stephanie Alves will explore COVID-19-related challenges on the adoption process and identify promising practices, from the views of adoptive parents. Peiling Kong's presentation will focus on how the spread of Covid-19 and the consequent restrictions have affected assessors' practice and assessment in Australia and will provide recommendations for best practice in this field. Anne Murphy and Ruth Copson will instead present the results of two studies carried out in England during the lockdown period aimed at considering how digital forms of communication affected adoption/foster care practice, both in terms of placement and contacts. The presentation by Patricia Germain and Angela Esquivel will describe the impact of Covid-19 on a sample of Quebec adult adoptees, in terms of health-related behaviors due to confinement, mood changes, and micro-aggression situations. Abbie Goldberg will present an explorative study aimed at considering the perspectives of adoptive parents about the transition to remote schooling and their children's mental health, amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. Finally, Jen-Vital de Monleon will discuss a study that will help to better understand the effects of confinement in adoptees in France.

Discussant: Camillo Regalia

The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on intercountry adoption in selected receiving states and states of origin

Wednesday, 7th July - 14:40: (The Ice-House) - Oral

Peter Selman (Newcastle University), Howard Altstein (University of Maryland, Baltimore)

The impact of the Coronavirus pandemic on Intercountry adoption is largely unknown. The aim of this paper is to explore this by analysing the number of international adoptions recorded by key receiving States in 2020 and comparing these with the numbers recorded in previous years highlighting differences in the number of adoptions recorded for States of origin

The aim of this short presentation will be to explore the decline in numbers 2019-2020 and whether there is variation between States in the size of the decline. By June 10th we had very limited data: the US State Department had still not published any data for FY 2020, but we had information from EURADOPT, which included data from Nordic countries, Belgium, Italy and the Netherlands. These indicate annual totals falling by more than 50% with the largest fall in adoptions from China.

We would end by considering the possible impact of Covid alongside other factors influencing the decline in numbers over the past decade – e.g. socio-political changes in sending countries; the growth of surrogacy as an alternative for infertile couples; pressure on receiving countries to find domestic adopters for growing numbers of children in foster-care.

We recognise that this will be hard to prove and believe that further declines would be expected and that any future rise in ICA numbers is likely to be due to local factors such as international conflicts, social unrest (Myanmar), civil war (Yemen), famine in Africa. This will provide a background to other contributions

Adopting a child in times of Covid-19: Lessons learned from adoptive parents' views

Wednesday, 7th July - 14:50: (The Ice-House) - Oral

Stephanie Alves (ProChild CoLAB Against Child Poverty and Social Exclusion), Catarina Gomes (CrescerSer APDMF, Casa de Cedofeita), Isabel Pastor (Santa Casa da Misericórdia de Lisboa), Margarida Henriques (Faculty of Psychology and Education Sciences, University of Porto)

Introduction: The COVID-19 pandemic represented a psico-socio-ecological challenge for adoption-related procedures, with some placements being cancelled. But what can we learn from those who proceeded?

Aims: To explore COVID-19-related challenges on the adoption process and identify promising practices, from the views of adoptive parents.

Method: Participants were 23 Portuguese adoptive parents who received a child into their family during the first COVID-19 confinement (March-June 2020). Semi-structured interviews were conducted *online* with both parents and analyzed through thematic analysis.

Results: Delays and uncertainties of child's placements due to COVID-19 caused anxiety for most children and parents. However, some parents experienced this waiting time as beneficial to establish a trustful relationship with the child, through sending personal videos to each other, and to better prepare themselves for parenthood. Parents viewed confinement and telework as an opportunity for both parents to be concurrently at home with the child, which facilitated establishing family bonds and routines. Mandatory social distancing was simultaneously seen as a benefit (parents frequently used COVID-19 as an excuse to delay meetings with extended family) and as a challenge (namely for children). Parents' views about child's adjustment and professionals' practices will be described.

Discussion: Findings highlight benefits of a *private family time* in the very beginning of the adoption process to facilitate the establishment of quality parent-child bonds.

Implications: Policies should be revised regarding the duration and format of the time between child proposal and placement, and the possibility of concurrent parental leave/telework, including the child staying at home, after placement.

The impact of Covid-19 on expert assessment and child participation in care and adoption proceedings in New South Wales, Australia

Wednesday, 7th July - 15:00: (The Ice-House) - Oral

*Peiling Kong (University of Sydney), Judith Cashmore (The University of Sydney), Amy Conley Wright (University of Sydney),
Rita Shackel (University of Sydney)*

Introduction. In New South Wales (NSW) Australia, children in care and adoption experience substantial differences in child participation in legal proceedings. Children in care proceedings are legally represented and assessed by independent experts (consisting of an independent panel of psychologists, psychiatrists, and social workers), whilst children in adoption proceedings are also assessed by experts but not legally represented. Children undergoing care and adoption proceedings in Australia have reported that they do not feel heard by their caseworkers and lawyers (Bessell, 2011). My study argues that experts play a valuable role in assessing children and facilitating child participation. This paper focuses on the impact of COVID-19 restrictions on expert assessments.

Aims. This paper focuses on one area of my research- how experts facilitate child participation whilst working within the constraints of COVID-19 restrictions on travel and social distancing.

Method. This research utilises a mixed-methods approach. Stage 1 involves semi-structured individual interviews with care and adoptions assessors (n= 24) in NSW. Stage 2 includes thematic analyses of 80 care assessment reports and 80 adoption application reports. Stage 3 involves review of 80 court files from care matters and 80 court files from adoption matters.

Results and implications. Preliminary findings will be presented, with particular focus on the shift of experts' practice and assessment processes due to COVID-19, as well as the potential effect these adjustments may have on the completeness of assessments and how well children are heard. Recommendations to guide best practice with regard to expert assessments are made.

The advantages and disadvantages of digital communication in UK adoption and foster care.

Wednesday, 7th July - 15:10: (The Ice-House) - Oral

Anne Murphy (University of East Anglia), Ruth Copson (University of East Anglia), Elsbeth Neil (University of East Anglia)

Covid-19 necessitated a rapid replacement of face-to-face interaction with digital forms of communication, particularly video calling. Two key areas of adoption/foster care practice, normally reliant on in-person visits, were affected: (1) moving children from foster to adoptive placements, which typically involves several visits to the foster home by adopters and (2) direct contact between children and birth families, both pre and post-adoption. Two studies were undertaken during the first period of 'lockdown' in England. Study 1, looking at the move to adoption, involved interviews with practitioners across 16 adoption agencies and Study 2, focussing on contact, encompassed an online survey (n=197) and 22 interviews with affected adult parties.

Participants reported some positive impacts of digital communications. Adopters and foster carers were able to work creatively together during the pre-placement period to build relationships with each other and familiarity for the child, even with a reduction of in-person meetings due to infection risk. With contact for children in care, digital methods enabled family relationships to be maintained, and for some virtual contact worked very well. In both studies, engaging children under two in virtual communication required careful planning and support, and benefits were limited.

The positive reception of digital communication methods in certain circumstances suggests these methods could play a role in future work supporting relationships through virtual contact. Ongoing monitoring, however, is needed to see the impact of this period, especially in shorter face-to-face time during adoption introductions, and the lack of direct contact for young children with their parents.

Impact of Covid-19 on adult adoptees : Quebec experience

Wednesday, 7th July - 15:20: (The Ice-House) - Oral

Patricia Germain (Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières), Angela Esquivel (Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières)

In March 2020, Quebec experienced its first confinement due to the pandemic. At that time, we were doing a study on the health of adopted persons. We knew that there could be impacts on health behaviors (INESSS, 2020, Mattioli et al., 2020). In addition, discriminatory behavior towards members of the Asian community has been reported towards this population since the start of the pandemic (Asmundson and Taylor, 2020; Lin, 2020). However, a large proportion of those adopted are of Asian origin. We decided to focus on the impact of confinement on adopted people. **Objectives:** describe the changes in health-related behaviors due to confinement; describe the mood changes; describe micro-aggression situations **Method:** Online survey. Recruitment via social medias. Results: 64 participants (57 women, 7 men, 2 people who do not identify with any gender). 72% of the international adoption sample and 28% of the domestic adoption. The participants came from all Quebec regions. They were between 18 and 80 years old. We have noticed changes in health behaviors (diet, exercise) and moods. The participants experienced micro-aggressions mainly because of their ethnic origin and some also because of their age. The confinement brings back a feeling of abandonment and loneliness. Conclusion: We are continuing this study a year later to determine strategies to put in place to support adoptees.

Adopted children and adolescents in France during the spring 2020 Covid-19 confinement

Wednesday, 7th July - 15:30: (The Ice-House) - Oral

Jean-Vital de Monleon (Hôpital d'Enfants CHU du Bocage), Frederic Huet (Hôpital d'Enfants CHU du Bocage)

Introduction : As in many other countries, in March 2020, France began a 2-month confinement to try to stop the spread of Covid-19. The impact of this exceptional period, on adopted children and their families has not yet been systematically reported.

Aim : To better understand the effects of confinement in adoptees : traumatic reminder of life in orphanages or a privileged time to promote attachment ?

Methods : An online questionnaire addressing family function and child behavior during the confinement was prepared. Families were recruited via social networks . Parents of 544 adopted children and control group of 411 children responded to the questionnaire. For the adoptives families two questionnaires were posted (one at beginning and one at end).

Results : 6% of children (all asians) suffered racist remarks related to the origin of the pandemic. About a quarter of adoptives families consider that they have already experienced a confinement equivalent, at the time they adopted their child. Most adoptive families experienced confinement as a privileged moment of proximity, without major stress, and a valuable time to reconnect as a family. In general, adoptees were significantly more motivated than non-adoptees for school and sports activities. However, these motivations decreased considerably after a month of confinement.

Conclusion : at least at beginning, the containment was not a ordeal for adoptive families.

Who we are and how we see adoption: Adoption researchers' positionality

Wednesday, 7th July - 14:30: (Negri da Oleggio Room) - Invited Symposia

Ellen Pinderhughes (Tufts University), Amanda Baden (Montclair State University), Kasper Eriksen (European University Institute), Jesús Palacios (University of Seville), Gera ter Meulen (KnowledgeBureau ter Meulen), Rachel Farr (University of Kentucky)

As researchers, we all bring our lenses to our research. Our lenses, informed by our social identities and related experiences, also inform the research questions we ask and how we use research methods to answer the questions we pose. Historically research, especially studies grounded in quantitative approaches privileged the outsider perspective, with the emphasis on objectivity. However, evolving interest in qualitative approaches calls our attention to the importance of understanding the lenses through which we conduct our work, including through processes such as reflexivity, self-interrogation, etc. (e.g., Blythe, Wilkes, Jackson, & Halcomb, 2013; Ross, 2017; Vass, 2017). Researchers may bring an insider perspective (reflecting first-hand experience in the phenomenon) or an outsider perspective (reflecting no personal experience in the phenomenon).

This international panel includes six adoption researchers with varying adoption identities, racial/ethnic identities, gender/sexual identities, and from different generations of adoption researchers. Panelists will give a 5-minute reflection on their adoption and social identities and consider how their identities and related experiences may impact their adoption research. After these pre-taped individual reflections, 15 minutes will be devoted to live discussion and exchange among panelists, moderated by Ellen Pinderhughes and Amanda Baden. In the last 15 minutes we will respond to chat-based questions from attendees. Issues such as researcher positionality, objectivity, credibility will be discussed, with the goal of encouraging all participants to consider how to address these issues in their work.

Panelists include: Amanda Baden, Kasper Eriksen, Rachel Farr, Jesus Palacios, Ellen Pinderhughes, Gera ter Meulen

Symbolic tools: help for working with adopted children and their families

Friday, 9th July - 12:00: (The Ice-House) - Invited Symposia

Ondina Greco (Catholic University)

Working with family members about adoption necessarily involves issues of loss and abandonment. Such work connects the subjects with a powerful web of emotions, and is therefore a very delicate task.

Symbolic tools can provide subjects involved with metaphors for representing deep-seated feelings, allowing the expression of their deepest emotions and thoughts that would otherwise be difficult to translate into words. Treating psychologists and psychiatrists can use these tools to access themes of mourning, distancing and the new attachment, in symbolic terms, in a manner which can be less threatening for all the family members.

Through the presentation of three symbolic tools used with the adoptive children and their families, it will be possible to better understand how these tools offer significant insights for clinical work.

1. "The double Moon Drawing" is designed to elicit preconscious representation of family boundaries and to observe the extent to which this representation can be shared with other family members.
2. "House Floor-Plan Drawings" recognizes that space, like a mirror, represents self –projection, and offers a means for adopted adolescents to reveal their inner psychic beliefs.
3. Analysis of "spontaneous drawings" made by adopted children during therapeutic family guidance sessions over time demonstrates the evolution of their sense of attachment and belonging,

Each of these tools will be presented and discussed in the context of adoptive family support.

Discussant: Ferdinando Salamino

The Double Moon Drawing (DMD): a tool for clinical intervention with adoptive families, focused on family boundaries and belonging

Friday, 9th July - 12:08: (The Ice-House) - Oral

Ondina Greco (Catholic University)

INTRODUCTION:The complexity of the adoptive situations consists in the family task of giving a place and meaning to what was there before and is no longer there –adoptive child’s birth family and environment. So the perception of “what is family” is crucial for the well-being of family relationships.

AIMS : Analyze the different representations of family boundaries and belonging in adoptive families.

METHOD : Adoptive families attending a clinical support are asked to draw The Double Moon Drawing and protocols are commented together. Depending on clinical needs, this tool has been used in different versions: individual and parallel administration; in a sequential fashion: first to the parents as a couple, then individual for the child and finally to the triad, observing the extent to which individual representations can be shared with other family members.

RESULTS : The quality of family relationships was better where parents and child share the same family representation or where it was possible to comment together on the difference between each representations.

DISCUSSION : This tool can be used to guide therapeutic conversations related to the adoptive child’s sense of belonging, and to increase the ability of all family members to recognize the child’s double connection

IMPLICATION : Because of its graphic evidence and transparency, this tool has proved very effective in deepening the theme of the double connection of the adopted child with family members, and can be a valuable addition to therapeutic dialogue both in an individual setting and in conjoint settings.

Co-constructing narratives with adoptive families using the Double Moon Drawing: a clinical vignette

Friday, 9th July - 12:16: (The Ice-House) - Oral

Ferdinando Salamino (University of Northampton)

Meaning making, co-construction of shared narratives and co-creation of an emotional common ground are essential tasks in the adoption process.

Each member of the new family is bound to engage in such process, which at times can take the form of a real interactive, conversational negotiation among children and adults.

In my capacity of systemic family therapist, I have been often involved in this complex, yet fascinating process and my commitment has always been to find new ways and tools that can help families in successfully undertaking this task.

With its simple administration, its symbolic power and the possibility to generate meaningful interactions when administered conjointly, the Double Moon Drawing (Greco et al., 2020) has proven a very effective tool in this respect.

Through the clinical and methodological analysis of a clinical vignette, this contribution will outline the potential usefulness of the Double Moon Drawing in the light of complex meaning reconstructions, such as those entailed by the creation of a new family.

The vignette will present a constructionist approach to the use of the Double Moon Drawing that, without denying of over-writing the psychodynamic methodological roots of the test, aims at implementing an analysis of the conversational process involved in the conjoint administration, highlighting patterns of communication and message exchange within the family.

House Floor-Plan Drawings: Representations of family relationships and belonging

Friday, 9th July - 12:24: (The Ice-House) - Oral

Claire Payen (Hôpitaux de Saint Maurice, Paris Centre Est), Laurie Miller (Tufts University), Marie-Odile Perouse de Montclos (GHU St Anne, Paris), Emmanuelle Boe (Hôpital Sainte Anne, 6e secteur de psychiatrie infanto-juvénile, Paris), Armelle Cadoret (Centre hospitalier intercommunal de Créteil)

INTRODUCTION: Cognitive understanding of two-dimensional spatial representation and perspective usually emerges in early adolescence. Adolescents are able to draw floor-plans of their houses. This exercise has been used in psychiatric settings to better understand the psychic construction of children regarding their self-image and their place in the family. The House Floor-Plan Drawing has particular utility during adolescence, period of identity crisis, which may be specifically complicated among internationally adopted adolescents.

AIMS: Analyze the trends in psychic development among young adolescents, including international adoptees, using the House Floor-Plan Drawing exercise.

METHODS: Adolescents attending a general child psychiatry clinic were asked to draw the floor-plan of their houses, and label the rooms. The exercise was repeated at intervals with some of the adolescents; at times the adolescents were asked to draw the floor-plan of their “dream-home”. The drawings were used to guide therapy.

RESULTS: House Floor-Plan Drawings were produced by young adolescents as part of the therapeutic process. The drawings were used to guide therapeutic conversations related to the adolescent’s sense of belonging, individualization and separation. Over time, the details of these drawings evolved, in accordance with the psychic maturation and progress of the adolescents.

DISCUSSION: House Floor-Plan Drawings rely on the adolescent’s representation of space as a means of revealing inner psychic beliefs. This tool can be a valuable addition to conversations with internationally adopted adolescents in therapeutic settings. It reveals their function of inhabiting, between here and elsewhere, between them and their families.

Children's drawings reflect adjustment and attachment after international adoption: the impact of therapeutic family guidance

Friday, 9th July - 12:32: (The Ice-House) - Oral

Marie-Odile Perouse de Montclos (GHU St Anne, Paris), Marie-Paule Poggionovo (GHU Paris Psychiatrie & Neurosciences - Ste Anne), Natalia Toulet (GHU Paris Psychiatrie & Neurosciences - Ste Anne), Clement La Torre (GHU Paris Psychiatrie & Neurosciences - Ste Anne), Edwige Garcia (GHU Paris Psychiatrie & Neurosciences - Ste Anne)

Introduction: Children's drawings are widely used as a measure of fine motor and cognitive skills. They also provide insight into the child's self-image and view of family relationships. However, the use of children's drawings post-adoption in clinical settings has not been completely explored.

Objective: Demonstrate the role of children's drawings in the setting of therapeutic family guidance for attachment disorders post-adoption.

Methods: 650 children and their adoptive families were followed between 2009-2019 in a child psychiatry clinic specializing in post-adoption family guidance. Children, who had arrived from 35 countries, usually had developmental delays and/or attachment disorders. Families were seen every ~2-3 months by a pair of therapists, and child drawings were produced at most visits.

Results: The children's drawings clearly represent the child's affiliation style of, especially when this was problematic. The evolution of the drawings over time reflects the positive impact of family guidance work over several months or even years to support the construction of the parent-child bond.

Conclusions: The analysis of drawings produced by internationally adopted children during family guidance consultations provides useful information about the quality of affiliation of the child to his parents. The drawings, a non-verbal method of communication, indicate the child's view of the family dynamics and his/her adjustment over time. For the clinician, attention to the content and form of children's drawings provides a useful tool to facilitate therapeutic interventions.

The life size drawing (My Body) in the elaboration of trauma in adolescents and pre-adolescents

Friday, 9th July - 12:40: (The Ice-House) - Oral

Annalisa Di Luca (Advisor University Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, Milano)

In 2008 we started to suggest the patients to work on the drawing of their body, inspiring a modified version of the drawing of the Machover's human figure (1968). My Body involves the use of a full scale shape of the human body which the patients are asked to complete in the therapeutic setting; My Body has been applied on the treatment of 50 adolescents, aged between 11 and 17. Many of these minors were accompanied to foster care and adoption.

All of them carrying psychological diseases linked to traumatic experiences of sexual abuse or ill-treatment. The work focuses on the main elements used by the patients making My Body, elements which suggest the emergence of traumatic thoughts and emotions. A recurrence of symbols has been identified. Drawing can help the subjects' communication of their internal world, leading the self construction and the valuation of the body's image; moreover, this tool may promote resilience, encouraging the expression of feelings such as shame, threat, powerless, which decrease the coping abilities. The "real" dimension creates a strong visual impact; the drawn body describes what has happened and what happens now, and allows to "touch" and get in contact with "all" that has been experienced. My Body could be a valuable support in the elaboration of trauma and negative experiences; it facilitates the reintegration of dissociated parts, enhancing the ability to communicate and the confidence in self-emotions. My Body is useful for telling trauma to caregivers, an important step in building a trusted environment.

Symposia

Health issues in international adoption and impact on everyday life

Tuesday, 6th July - 15:30: (Negri da Oleggio Room) - Symposia

Patricia Germain (Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières), Frédéric Sorge (Hôpital Necker Enfants Malades), Angela Esquivel (Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières), Celine Lafay (service de pédiatrie, hôpital Kremlin Bicêtre)

The health problems in international adoption are very wide; it affects physical health, mental health, learning disabilities, etc. More than ever, health has a concrete effect on adopted people and families on a daily basis. The children are older, they are sicker.

The health situation is omnipresent, it has often been trigger for the great difficulties experienced by adopted person and his parents.

Discussant: Frederic Sorge

The impact of the health of children adopted in Haiti following the 2010 earthquake on parental experience

Tuesday, 6th July - 15:45: (Negri da Oleggio Room) - Oral

Angela Esquivel (Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières), Patricia Germain (Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières)

Introduction: After the 2010 earthquake in Port-au-Prince, the adoption process for several Quebec families was accelerated. Some parents who were not ready found themselves with their child in their arms. It should be noted that 127 children arrived in emergency situations in Quebec. Parents ended up with their children, whom they were waiting for months, if not years.

Aims:

- 1- Identify the challenges and strengths of parenting following the earthquake in Haiti.
- 2- Identify what can support the parenting experience in international adoptions following a significant event.

Method: Phenomenological research among 11 families who adopted in Haiti following the earthquake in January 2010. Semi-structured interviews with 10 mothers and 2 fathers.

Results: Most of the children have arrived with significant health issues that have had an impact until now. Their condition was a source of anxiety and added stress for the parents, some children were suffering from severe malnutrition requiring immediate hospitalization causing delays in development. In addition, the majority of these children have been followed from preschool age and are still being followed today by various health and social service professionals with learning disabilities.

Discussion: Accompanying adoptive parents is necessary before, during and after the adoption of the child.

Implication: the adoption practitioners need to be informed about the reality of adopted children for optimal support of adoptive families and realize how health issues can have an impact on the parenting experience.

Infections and vaccinal status in adopted children vs migrant children at their arrival in France. A retrospective comparative study in Ile-de-France from 2017 to 2020

Tuesday, 6th July - 16:00: (Negri da Oleggio Room) - Oral

Celine Lafay (service de pediatrie, hopital Kremlin Bicetre), Juliette Goutines (service de pediatrie, hôpital universitaire Jean Verdier 93 Bondy), Laurie Miller (Tufts University), Frédéric Sorge (Hôpital Necker Enfants Malades)

Context: Recently, the number of newly arriving internationally adopted children (IAC) has decreased in all receiving countries. Concurrently, the number of newly arriving migrant children (MC) has grown. These children share a complicated life course prior to arrival. Numerous studies have described the prevalence of morbidity in these 2 specific populations, but comparisons between them are lacking.

Objective: In the context of these global changes, we compared the prevalence of infectious diseases and vaccinal status at arrival in IAC and MC.

Methods: The demographic, anthropometric and infectious data of all the newly arrived IAC and MC, age <12 years, seen in a specialized pediatric clinic at Necker Hospital between 2017 and 2020, were retrospectively analyzed.

Results : Data for 252 IAC and 107 MC was available. An infection was found in 25% IAC and in only 11% of MC. 83% of IAC and 81% of MC had an associated comorbidities. As for the vaccinal status, there were no significant difference between IAC and MC for BCG, DTP, Measles, Mumps & Rubella. However, concerning VHB more MC were positive than IAC and conversely for Pneumo vaccine.

Discussion: Both IAC and MC represent groups of vulnerable children who have increased risk of exposure to infectious disease in their environments (countries of origin and transit, refugee camps, orphanage,...).

Implications: The spectrum of infections and vaccinal status at arrival is similar between IAC and MC. These conditions require early detection and careful follow-up. Families of MC require extra support in accessing services.

Broken-up in international adoption context: impact of health issues on family relationships

Tuesday, 6th July - 16:15: (Negri da Oleggio Room) - Oral

Patricia Germain (Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières)

«*Experiences Adoptions*» is a vast research program that aims to develop new knowledge about the health status of adoptees, care and services related to international adoption in Quebec. This is a major multi-phase project that focuses on adoptees, adopted fathers, adopted mothers and professionals. Since the early 2000s, the health status of adopted children has changed considerably, greatly influencing family dynamics. Children are older on arrival and have more health problems. In this context, we conducted a study with a subsample interested in a small group of parents who have adopted and experienced a breakup from adoption.

Aim: Describe situations of breakup in international adoption in order to identify risk factors, protection and consequences for individuals and families who have experienced this situation

Methods: We explored parental experience through qualitative interviews. 12 parents (8 mothers and 3 fathers). We carried out a thematic analysis (Paillé and Mucchielli, 2012)

Results: Themes emerging from interviews are related to: the importance of matching, challenges with mental health, impact of health issues on family relations, difficult relationships with services and school; , impact of the rupture on family and protective factors

Conclusions: Findings show the importance of parent preparation, matching and family support. It is essential to develop better services throughout the life trajectory of adoptive families.

Openness in adoption and adolescent psychosocial development

Tuesday, 6th July - 18:00: (The Ice-House) - Symposia

Leslie Leve (University of Oregon), Amy Whitesel (George Washington University), Harold Grotevant (University of Massachusetts Amherst), Elsbeth Neil (University of East Anglia)

Adolescence is characterized by the establishment of independence and separation from family. During this developmental period, adolescents often reflect upon their conception of family and identity, a process that can be complex for adoptees. While research has demonstrated the benefits of openness in adoption, adolescents may have more questions than answers about their origins, understanding of birth, adoptive and peer relationships. Adolescence is also a critical period of development during which key areas of the brain mature and develop. These changes in brain structure, function, and connectivity mark adolescence as a period of opportunity to form new relationships with adults and to explore one's developing identity.

This symposium focuses on openness as it relates to the development and psychosocial well-being of adolescents. Drawing upon the framework provided in the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine report on *The Promise of Adolescence*, we will present data from two longitudinal adoption studies, The Early Growth and Development Study and the Minnesota-Texas Adoption Research Project. Data will also be included from a sample of foster care adoptees from England and Wales who are now emerging adults. Structural openness (contact with birth family members) and adoptive communicative openness (honest and open conversations about adoption) will be examined as it relates to identity development and information seeking of adolescents. We will also explore how adoptee-adopter relationships change as adoptees develop into adults and become parents, including their contact with birth parents.

Discussant: Rachel Farr

The promise of adolescence: realizing opportunity for all youth

Tuesday, 6th July - 18:15: (The Ice-House) - Oral

Leslie Leve (University of Oregon)

Drawing from the recent report from the United States' National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine report on *The Promise of Adolescence*, this presentation will include an overview of the evidence base and recommendations regarding the opportunities that adolescence presents for those who have been in foster care and/or adopted. Adolescence is a critical period of development during which key areas of the brain mature and develop. These changes in brain structure, function, and connectivity mark adolescence as a period of opportunity to discover new vistas, to form relationships with peers and adults, and to explore one's developing identity. It is also a period of resilience that can ameliorate childhood setbacks and set the stage for a thriving trajectory over the life course.

Some of the major social and emotional milestones that occur during adolescence include identity development, development of new social relationships with peers and adults outside the family, attunement to one's social status, and a growing capacity for self-direction. At the same time as these social and emotional changes are occurring, adolescent brain development and brain connectivity are increasing, resulting in heightened curiosity and reward sensitivity, and increased cognitive abilities, logical thinking, and problem-solving skills. The interface of these aspects of neurobiological development and the social context are critical to helping adolescents realize their potential. Particularly salient for fostering positive outcomes for adopted and fostered adolescents are supportive familial, caregiver, and adult relationships with their adoptive and birth families, in the context of their identity development.

Openness in adolescence: exploring birth family contact, information seeking and communicative openness with adoptive parents

Tuesday, 6th July - 18:30: (The Ice-House) - Oral

Amy Whitesel (George Washington University), Leslie Leve (University of Oregon), Jenae Neiderhiser (Pennsylvania State University), Misaki Natsuaki (University of California, Riverside), David Reiss (Yale Child Study Center), Daniel Shaw (University of Pittsburgh), Jody Ganiban (George Washington University)

Adolescence is a time of independence and separation from families as teens strive to develop their identity and sense of self. It can also be a time when teens seek more information about their background and history. For adoptees, this process can be complicated and confusing. Uncertainty about their background may cause self-doubt at a time when talking with parents about concerns may feel uncomfortable. However, openness in adoption has been shown to positively impact the adjustment of adoptees. Adoption communicative openness (ACO) in families (honest and non-defensive conversation) has also been associated with more positive self-esteem. The current study explores openness as reported by adoptees, their communication about adoption with their parents, and the information they would like about their birth parents.

The Early Growth and Development Study (EGDS) has followed adopted children and their adoptive and birth parents for over 15 years. The children were adopted through private, domestic agencies throughout the U.S. Preliminary data with adoptees at age 15 (N=10) shows that 62% have contact with their birth mothers and 18% with birth fathers. Most of the contact is via text or phone calls. Teens reported high rates of ACO and are curious about their birth parents. Teens wanted to know their birth mother's cultural background, if their birth father knew about them, what the relationship between birth parents was like, and characteristics of their birth father (i.e. occupation, personality). Further analyses will focus on how these variables relate to adoptee self-worth, life satisfaction, and peer relationships.

What helps and hinders making sense of being adopted? Perspectives of adopted young people

Tuesday, 6th July - 18:45: (The Ice-House) - Oral

Elsbeth Neil (University of East Anglia)

Contact with birth family and communication within the adoptive family can help adopted young people construct their sense of identity, but other factors impacting adoptive identity development are under-explored. This paper uses the perspectives of adoptees to explore factors that help and hinder pathways to adoptive identity development.

The data are drawn from a longitudinal study of adolescents domestically adopted in England when under age four. In wave three of the study, 32 adoptees (age 14-22, mean age 18; 16 male, 16 female) took part in in-depth semi-structured interviews exploring their experiences and perceptions of adoption and birth family contact. Four patterns of identity formation were identified: cohesive, developing, unexplored, and fragmented identity (Neil, Beek and Ward 2015). Young people in the cohesive identity group had experienced the highest levels of structural and communicative openness in their adoption, but these factors alone were insufficient to explain the all individual variations in identity formation.

Further thematic analysis of adoptive young people's interviews revealed a range of other factors that young people felt had helped or hindered their sense of adoptive identity. These included individual factors (e.g. age, interest in family heritage, emotional sensitivity), the peer group (e.g. confiding relationships, bullying, meeting adopted peers, sibling interactions) and professional support (e.g. life story work, counselling, support with contact). The findings suggest taking an ecological view of adoptive identity development is necessary. Implications for practice will be discussed.

Structural and communicative openness in families of adolescents experiencing “unsettled” adoptive identity

Tuesday, 6th July - 19:00: (The Ice-House) - Oral

Harold Grotevant (University of Massachusetts Amherst), Albert Y.H. Lo (University of Massachusetts Amherst), Christina Hogan (University of Massachusetts)

Although adoption research attests to benefits of open communication about and contact with birth relatives, such experiences add complexity to family life. During adolescence, young people begin to think in more abstract ways, leading them to reconsider childhood ideas about family as they develop a sense of adoptive identity.

In prior research, cluster analysis revealed a subgroup of 30 adolescents from our larger sample of 145 whose detailed interviews reflected a high level of negative affect toward adoption and moderate to high adoptive identity processing (“unsettled” identity.) What are the patterns of structural and communicative openness experienced within this group, and what are the connections between openness and negativity?

Participants included 30 adolescents from the Minnesota Texas Adoption Research Project (mean age = 15.2 years; 60% female) who had been categorized in the “unsettled identity” group. All participants had been domestically adopted as infants into same-race families.

Interviews were coded to understand the nature of the negative affect and its connection to aspects of their adoption. This study examines the themes reflected in qualitative analysis of the interviews alongside data about structural openness (birth family contact) and communicative openness (communication climate in adoptive family). Among the 30 adolescents, over half were in families with fully disclosed open adoptions, and over half lived with adoptive parents who promoted the teen’s dual connection to adoptive and birth families. Higher maternal communicative openness was found in open rather than closed adoptions. Ongoing analyses focus on qualitative aspects of negative affect associated with contact.

Adoption communication and family wellbeing across the lifespan

Wednesday, 7th July - 12:00: (The Ice-House) - Symposia

Ana Berástegui (Universidad Pontificia Comillas)

The Adoption Communication Theory conceptualizes open communication about adoption as a continuum related to the exploration of adoptive issues between the different members of the adoption triangle. This symposium will address the intrafamily dimension of communication from different backgrounds, perspectives, stages and practices.

- 1) Understanding the climate, skills and core contents of adoption communication in the family, using parents, adoptees and professionals perspectives
- 2) Exploring the impact of this communication at different stages of life, such as childhood, adolescence and adulthood, on the adoptees and family well-being
- 3) Testing the impact of programs and tools designed to promote proper communication about the origins within the family.

Results and its implications in adoption practice will be discussed. The presentation included will be

1. Colaner et al. Communicating Support to Adopted Children: Emotion Coaching and Adoption Communication Openness
 2. Lorente et al. Promoting psychosocial adjustment in adolescence: Parental sensitivity towards their son's experiences of discrimination and communicative openness about origins and adoption
 3. Juárez et al. Contents and timing of adoption communication in a sample of intercountry adoptions from Ethiopia.
 4. Oliver & Berástegui. Adoption communication and differentiation of self in a sample of adults adopted in Spain.
 5. Corral et al. Building relationships in adoptive families: a post-adoption intervention for adoptive parents.
- Discussant: Susana Corral

Communicating support to adopted children: emotion coaching and adoption communication openness

Wednesday, 7th July - 12:08: (The Ice-House) - Oral

Colleen Colaner (University of Missouri), Amnee Elkhaid (University of Missouri), Ellen Jordan (University of Missouri), Shaye Morrison (University of Missouri)

Introduction: Emotion coaching (EC) – when parents help their child understand, appropriately express, and cope with intense feelings – relates to child wellbeing across social, academic, and physical domains. In addition to supporting emotions generally, adoptive parents can also offer adoption-specific support through adoption communication openness (ACO), which is adoption-specific communication that is open, direct, empathic, and sensitive in nature.

Aims: We hypothesize that parents' EC behaviors predict their use of ACO (H1). We also predict that EC and ACO will be positively associated with child mental health (H2) and emotional capacities (H3). Finally, we anticipate that ACO moderates the relationship between EC and child wellbeing (H4).

Method: 399 adoptive parents collected via snowball sampling and an online panel responded to a web-based survey. Participants completed self-report (Emotional Styles Questionnaire; Adoption Communication Openness Scale) and other-report (Emotion Regulation Checklist; Mental Health Checklist) scales.

Results: EC and ACO were not significantly related to one another. Regression analysis revealed that parent emotion coaching and ACO relate to increased child emotional regulation and decreased child negative emotion lability and mental health symptoms. ACO was a significant moderator, such that the EC was most strongly associated with emotional regulation with high levels of ACO.

Discussion/implications: Emotion coaching has potential to support adoptees' mental health, especially when paired with adoption-specific emotional support. Finding suggest that adoptive parents may be able to support their children through global and adoption-specific emotional scaffolding that allows for a range of feelings.

Promoting psychosocial adjustment in adolescence: Parental awareness about their adopted children experiences of discrimination and adoption communication openness

Wednesday, 7th July - 12:16: (The Ice-House) - Oral

*Judith Lorente (Universitat Ramon Llull), Inés Aramburu (Universitat Ramon Llull), Josep Mercadal (Universitat Ramon Llull),
Carlos Perez-Testor (Universitat Ramon Llull)*

The impact of discrimination on psychosocial adjustment of internationally adopted adolescents has been widely described: increased prevalence of depression, anxiety and psychological suffering, and lower self-esteem. Furthermore, in transracially adopted adolescents, perceived discrimination has been associated with a higher prevalence of substance abuse and behavior problems. This quantitative study will evaluate the predictive relationship between Parents' awareness on their children's experiences of discrimination, Adoption communication openness and Psychosocial adaptation. The sample consisted of 50 internationally adopted adolescents between 12 and 17 years old, and their respective families. Data was gathered through a structured interview, the Adoption Communication Scale and the Behavior Assessment System for Children. Results show that those parents who are aware to their children experiences of discrimination, as well as those who promote the Adoption communication openness are fostering the psychosocial adjustment on their children (less clinical disadjustment).

Contents and timing of adoption communication in a sample of intercountry adoptions from Ethiopia

Wednesday, 7th July - 12:24: (The Ice-House) - Oral

Almudena Juárez (Universidad Pontificia Comillas), Ana Berástegui (Universidad Pontificia Comillas), Santa Lázaro (Universidad Pontificia Comillas)

This research explores the content and timing of adoption communication inside the family as key dimensions of adoption communication openness in a sample of 315 intercountry adoptions from Ethiopia in Spain. The standardized annual follow-up report includes the Communication Scale on Origins and Differences (Berástegui, 2012) that assesses the degree of communication about different contents of adoption. It includes communication with the parents about the fact of the adoption, the country of origin, the pregnancy and birth process, the physical and racial differences, the motives for separation from their biological family and the child's communication with their siblings or peers and the relationship with other adopted people or people from their ethnic background. Two additional items explore the stigma felt or experienced by the child. The results indicate that there is adequate communication about adoption. The contents shared more frequently and earlier are those related to the adoption status itself and the country of origin. However, other aspects such as the motives for the separation of the biological family or the process of pregnancy and birth of the child are addressed later and less frequently. Communication about physical and racial differences occupies an intermediate place. The importance of evaluating not only the climate but also the contents of the communication regarding the most stigmatized issues of adoption and the implications for research and practice are discussed.

Adoption communication and differentiation of self in a sample of adults adopted in Spain

Wednesday, 7th July - 12:32: (The Ice-House) - Oral

Jesús Oliver Pece (Universidad de Málaga), Ana Berástegui (Universidad Pontificia Comillas)

In the present research, the associations of various sociodemographic variables of the adult adoptee and the adoptive family, of the adoptive process and the family dynamics (family functioning and communication about adoption) with the level of differentiation of self and of attachment of adults adopted in Spain are analyzed. The study involved 50 adopted adults, national and international, of both gender, between 18 and 51 years of age. To assess the variables, a socio-demographic questionnaire, the Family Adaptability and Cohesion Evaluation Scale-20Esp, the Adoption Communication Scale-Spanish, the Differentiation of Self Scale and the Experiences in Close Relationships-Spanish questionnaire were used. The results showed that *differentiation of self* of the adopted adults was explained in 27% by *family functioning* and in 9% by *communication about adoption with the mother*. It was also observed that *differentiation of self* was predicted in 58% by *avoidance*, *anxiety* and *family functioning*. In addition, *emotional reactivity* was explained in 24% by *family functioning*, while *emotional cutoff* was predicted in 42% by *age at placement* and *family functioning*. A moderation analysis did not find that *family functioning* moderated the relationship between *age at placement* and *emotional cutoff*. On the other hand, *anxiety* was explained in 13% by *cohesion*, and *avoidance* was predicted in 9% by *age at placement*. Likewise, *anxiety* was explained in 22% by *emotional reactivity*, and *avoidance* was predicted in 58% by *emotional cutoff*. Finally, *differentiation of self* shared 50% of the variance with *avoidance* and *anxiety*. The relevance of the results are discussed.

Building relationships in adoptive families: effectiveness of a post-adoption intervention for adoptive parents

Wednesday, 7th July - 12:40: (The Ice-House) - Oral

Susana Corral (University of Deusto), Susana Cormenzana (University of Deusto), Ana Berástegui (Universidad Pontificia Comillas), Noemí García Sanjuán (Universidad Pontificia Comillas), Carlos Perez-Testor (Universitat Ramon Llull), Inés Aramburu (Universitat Ramon Llull)

Facilitating an atmosphere of openness in communication is relevant to support a healthy development of identity, self-esteem (Brodzinsky, 2006), and family relationships (Sobol et al., 1994). The purpose of the study was to assess the effectiveness efficacy of a post-adoption intervention (Corral et al., 2016) designed to support parents in their openness to the adoption.

This study utilised a quasi-experimental design with a waiting list control group and a mixed-methods approach. Twenty-five parents in the intervention group and nine parents in the control group completed measures of openness in communication, of adoption-related stress, of family strengths and of adjustments of their children before and after the intervention.

We also interviewed five of the six facilitators and eight participating parents.

Findings suggest that there was a statistically significant difference in the pre- and post-intervention means in the children's emotional problems ($m_{pre} = 3.48$, $sd_{pre} = 2.31$; $m_{post} = 2.92$; $sd_{post} = 2.22$) and in the children's conduct problems ($m_{pre} = 3.76$, $sd_{pre} = 2.67$; $m_{post} = 3.08$, $sd_{post} = 2.47$). In addition, parents reported more family strengths, more adoption-related stress and more openness when communicating about the adoption and origins, although these findings were not statistically significant.

The qualitative findings support the idea that the intervention was instrumental in helping the parents change their outlook on their relationship with their children, the adoption, and their children's biological family.

The findings point out the relevance of this type of post-adoption interventions and suggest some promising results regarding their effectiveness.

How are they doing now? Longitudinal studies of resilience, outcomes, adoption openness and satisfaction in adopted adolescents/young adults

Wednesday, 7th July - 15:30: (Negri da Oleggio Room) - Symposia

Jill Waterman (UCLA Department of Psychology and UCLA TIES for Families)

This symposium assesses adoption dynamics longitudinally, examining adolescent/young adult outcomes, adoption openness, and perceptions of adoptive experience for families with extensive childhood data.

The first presentation examines adoption dynamics in 82 adolescents/young adults adopted from foster care (mean age: 4.3 years) and their parents through an online follow-up study. Both youth and parents were very positive about the adoption experience, with parent satisfaction unrelated to pre-placement risk, most mental health experiences and birth parent contact. Youth reported less adoption openness than their parents.

The second study, from the above dataset, used bootstrapping mediation to reveal a significant indirect effect of cumulative risk on substance use through childhood internalizing but not externalizing problems. Low substance use rates were reported overall, underscoring the positive impact of adoption.

Third, using four post-adoption contact trajectories between birth and adoptive families from the Minnesota-Texas Adoption Research Project, results showed that young-adult members (N=114) in all trajectory groups expressed moderate curiosity about birth parents; highest levels were for the “no contact” group for birth mothers, and the “limited contact” group for birth fathers. All groups expressed low levels of negativity and high levels of positive adoption affect.

Finally, in-depth qualitative interviews with 20 young adults adopted from foster care demonstrated that every interviewee expressed deep gratitude for their adoption. Over half reported that adoption positively shaped their personality. However, some adoptees reported costs: trauma, loss of identity, and feeling indebted to adoptive parents.

Clinical implications and future research directions will be discussed.

Discussant: Amy Conley Wright

Adoption satisfaction for youth adopted from foster care and their parents in late adolescence/early adulthood: A Follow-up Study

Wednesday, 7th July - 15:45: (Negri da Oleggio Room) - Oral

*Jill Waterman (UCLA Department of Psychology and UCLA TIES for Families), Vanessa Perez (UCLA TIES for Families),
Matthew Ruderman (UCLA TIES for Families)*

Little longitudinal data on long-term adoption satisfaction is available for youth and families adopting from foster care. The current study examines adoption satisfaction and family dynamics of youth adopted from foster care and their adoptive parents through an online follow-up survey of 53 adoptive parents and 35 adolescent/young adult adoptees for whom we had extensive data collected yearly for 5 years after adoptive placement during childhood. Most youth and parents expressed very positive feelings about the adoption. In examining parental adoption impact and whether parents would adopt their child again, the strongest predictors involved relationship characteristics: family closeness, caring, and relationship satisfaction. Parental adoption impact was not related to pre-placement risk factors, mental health variables, youth's birth parent contact with birth parents, or transracial adoption. Youth's positive feelings about the adoption were associated with their feelings of closeness and enjoyment of their family, and were unrelated to pre-placement risk factors. There was general agreement between youth and parents about relationship dynamics such as having fun together and amount of conflict. However, youth reported more beliefs that parents were disappointed in them than parents did. Comparing to ADDHealth data, our late adolescents/young adults did not differ from those in the large ADDHealth study in family satisfaction, but our parents expressed significantly less positive feelings about their adopted youth than parents in the larger ADDHealth study and the adopted subsample. Clinical implications, including greater focus on treatment/support for parents following placement, and utilizing a trauma-focused lens and adoption-specific treatment techniques are discussed.

Cumulative risk, childhood symptoms, and adolescent substance use in children adopted through foster care

Wednesday, 7th July - 16:00: (Negri da Oleggio Room) - Oral

Audra Langley (UCLA Semel Institute for Neuroscience and Human Behavior), Austin Blake (Arizona State University), Jill Waterman (UCLA)

Early adversity experienced by children who enter foster care may place them at increased risk for substance use and/or abuse in adolescence and young adulthood. While research demonstrates that life stressors are implicated in neurobiological changes that may lead to ongoing internalizing symptoms, few studies have looked at externalizing behavior as a mediator between early adversity and later substance use. The current study examines the mediating role of child internalizing and externalizing symptoms on the relationship between cumulative pre-adoptive risk (i.e., maltreatment, age at placement, placement instability, ever having lived with birth parent) and self-reported substance use in adolescence/young-adulthood. Participants included 82 youth who had been adopted through foster care. Parents ratings of internalizing and externalizing problems across 5 years in childhood (mean age 4 years-3 months at study entry) were tested as simultaneous mediators of cumulative risk and level of substance use 11–15 years later (mean age 19 years-2 months). Notably, low rates of substance use were reported overall which underscores the positive impact of adoptive placement on potentially mitigating risk for substance abuse among foster youth. Bootstrapping mediation procedures, controlling for age, prenatal substance exposure, adolescent/young adult mental health symptomatology, and youth participation in follow-up, revealed a significant indirect effect of cumulative risk on substance use through childhood internalizing problems, but not externalizing problems. Results related to mental health and substance use will be discussed, including clinical implications of surmounting early risk for children in the child welfare system and targeting childhood emotion dysregulation among previously high-risk children.

Curiosity, information seeking r young adult adoptees across longitudinal trajectories of birth family contact

Wednesday, 7th July - 16:15: (Negri da Oleggio Room) - Oral

Gretchen Miller Wrobel (Bethel University), Albert Y.H. Lo (University of Massachusetts Amherst), Kelsey Dongwei Wang (University of Massachusetts Amherst), Harold D. Grotevant (University of Massachusetts Amherst)

Post-adoption contact experience varies greatly among adoption kinship networks and changes over time. Using data from the Minnesota-Texas Adoption Research Project (MTARP), four distinct trajectories of postadoption contact between members of birth and adoptive families have been identified. Three aspects of birth family - adoptive family relationships measured across time (middle childhood, adolescence, emerging adulthood, young adulthood) were used to create the groups: frequency of contact between the adopted person and the birth mother, satisfaction of the adopted person with openness arrangements, and the number of adoptive and birth family member involved in contact. The trajectories groups include: no contact, stopped contact, limited contact, and extended contact. The purpose of the current project is to provide a description, at young adulthood (N=114), of curiosity and information seeking about birth mothers and birth fathers, positive affect about adoption, and negative experience with adoption. Members of all four trajectory groups expressed moderate levels of curiosity about birth mothers and birth fathers. The highest levels of curiosity were expressed by the no contact group for the birth mother and the limited contact group for the birth father. Despite a moderate level of curiosity about birth mothers and birth fathers, members of all trajectory groups were not likely to seek out new information about their adoptions at this time. Across all four trajectory groups, generally low levels of negative experience and high levels of positive affect about adoption were expressed. Implications for understanding the experience of adopted young adults will be discussed

Narrative constructions of adoption among young-adult adoptees: The role of gratitude

Wednesday, 7th July - 16:30: (Negri da Oleggio Room) - Oral

Austin Blake (Arizona State University), Jose Guzman (University of California, Los Angeles)

Introduction: Given the dearth of research examining the experiences of young adults adopted from foster care as children, qualitative data is needed to provide a baseline of theory surrounding this unique population.

Aims: The present study aimed to characterize the ways in which young-adult adoptees retrospectively described their adoption experiences.

Method: Twenty young-adult adoptees completed semi-structured interviews as part of a larger longitudinal study on outcomes of children adopted from foster care. Data analysis was guided by the principles of grounded theory. Recurring themes were identified through the use of constant comparison, using NVIVO 12 software.

Results: Across all interviews, adoptees voiced gratitude for adoption. Over half reported that the adoption experience profoundly and positively shaped their personality characteristics (e.g., empathy, tolerance, resilience), and many expressed that it afforded them an abundance of privilege and opportunity. A primary mechanism by which adoptees gained gratitude for adoption was through the use of counterfactual thinking (thinking about how . Adoption-related narratives often included language of being “chosen” or “saved,” and “blessed.” Despite largely positive perceptions of the adoption experience, some adoptees reported costs, such as trauma and loss of identity.

Discussion: By and large, young-adult adoptees characterize their adoption experiences positively, particularly due to the gratitude they feel for privilege and personal growth. Nevertheless, these gains come with significant costs.

Implications: Mental health practitioners working with adoptees should aid them in celebrating resilience and recognize the costs that accompany resilient functioning. Further implications will be discussed.

Becoming and being a parent: experiences of adult adoptees

Wednesday, 7th July - 18:00: (The Ice-House) - Symposia

Julia Rimmer (University of East Anglia)

Adoption is a lifelong phenomenon, and adoptive identity development a dynamic and complex process. Outside of clinical studies, little is known about the lives of adult adoptees and even less so about how adults adopted as children, experience parenthood and its effect on adoptive identity and wellbeing.

This symposium brings together four papers from original research conducted with adult adoptees. Studies adopt a variety of approaches and methods, undertaken in different contexts. The opening two papers report from longitudinal studies. Firstly, Cashen *et al* compare measures from parent and nonparent adoptees adopted domestically as infants in the US. They explore how parenting shapes the experience of emerging adulthood, and how this might intersect with measures of adoptive identity. Next, Edwards *et al*, present findings from interviews with adoptee parents and adopters from adoptions in England following deprivation in Romanian childcare institutions in the 1980s. Their focus is on the effect of parenthood on the mental health, functioning and self-concepts of the adoptees. Rimmer *et al* share initial findings from a narrative study with adoptees (from child welfare) who are now parents, to explore the stories these adoptee parents tell about their lives. Lastly, Kim and Lindley's paper presents thematic findings on the socialization practices of a subset of Korean adoptees who have themselves gone on to become adoptive parents.

Together, we address issues such as: how parenting/parenthood effects adoptees' development as emerging adults, their mental health, identity, and relationships with children, birth and adoptive families.

Discussant: Elsbeth Neil

Adoptees as parents: Family relationships, stress, and the experience of young adulthood

Wednesday, 7th July - 18:10: (The Ice-House) - Oral

Krystal Cashen (University of Massachusetts Amherst), Harold Grotevant (University of Massachusetts Amherst), Rachel Farr (University of Kentucky)

This paper expands previous work examining the experience of parenting as an adopted person during emerging adulthood ($N = 30$ parents; $M_{age} = 25.0$ years; Grotevant, Altamari, & Mbengue, 2018) by extending into young adulthood ($M_{age} = 31.4$ years) among adoptees ($N = 114$) placed as infants through private domestic (US) adoption into same-race families. By young adulthood, 46 of the adoptees were parenting 89 children. We expand upon previous work in two ways:

First, we assess whether specific differences between parents and nonparents identified in emerging adulthood persist into young adulthood. The previous paper described that adoptees who were parents reported more stressful life events and experiences of emerging adulthood on the Inventory of Dimensions of Emerging Adulthood (IDEA) that were more representative of Arnett's (2000) conceptualization. While we anticipate that parents will continue to report more stressful life events than nonparents, differences in IDEA scores may not persist. We also expect that the parents would continue to enjoy significant emotional and material support from their adoptive parents (now grandparents), as reported during emerging adulthood.

Second, we will explore potential differences among parents and nonparents on measures of adoptive identity, positive affect about adoption, preoccupation with adoption, and negative experience with adoption in order to understand how parenting might intersect with experiences of and feelings about being adopted.

Implications for adoption professionals and families will be discussed in light of varying pathways to adoptive parenthood (e.g. private adoption, international adoption, adoption from care), developmental stages, and family life cycles.

The effect of parenthood on the young adults in the English and Romanian Adoptee (ERA) study

Wednesday, 7th July - 18:20: (The Ice-House) - Oral

Chris Edwards (Kings College London), Mark Kennedy (King's College London), Barbara Maughan (King's College London), Jana Kreppner (University of Southampton), Hanna Kovshoff (University of Southampton), Edmund Sonuga-Barke (King's College London), The ERA Team (King's College London, University of Southampton)

Background

The English and Romanian Adoptee study (ERA) is a longitudinal investigation of the experiences, needs and achievements of individuals who endured severe deprivation in Romanian childcare institutions in the late 1980s. Many in the cohort have continued to experience complex emotional, cognitive or functional difficulties during their transition to adulthood (Kennedy et al. 2016) and relationship problems (Sonuga-Barke et al., in preparation). The present study is an investigation of the effect of parenthood on the adoptees, their parenting needs and the nature of their parenting.

Method

Thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006) was conducted using transcripts of the 15 interviews with adoptees from the ERA cohort, who were adopted from Romania and who had become parents (14 females, 1 male, age range; 22-25 years) and transcripts of the 15 interviews with their parents.

Results

The thematic analysis revealed that parenthood was a catalyst for a range of positive emotional and social outcomes for the adoptees, but a minority of adoptees had complex needs with parenting. The parents and partners of the adoptees were providing a great deal of the support for their grandchildren. Themes, sub-themes and exemplars will be presented and discussed.

Conclusions

Parenthood brought many benefits for the adoptees, but a minority of parents experienced quite pronounced difficulties with parenting which were characterised by not attenuating to risk in various forms and poor organisation.

Funding for this aspect of the ERA study was provided by the Waterloo Foundation.

Adoptees as parents: a narrative identity approach

Wednesday, 7th July - 18:30: (The Ice-House) - Oral

Julia Rimmer (University of East Anglia), Elsbeth Neil (University of East Anglia), Irina Sirbu (University of Ea)

Becoming a parent may bring particular joys and challenges for adoptees, prompting revisiting of identity, belonging and loss. In this paper, we share emerging findings from a broader, two-generational study into the later lives of adoptive families in England and Wales. We here focus upon our narrative analysis of 'life story interviews' (McAdams, 1995), conducted with 40 adoptee parents (20 mums and 20 dads) who were adopted in the last 30 years, predominantly from child welfare backgrounds.

Adoptive identity development is a dynamic and complex process, and being able to tell a life story that connects our past, present and future with a sense of unity, coherence, and purpose is important for our psychological well-being. Making sense of who we are and how we relate to others however, can be complicated if there are gaps or inconsistencies in our life story or if our memories are faded and painful. In this paper, we explore the tone and content of these narratives, presenting a typology of the range of stories our participants tell about being an adoptee parent. We explore the extent and depth to which participants explore their identities and reflect on experiences in a meaningful, coherent way, and how individual stories are shaped by wider 'master narratives' around adoption and parenting. We consider our findings in terms therapeutic interventions for adoptive families (such as life story work) and what support might be made available to adoptive families to help them prepare for the arrival of the next generation.

Intervention research with adoptive families: Lessons from interventions tested in multiple sites across the U.S.

Wednesday, 7th July - 18:00: (Negri da Oleggio Room) - Symposia

Nancy Rolock (Case Western Reserve University)

The first paper reports on result from two surveys, in different US states, with adoptive parents, focusing on the strengths and needs of adoptive families:

Survey Results: Wellbeing of Families who Adopted Children from Foster Care in the U.S. Authors: Kevin White, Laura Marra, Monica Faulkner

The second paper will present findings from an intervention that addresses trauma, grief and loss for children to help facilitate their move from foster care to adoption:

Pathways to Permanency 2: Addressing trauma, grief and loss to facilitate adoption of children in care. Authors: Laura Marra, Monica Faulkner, Rowena Fong

The third paper reports on the results of an experimental design testing an intervention targeted at adoptive parents of youth in their teen or pre-teen years:

Building the evidence of what works with at-risk adoptive families: A study of an adaptation of Tuning in to Teens (TINT). Authors: Kerrie Ocasio, Nancy Rolock

The fourth paper will focus on the results of an intervention that was developed from scratch, designed in cooperation with adoptive parents. Findings from interviews with participants will be reported.

Adoption and Guardianship Enhanced Support (AGES): Providing a triage of support for adoptive parents. Authors: Joan Blakey, Rowena Fong

The symposium will conclude with results across several sites that focuses on a set of wellbeing measures that can be used to identify adoptive families who may be at-risk for compromised wellbeing:

Tools to identify families who may be struggling after adoption. Authors: Nancy Rolock, Kevin White, Young Ik Cho

Discussant: Rowena Fong

Survey results: Wellbeing of families who adopted children from foster care in the U.S.

Wednesday, 7th July - 18:08: (Negri da Oleggio Room) - Oral

Kevin White (East Carolina University), Laura Marra (Texas Institute of Child and Family Well-Being), Monica Faulkner (Texas Institute of Child and Family Well-Being)

Introduction: The percentage of youth who exit foster care to adoption in the U.S. has increased from approximately 15% in 1998 to 24% in 2017. However, up to 5-20% of children experience placement instability after adoption and more show adjustment difficulties such as child behavior problems. Thus, prevention interventions are needed to support adoptive families in order to improve familial stability and wellbeing.

Aims: Two primary aims: (1) Describe data from two districts that implemented universal prevention outreach surveys to all adoptive families. (2) Examine factors related to long-term caregiver commitment to adoptions.

Method: Descriptive statistics were analyzed, and three stepwise regression models estimated with survey data ($N = 937$) to examine relationships between child and caregiver demographic and wellbeing factors and caregiver commitment. The psychometric properties of a short-scale measure of caregiver commitment were explored through factor analysis.

Results: Findings showed that a younger child age, fewer child behavior challenges, and more family nurturing and attachment were associated with higher caregiver commitment. Also, the caregiver commitment short-scale ($\alpha = .76$), showed promise as an indicator of post-adoption adjustment. Multivariate models explained a small to moderate amount of variance in caregiver commitment, with R^2 ranging .10 to .58.

Discussion and Implications: This study provides information about how prevention outreach with adoptive families can identify families who may be at highest risk for adjustment difficulties. Results provide information to those who aim to provide prevention services for adoptive families, and researchers interested in developing standardized measures of wellbeing for adoptive families.

Pathways to Permanency 2: Addressing trauma, grief and loss to facilitate adoption of children in care

Wednesday, 7th July - 18:16: (Negri da Oleggio Room) - Oral

Laura Marra (Texas Institute for Child and Family Wellbeing), Monica Faulkner (Texas Institute for Child and Family Wellbeing), Rowena Fong (The University of Texas at Austin)

Background/Purpose: The study explored root causes of delayed permanency for foster youth whose parental rights had been terminated, hypothesizing that if caregivers had knowledge about trauma, grief, and loss, they would be more likely commit to be a permanent caregiver for the foster youth. Pathways to Permanency 2 intervention, a seven session (21-hour intervention) was tested.

Methods: Pathways 2 is a 7-week series whose core components are: use of experienced facilitators; experiential delivery of material; participant engagement and participation; and opportunities to practice and apply techniques. Fidelity tools were: facilitator questionnaire, fidelity assessment log, participant evaluations, attendance log, and an observation completed by the evaluation team.

Results: Seventeen facilitators completed 23 series (161 sessions) with 178 participants. Facilitators reported that 93% of content was taught as suggested. Changes most often related to time management and technology issues. Participants rated meeting objectives, relevance, interesting delivery, usefulness of material, quality of audio visual products, time for questions, and encouragement of participation. The average score for all participants was between four (agree) and five (strongly agree) for all criteria in all sessions.

Conclusions/Implications: Fidelity to the model was strong. Because the curriculum requires co-facilitation, facilitators practiced together, reviewed practice sheets for guidance around time management, prioritized and taught material through the activities, identified key messages in each section, and worked with one another to identify how to condense material, as needed.

Building the evidence of what works with at-risk adoptive families: A study of an adaptation of Tuning in to Teens (TINT)

Wednesday, 7th July - 18:24: (Negri da Oleggio Room) - Oral

Kerrie Ocasio (West Chester University of Pennsylvania), Nancy Rolock (Case Western Reserve University), Sophie Havinghurst (University of Melbourne)

Background/Purpose: Tuning in to Teens (TINT) is a six-week parent education program designed to proactively prepare parents to support their teens in managing the complex developmental task of adolescence by developing the youth's emotional intelligence through a technique known as emotion coaching. The current study sought to replicate prior findings with an adoption population identified as at-risk for a return to state care.

Methods: A post randomized consent trial was used, with 1,232 families in the target population (784 intervention, 448 comparison). The program successfully contacted 452 (58%) of intervention cases, and 94 (12%) participated. Survey were sent to all families to assess child behavioral issues; caregiver commitment, parent-child relationships, and family interactions.

Results: Intent-to-treat and treatment-on-the-treated analyses found no differences between the intervention and control groups on the primary outcomes measures. However, a linear mixed effects models found a significant effect for TINT participants (i.e., the interaction of the TINT with time; $z=-1.74$, $p=.041$). Intervention participants were more likely to be struggling with their child's behavior at baseline, and had an additional decrease over time compared to the control group.

Conclusions/Implications: The intervention was effective at reducing the degree to which parents reported challenging child behaviors over time. This provides important results on how families with high-risk characteristics are faring and insight into how families responded to opportunities for support. This study has implications for the development of evidence-based services for adoptive families, as well as considerations for studies using post-randomized consent study designs with at-risk populations.

Adoption and Guardianship Enhanced Support (AGES): Providing a triage of support for adoptive parents

Wednesday, 7th July - 18:32: (Negri da Oleggio Room) - Oral

Joan Blakey (Tulane University), Rowena Fong (University of Texas at Austin)

Background/Purpose: Adoptive parents reported feeling ill-equipped and lacking the support necessary to meet the needs of their children. Building on portions of two existing interventions, Adoption and Guardianship Enhanced Support (AGES) was developed and tested to address this gap in support. Families who received AGES services reported feeling less stressed, had increased capacity for family stability and improved wellbeing.

Methods: Using grounded theory, interviews were conducted with 32 AGES participants. Responses were recorded, transcribed, and coded using open coding, axial coding (creating subcategories), and selective coding (refining theory). Themes identified through coding were used to create a theory that reflected the participants' experiences.

Results: Adoptive parents identified three types of support that equipped them to meet their children's needs. **Support Within** helped family members develop a shared vision and goals allowing them to move forward in the same direction. **Support Between** included sharing information and improving relationships between families and service providers. **Support Outside** involved caseworkers finding resources that adoptive parents and guardians did not know existed, helping them gain access to those resources, and advocating on their behalf.

Conclusion/Implications: AGES participants reported significant relief as a result of the three types of support provided, which increased their skills and capacity to meet their children's behavior and educational needs. More specifically, the AGES program provided them with critical information and resources that enabled them to better parent their children, improved their familial and outside provider relationships, and transformed adoptive and guardianship placements that were at risk of discontinuity.

Tools to identify families who may be struggling after adoption

Wednesday, 7th July - 18:40: (Negri da Oleggio Room) - Oral

Nancy Rolock (Case Western Reserve University), Kevin White (East Carolina University), Young Cho (University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee)

Background/Purpose: Targeted prevention efforts with adoptive families require effective tools to identify at-risk groups. Early identification is critical; the hardship associated with foster care reentry is immense. Three tools were explored: Belonging and Emotional Security Tool, Behavioral Problem Index, and Caregiver Strain. Parents were also asked the likelihood that they would adopt their child again, knowing what they know now, a question used in prior studies that was found to be associated with risk of foster care reentry.

Methods: Adoptive parents in four U.S. states (combined into two groups) were surveyed: Group 1 (n=937) – all adoptive parents in the area; Group 2 (n=1,813) – adoptive parents of teens. Extant research has found that children are more likely to reenter foster care during their teen years; our hypothesis was that Group 2 would report poorer outcomes than Group 1. Bivariate differences between Groups 1 and 2 were examined along with the moderating impact of a dichotomous variable indicating respondent reported either: a) hesitancy to adopt again or b) no hesitancy to adopt again.

Results: Bivariate examination found more behavioral issues ($p<.0001$), higher levels of strain ($p<.0001$), a greater sense of belonging ($p=.0139$) in Group 2 compared to Group 1. Examining the question of adopting again, parents who expressed hesitancy fared worse on all outcomes compared to parents who did not express hesitancy to adopt again ($p<.0001$).

Conclusion/Implications: The two groups varied in interesting and unexpected ways, suggesting an opportunity for nuanced wellbeing assessment for adoptive families using adapted tools.

Becoming adults: adoptees' identity and search of origins

Thursday, 8th July - 12:00: (The Ice-House) - Symposia

Laura Ferrari (Catholic University), Marta Casonato (Istituto Universitario Salesiano Torino Rebaudengo - IUSTO)

This symposium will offer different perspectives on the topic of search of origins among adult adoptees, who are less involved in the adoption research field. One of the challenges adoptees have to face at this stage of life is that of identity definition, which might be influenced by the search of origins. This international symposium brings together four various countries and research approaches, focusing on the unique experience of the adoptee. Specifically, Wendy Tieman will give a comprehensive overview of the literature about the adoptees' search for origins and its influence on development. The contribution by Gera ter Meulen and Femmie Juffer presents a study involving adult Dutch intercountry adoptees. Using a survey this research examines their search and reunion experiences. The paper of Laura Malacrida and colleagues focused on the results of a participatory research on the process of reconstruction of pre-adoptive history by Italian adult adoptees, showing the complexity of the origins' research process. The presentation by Laura Ferrari and colleagues examine how adoptees define themselves and their adoptive origin during adulthood, investigating their identity and the experience of search in terms of motivations and process. This symposium will generate new important knowledge concerning the topic of adult adoptees and their perceived need in term of identity formation. It also highlights the importance of social support and will give practical implication for supporting both adoptive families and professionals.

Discussant: Yolanda Sánchez-Sandoval

Searching for birth parents: a literature review

Thursday, 8th July - 12:10: (The Ice-House) - Oral

Wendy Tieman (Erasmus University Rotterdam - Erasmus School of Social and Behavioral Sciences - Department of Psychology, Education & Child Studies - Clinical Child & Family Studies)

Meta-analytic research has given us a complete overview on the developmental risks of adoptees and their recovery following early adversity. The role of the birth family in adoption, and especially in international adoption, has long been ignored in adoption research. At first, there was little attention to what it feels like to grow up without birth parents. Since 2000, adoption research begun to emphasize the processes and factors within the adoptees and the adoptive families. To date no overview is available yet. Therefore, the overall aim of this study is to give a comprehensive overview of adoptees' search for origins and its influence on adoptees' development. This review of the literature started by addressing the following questions: How many adoptees are searching or willing to search? What are their motives? Who is searching and who is not? What is the outcome of the searching process? Results showed that search numbers vary largely, gender differences in searching are inconsistent, stability of search interest in time differs and different factors are associated with searching. It was concluded, however, that there are many important themes in research on adoptees' search for origins that should be included as well. A model is proposed in which adoption identity, adoption reflection, feelings and emotions, search methods, facilitators and barriers and the relationship and communication with adoptive parents are key elements.

Put together the pieces of own identity puzzle. A participatory research on the challenge of Italian adoptees in searching for their origins

Thursday, 8th July - 12:20: (The Ice-House) - Oral

Laura Malacrida (CTA - Centro di Terapia dell'Adolescenza - Relational Social Work research group, Catholic University of Milan), Francesco Valdilonga (CTA - Centro di Terapia dell'Adolescenza, IRIS Psychotherapy School), Gloriana Rangone (CTA - Centro di Terapia dell'Adolescenza, IRIS Psychotherapy School)

This paper shows the results of a participatory research on the process of reconstruction of pre-adoptive history by Italian adult adoptees.

For this research project we used the participatory research model. Involving four experts by experience in a research group (*steering group*) and shared with them the interest in the research topic, we worked in tandem on all the research project. Integrating the technical and professional skills of the researcher and experiential skills of the co-researchers, we defined the research question and we decided to use semi-structured interviews to collect data. Questions of the interviews were constructed using the suggestions of the co-researchers regarding the terminology and what kind of information we could collect.

Text analysis of the transcripts of the 16 interviews carried out, was also made in the steering group, finding the most important emerged aspect, collecting and reworking them. This work is made according to the literature review and to the personal experience of co-researchers.

The interviews analysis showed us the complexity of the origins research process: what is the meaning of origins research for adoptees; how Italian adoptees try to find the identity of their birth family; by whom were searchers supported during the research process; The searchers experiences with the Juvenile Court and with social worker involved in their research and some links between the search of origins and the relationship with adoptive family and with friends. These results give some important suggestions in how adopted people could be supported in their experience of research.

Who am I? Identity and search of origins in the adoptees' point of view

Thursday, 8th July - 12:30: (The Ice-House) - Oral

Laura Ferrari (Family Studies and Research University Centre, Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore), Marta Casonato (Istituto Universitario Salesiano Torino Rebaudengo (IUSTO)), Ondina Greco (Family Studies and Research University Centre, Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore), Sonia Ranieri (Family Studies and Research University Centre, Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore), Elena Canzi (Family Studies and Research University Centre, Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore), Francesca Danioni (Family Studies and Research University Centre, Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore), Rosa Rosnati (Family Studies and Research University Centre, Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore)

While psychological outcomes of adopted children have received a great deal of attention, relatively few studies have examined adoptees' interest on their adoptive history as well as adoptees' experience in search for birth family, especially in Italy. When adoptees grow older, at various points in life and especially during adolescence, emerging adulthood, and the transition to parenthood, they can express a desire to obtain more information regarding their adoptive history and birth families, as well as health and medical histories of their birth relatives. Some adoptees display no desire to seek out such information, whereas others take actions to gather information about their adoptive origin and birth families. Each individual may search for different aspects in different ways. The present study examined some under investigated issues: the adoption-related interest and information seeking behavior, the factors associated with searching for birth families, and the outcomes of searching. Specifically, we considered how adoptees with different search experiences might differ in terms of their identity development, quality of family relationships, and psychological well-being. A research was carried out in Italy: an on-line questionnaire was administered to 100 domestically and internationally adopted emerging adults and adults exploring the topic of identity and the experience of search of origins in terms of process and outcomes. Data analysis is still in progress and results will be discussed in relation to the implication for the post-adoption support.

Adoptees searching for roots

Thursday, 8th July - 12:40: (The Ice-House) - Oral

Gera ter Meulen (KnowledgeBureau ter Meulen), Femmie Juffer (Leiden University)

In 2016 1155 adult Dutch intercountry adoptees answered a questionnaire on their feelings on adoption and relinquishment and on their roots searching results. The adoptees were reached by means of adoptive agencies approaching adoptive parents with adult adopted children, by means of adoptee organizations sending the link to their members and through social media.

The adoptees originated from 32 countries, their age ranging from 18 to 55 years. Sixty four percent of the adoptees had visited their country of origin, mostly for holidays. Slightly more than half of the group who had not, declared they would like to go, often just for holidays. From the 321 adoptees who had searched for information on relinquishment and adoption about 70% found no information different from what they knew before. Thirty percent did, but incorrectness of files differed per country and the period of time in which they had been adopted. Hardly any incorrect files were found for adoptees born after 1991. About 20% had found their family of origin and almost one quarter had frequent contact with their original parents, and even more with other family members. However, contact was not always easy, due to cultural or language barriers, or because the adoptee or family of origin felt that contact was very difficult. Over 10% of the adoptees had stopped the contact. The relation between the experiences of the adoptees and their feelings about relinquishment and adoption is studied and the relevance for post-roots services is discussed.

Social competence, social integration and relational competence in adopted children, teens and young adults

Thursday, 8th July - 14:30: (The Ice-House) - Symposia

Maria Barbosa-Ducharne (Faculty of Psychology and Education Sciences, University of Porto)

Social skills and social integration have not been much studied in adoption research. Moreover, most existing research refers to adopted children in the context of peer relationships. The papers in this symposium contribute to this important developmental domain and expand both the ages and the contents usually covered in extant research. Children, adolescents and young adults are represented in the reported studies. Peer relationships, but interactions in the social context and in close relationships are also considered. Intra-individual as well as interpersonal and cultural aspects are analyzed. The papers also reflect the diversity of methods of study, from structured scales, to surveys and questionnaires. Finally, four different countries (France, Portugal, Spain and the United States) are represented. Overall, the reported results show the relevance of the domain in adoption research and highlight the need to consider social challenges in each developmental stage. A comprehensive understanding of the experience of adoption requires considering the relational component inherent to peer relationships in childhood, social interactions in adolescence and close relationships in early adulthood, as well as their contribution to psychological and social adjustment. The four papers in this symposium advance our knowledge on these important subjective and relational matters in adoptees.

Discussant: Jesùs Palacios

Social development of adoptees during adolescence: A multi-level model of social skills self-reported by teens and perceived by parents and teachers

Thursday, 8th July - 14:45: (The Ice-House) - Oral

Isabel Caceres (University of Seville), Joana Soares (Faculty of Psychology and Education Sciences, University of Porto), Maité Román (University of Seville), Jesús Palacios (University of Seville), Carmen Moreno (University of Seville), Maria Barbosa-Ducharne (Faculty of Psychology and Education Sciences, University of Porto)

Previous studies on adoptees' social skills have focused either on comparing adoptees to normative samples, or comparing the perspectives of multiple informants on adoptees' skills. Integrative approaches that include both (different informants of teens' competence and different comparison groups) are scarce. This paper explores the social competence of adopted and institutionalized adolescents, in comparison to a normative group, from their own perspective and that of their parents/caregivers and teachers. Participants were 120 triads (composed by the adolescent, parent/caregiver and teacher). The adolescents belonged to one of three groups: international adoptees from Russia (IA), adolescents in institutional care (RC) and a normative comparison group (CG). Social skills were assessed using *SSIS-RS* (Gresham & Elliott, 2008). Multilevel modeling was performed to examine the influence of the informant (self, parents/caregivers, teachers) and the group (IA, RC, CG) on adolescents' social skills. Social skills differed between the groups of adolescents and between the informants. The discrepancies between informants were particularly significant in both the adoptive and the institutionalized groups. Teens from the comparison group had normative social skills, according to the self-report and parents and teachers perspectives. In the adoptive group, teenagers perceived their social skills similarly to the control group, but adoptive parents and teachers reported lower skills in adopted teens. In institutionalized teens, caregivers reported lower social skills than the teen's self-reports, and both were behind the scores of the community group. This paper proves the importance of using a comprehensive approach to study the social development of adopted and institutionalized adolescents.

Supportive parenting and the child's temperament as predictors of adopted children's social competence: a dyadic analysis approach

Thursday, 8th July - 15:00: (The Ice-House) - Oral

Joana Soares (Faculty of Psychology and Education Sciences, University of Porto), Maria Barbosa-Ducharne (Faculty of Psychology and Education Sciences, University of Porto), Jesús Palacios (University of Seville)

In non-adoption research, some studies have explored the relationship between the child's temperament and parenting practices on emotional socialization in order to explain the child's social competence. In adoption research, this association has been less explored. In the present study, a Hybrid Dyadic Model was used to assess (a) the impact of (un)supportive parenting on adoptees' (aged 8-10) social skills, (b) the impact of adoptees' temperament on their social skills and (c) the mediational role of the child's temperament in the relationship between (un)supportive parenting and the adoptee's social skills. Within a sample of 102 couples of adoptive parents, the mothers and fathers' reports on adoptees' social competence (SSIS-RS - Gresham & Elliott, 2008), adoptees' temperament (SATI - McClowry, 1995), and (un)supportive parenting (CCNES - Fabes, Eisenberg, & Bernzweig, 1990) were explored. (Un)supportive parenting was assessed at an individual level, whereas the adoptees' temperament and social skills were treated as common fate variables, in which the two parents' scores were indicators of a latent construct. Results showed different association patterns between (un)supportive parenting and social skills, depending on whether the mother or the father is the informant. The child's temperament revealed itself as a mediator of the relationship between the father's (not the mother's) unsupportive parenting and the child's social skills. This is a novel study in that it uses the information from both parents to analyse the prediction model and considers the unique and shared perspectives of each. These findings strengthen the pertinence of dyadic analyses in adoption research.

Associations between relational competence and adjustment in emerging adult adoptees

Thursday, 8th July - 15:15: (The Ice-House) - Oral

Krystal Cashen (University of Massachusetts Amherst), Harold Grotevant (University of Massachusetts Amherst)

Relational competence, defined here as competencies shown in one's self-identified closest relationship, provides an understanding of how emerging adults are progressing towards meeting important developmental tasks while accounting for the increased exploration and fluidity that is a cornerstone of this developmental period (Arnett, 2000; Cashen & Grotevant, 2019). This presentation describes associations between relational competence and adjustment among emerging adult adoptees (i.e., adaptive functioning, internalizing behavior, and externalizing behavior).

Participants included 162 adoptees ($M_{\text{age}} = 24.91$) who had been adopted before the age of one in the United States through private domestic adoption in to same-race families. Relational competence was coded from semi-structured interviews about their self-identified closest relationship. 71 of the relationships were nonromantic (e.g., friend) while 91 were romantic. Adaptive functioning, internalizing behavior, and externalizing behavior were all measured using the Adult Self-Report (Achenbach & Rescorla, 2003).

Relational competence was positively associated with adaptive functioning ($\beta = 0.325, p = .006$) and negatively associated with internalizing ($\beta = -0.246, p = .035$) and externalizing behavior ($\beta = -0.347, p = .003$). Although relationship type did not moderate any of the associations between relational competence and outcomes (all p 's $> .069$), those in a romantic relationship showed fewer externalizing problems ($\beta = -0.749, p = .022$).

These findings suggest that relational competence is a useful indicator of adjustment for adoptees within the developmental context of emerging adulthood. Furthermore, relational competence scores in this sample suggest that emerging adult adoptees demonstrate competencies in close relationships on par with their peers.

Consequences of a colorblind society: Does skin color matter for French intercountry adoptees?

Thursday, 8th July - 15:30: (The Ice-House) - Oral

Seungmi Lee (Tufts University), Ellen Pinderhughes (Tufts University), Marie-Odile Pérouse de Montclos (GHU St Anne, Paris), Jessica Matthews (Department of Psychology, University of Massachusetts, Amherst MA, U.S.A.), Janice Peyre (Enfance & Familles d'Adoption), Jacques Vaugelade (Enfance et Familles d'Adoption), Odile Baubin (Enfance et Familles d'Adoption), Jacques Chomilier (Mouvement pour l'Adoption sans Frontières), Jean-Vital de Monleon (Hôpital d'Enfants CHU du Bocage), Anne de Truchis (Hôpital André Mignot, Versailles), Frédéric Sorge (Hôpital Necker Enfants Malades), Laurie Miller (Tufts University)

Within a legally color-blind society, French families are raising approximately 70,000 intercountry adoptees (ICAs) adopted from 1990 to 2014. 463 adoptive parents and 114 teen ICAs from France completed a survey about their experiences of bias. Recruited from national adoptive family organizations and clinical settings, ICAs and parents completed a(n) paper/online survey (56 items) about experiencing bias due to adoptive status, country-of-origin; connection to family; etc. Approximately 98 French ICAs provided multiple-choice and open-ended responses about experiencing microaggressions. Reflecting on their social integration within families, ICAs' reported feelings of belongingness to their family will be examined in relation to microaggressions. Responses were coded for adoption and/or racial microaggressions using an established coding system (Pinderhughes, Baden, & Zhang, 2016). The adoptees (mean age=13.92 years) were born from countries within Africa, Asia, South/Central America, and Europe. 50% of adoptees reported being in visible adoptions. Overall, adoptees reported experiencing more racial microaggressions ($M = 3.70$) than adoptive microaggressions ($M = 1.81$) on average. One survey item was used to measure family belongingness (Strong belonging = 81; Moderate belonging = 17). Point biserial correlation revealed that experiencing more racial microaggressions related to weaker family belongingness ($r = -.244$, $p = .016$). This poster will present these and additional findings: group differences in the number of MAs experienced and their family belongingness (i.e., country of origin, adoption visibility, communication difficulties with parents, identity connections to birth country and adoption). Implications of the experiences of these teens in France will be discussed.

LGBTQ+ parent adoption: Processes and outcomes

Thursday, 8th July - 18:00: (The Ice-House) - Symposia

Rachel Farr (University of Kentucky), Gabriela Misca (University of Worcester)

Many LGBTQ+ adults worldwide desire to be or are already adoptive parents (Goldberg & Conron, 2018; Patterson & Tornello, 2011). The international research literature, however, shows that despite numerous countries awarding statutory rights to adopt, LGBTQ+ adults continue to report facing ongoing difficulties when trying to adopt children. In addition, research demonstrates comparable adjustment among sexual minority and heterosexual parent adoptive families (e.g., Farr, 2017; Golombok et al., 2018), yet we know less about how LGBTQ+ parents talk with children about adoption and other unique family processes. Thus, this symposium extends this literature through five papers, offering a range of perspectives on challenges encountered by LGBTQ+ parents when navigating the adoption process as well as about family socialization and communication in LGBTQ+ adoptive parent families. The first paper explores the perceived barriers by trans parents in the U.S. and the second uniquely explores the role of lawyers - a professional group not yet empirically explored before in relation to LGBTQ+ adoption - as possible barriers. The third paper examines adoption socialization and outcomes among racially diverse sexual minority and heterosexual parent families and preadolescent adoptees. The fourth paper also investigates experiences among sexual minority and heterosexual adoptive parent families, particularly how heterosexism relates to early adolescent outcomes. The fifth and final paper explores adoptees' perspectives on birth and adoptive (sexual minority and heterosexual parent) family connections. A key strength of this symposium is surfacing common threads about the value of LGBTQ+ adoptive parenting, emerging from diverse, international and cross-cultural locations.

Adoption socialization, transracial adoption status, and children's academic functioning: A U.S. sample of lesbian, gay, and heterosexual adoptive families

Thursday, 8th July - 18:10: (The Ice-House) - Oral

Rachel Farr (University of Kentucky), Kyle Simon (University of Kentucky)

The United States has a complicated and politicized history with adoption, race, and sexuality which has led to negative outcomes for minority individuals such as lower levels of academic functioning. These cultural spheres intersect among parents who complete transracial adoptions, with (mostly) white parents adopting racial/ethnic minority children, and the increasing numbers of same-sex adoptive parents. Thus, it is relevant to investigate how parents engage in various forms of adoption socialization (i.e., *communication about adoption*, *empathy about adoption*, *promotion of the dual connection with birth family*, *communication with birth family*, and *empathy for birth family*; Neil, Grotevant, & Young, 2007) with their young children ($M_{age}=8$) and how socialization may influence outcomes such as children's academic functioning. Here we present data contributed by lesbian, gay, and heterosexual parent families ($N=186$ parents, 96 families; half of whom completed transracial adoptions; all were private domestic infant adoptions) in the U.S. We measured adoption socialization (coded via parent interviews), parental sexual orientation, transracial adoption status, and children's academic functioning (teacher-reported). Results suggested that some, but not all forms of adoption socialization varied by parental sexual orientation (lesbian mothers engaged in greater adoption communication compared to heterosexual parents) or transracial adoption status (parents who completed same-race adoptions reported greater empathy about adoption and communication with birth family). Among the whole sample, linear regression analyses indicated that greater adoption communication among parents was associated with children's better academic functioning. These findings point to the importance of adoption communication as related to adopted children's positive academic outcomes.

A United Kingdom longitudinal study of family functioning in adoptive gay father, lesbian mother and heterosexual parent families

Thursday, 8th July - 18:20: (The Ice-House) - Oral

Anja McConnachie (University of Cambridge), Nadia Ayed (Queen Mary, University of London), Sarah Foley (University of Cambridge), Susan Golombok (University of Cambridge), Vasanti Jadvva (University of Cambridge)

In the United Kingdom, the majority of adoptions are from care and most children display some degree of special need. Considering the large number of children waiting to be adopted, the greater likelihood of same-sex couples to adopt, and the reticence of adoption agencies to place children with same-sex couples, it is imperative to understand the consequences for adopted children's psychological functioning of being raised by gay fathers and lesbian mothers. The present UK longitudinal study followed adopted children raised in 41 gay father, 40 lesbian mother and 49 heterosexual parent families when the children, first seen in early childhood, reached early adolescence. Standardized interview, observational, and questionnaire measures of parental mental health, parent-child relationships, and child psychological functioning were administered to parents, children, and teachers. Few differences were observed in parent mental health, the quality of parent-child relationships or in child adjustment. In all family types, child adjustment problems significantly increased from Phase 1 to Phase 2. At Phase 2, a high proportion of children displayed adjustment problems. Family processes, including better parent mental health and parenting quality were associated with fewer adjustment problems. The findings contribute to adoption policy and to the theoretical understanding of parental gender in child development.

Adopted children from lesbian, gay, and heterosexual parented families in the United Kingdom: Drawing out family connections and relationships

Thursday, 8th July - 18:30: (The Ice-House) - Oral

Pedro A. Costa (William James Center for Research, ISPA - Instituto Universitário), Fiona Tasker (Birkbeck, University of London)

The purpose of the Empowering Adoptive Families study was to examine how 17 adopted children (aged 6-12 years) and nine teenagers (aged 13-20 years) represented and discussed their family connections in different family types. Nine children had gay fathers, 6 had lesbian mothers, and 11 had heterosexual parents. The 15 boys and 11 girls were interviewed and completed two visual depictions of their family relationships: (1) the Kinetic Family Drawing [KFD], and (2) the Apple Tree Family [ATF]. Interview data were quantified to consider four axes of family depiction: (1) *Number*, (2) *Inclusion*, (3) *Order*, and (4) *Closeness*. Children included significantly fewer family members on the KFD than on the ATF, and 70% of children included only “core family” (adoptive family) on the KFD. All children included adoptive parents on both measures while 17% included birth parents on the KFD and 47% on the ATF. Children tended to first include adoptive family members on the KFD and the ATF, and positioned themselves closer to their adoptive family than to their birth parents on both. No significant differences between family types were found on any of the axes. The KFD captures the quality of family relationships whereas the ATF encourages depiction of a wide array of proximal and distal family connections. Our findings point to similar good parent-child relationships across lesbian, gay, and heterosexual parented adoptive families. We contrast adopted children’s wide understanding of family connection with their conceptualization of closeness drawing out implications for research and practice.

Barriers towards same-gender adoptive parenting in the justice system: exploring the missing link(s)

Thursday, 8th July - 18:40: (The Ice-House) - Oral

Gabriela Misca (University of Worcester), Rhoda Scherman (AUT University)

Same-gender couples wishing to adopt continue to encounter unjustified barriers, based predominately on the negative or biased attitudes of professionals within the adoption industry. Research on social workers' attitudes reports that religiosity, being male, and heteronormative beliefs are some of the strongest predictors of bias. Lawyers are also professionals with the power to support or thwart same-gender adoptions. A search of the law journals shows no shortage of scholarship on same-gender marriage, the rights of same-gender couples, and the best interests of their children; yet, nothing about lawyers' attitudes or decision-making processes about same-gender parent adoption.

This presentation reports on the attitudes of New Zealand professionals toward same-sex adoption. While the study included social workers, lawyers, and other professionals, the focus of this talk is the lawyers—a largely unconsidered population, whose attitudes differed from the social workers' in one particular way: lawyers scored lower on beliefs that lesbians and gay men should have the same opportunities as heterosexuals to adopt. Possible explanations include the legal profession's emphasis on the "best interest of the children", which might predispose lawyers to argue from the children's perspectives; or their keen awareness of the risks associated with having a non-legal parent, with couples that do not disclose their sexual orientation. Recommendations for practice, and future research, will be discussed.

Barriers to adoption and foster care and openness to child characteristics among trans adults in the U.S.

Thursday, 8th July - 18:50: (The Ice-House) - Oral

*Samantha Tornello (Pennsylvania State University), Abbie Goldberg (Clark University), Rachel Farr (University of Kentucky),
JuliAnna Smith (Independent Practice)*

This study has two major aims: (1) to explore the types of anticipated discrimination transgender adults believe they will experience adoption/child welfare agencies and (2) to examine the characteristics of potential adoptive children that transgender adults are open to adopt. In this online U.S. based study, 448 transgender adults, 774 cisgender sexual minority men (CSMM), and 1514 cisgender sexual minority women (CSMW) completed a series of questionnaires regarding the perceived barriers to adoptive parenthood and their openness to characteristics of potential adoptive children. Trans adults reported more fears of discrimination in a number of areas relative to CSMM and CSMW, namely: gender expression, gender identity, finances, and social support. Trans adults were also more open to adopting children who are typically considered 'hard to place': children over 12, with behavior problems, with a mental health diagnosis, sibling group, children of color, with a physical disability, and those who identify as transgender or LGB. In all, trans adults perceived a number of significant barriers to becoming adoptive parents but were open to adopting children who are typically seen as the most difficult to place. In sum, trans adults are a greatly underutilized and potential asset to adoption and child welfare agencies. It is imperative for adoption and child welfare agencies to address the perceived barriers of these potential parents, along with providing necessary support and resources for these parents and families to succeed.

Oral Presentations

Sleep patterns and insomnia among internationally adopted adolescents

Tuesday, 6th July - 13:00: (Negri da Oleggio Room) - Oral

Kristin Gärtner Askeland (NORCE Norwegian Research Centre), Børge Sivertsen (Norwegian Institute of Public Health), Mari Hysing (University of Bergen)

Introduction and aim

Sleep is essential for adolescent development, but has not been investigated in internationally adopted adolescents previously. We aim to investigate sleep patterns and insomnia among internationally adopted adolescents compared to their non-adopted peers.

Method

Data stem from the population-based youth@hordaland-survey, conducted in 2012 in Norway. Of the 9846 adolescents who responded to the sleep measures, 44 were identified as international adoptees by linkage to the Central Adoption Registry. The adolescents provided self-report information on mental health problems and a range of sleep measures.

Results

There were no significant differences between the adoptees and non-adopted peers regarding time spent in bed, but the adopted adolescents reported significantly shorter sleep duration, both on weekdays ($d=0.37$, $p=.014$) and weekends ($d=0.37$, $p=.015$). The difference was due to the adoptees spending longer time awake after sleep onset ($d=0.78$, $p>.001$). Further, 32% of the adopted adolescents fulfilled the DMS-5 criteria for insomnia, compared to 18% of their non-adopted peers (odds-ratio 2.06, 95% CI 1.09-3.90). The association was no longer significant after adjusting for symptoms of depression. Adolescents adopted after they were 12 months old reported shorter sleep duration on weekdays ($d=1.25$, $p=.003$) and spending longer time awake after sleep onset ($d=1.38$, $p=.004$) than those who were adopted earlier.

Discussion and implications

The present findings suggest sleep problems as both a problem area that should receive more attention and a potential avenue for intervention. Assessing both mental health problems and sleep problems among internationally adopted adolescents who are experiencing difficulties could help target interventions.

Risk factors related to precocious puberty (PP) among internationally adopted girls (IAG) in France

Tuesday, 6th July - 13:10: (Negri da Oleggio Room) - Oral

Jacques Vaugelade (Enfance et Familles d'Adoption), Laurie Miller (Tufts University), Michel Duyme (University of Montpellier: Épidémiologie, Biostatistique et Santé Publique, Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique)

Introduction: An increased risk of PP has been reported among IAG. Undernutrition at arrival followed by rapid catch-up growth, incorrect age assignment, ethnic differences in pubertal onset, and/or dysregulation of various hormonal pathways have been cited as possible biological mechanisms contributing to this risk.

Aims: (1) determine the prevalence of PP via a large online survey of IAG, (2) assess risk factors contributing to PP.

Methods: Adoptive parents responded to an online survey (conducted by Enfance & Familles d'Adoption) about their 422 IAG, 15-30 years old (median arrival age 26 months). The survey included questions regarding nutritional status on arrival, age of menarche, and history of treatment of precocious puberty.

Results: 14% (N=59) of IAG received treatment for PP. Arrival between 2-6 years, history of pre-placement undernutrition, and continent of birth were all risk factors for PP. Logistic regression showed that factors contributing significantly to PP risk included: arrival specifically between 4-5 years of age (RR=5, 1.7-14), undernutrition at arrival (2.6, 1.3-4.9), African birth (2.1, 1.3-3.4), and single parent adoption (2.7, 1.8-4.0)

Discussion: Nearly 1 in 7 IAG had been treated for PP. Information about age uncertainty or growth trajectories was unavailable; however, undernutrition, age at arrival (specifically between 4-5 years), and continent of origin (Africa) were significant risk factors for PP. Single parent adoption was also a risk factor, possibly because children of these parents were more undernourished at arrival, or other socio-biologic factors. Further research is needed to better understand the mechanisms responsible for PP in this population.

Diurnal cortisol production and socio-emotional development in children in residential care

Tuesday, 6th July - 13:20: (Negri da Oleggio Room) - Oral

Daria Chernego (Saint Petersburg State University), Rifkat Muhamedrahimov (Saint Petersburg State University), Karina Tumanian (Saint), Christiana Martin (University of Delaware), Kristin Bernard (Stony Brook University), Kathleen Gordon (University of Delaware), Mary Dozier (University of Delaware)

Introduction: Children in residential care often show a range of deficits in social, physical, and cognitive functioning. Diurnal cortisol production is also influenced by early life adversity.

Aim: This study examined whether diurnal cortisol production was associated with socio-emotional development among children in orphanages and children in intact families.

Methods: Children were recruited from institutions (Baby Homes). Participants included 73 children, with 52 institutionally-reared, and 21 family-reared, in the age range 8 - 42 months. Saliva samples were collected from children twice daily (after wake-up and before bedtime) during a 3-day period. The Ages and Stages Questionnaires: Social-Emotional was used to assess socio-emotional development (Squires et al., 2015).

Results: For children living in orphanages, diurnal cortisol production was associated with socio-emotional development. Lower morning cortisol production and higher evening secretion of cortisol were associated with more problems reported in socio-emotional development. The association between cortisol and social-emotional development was not significant for children living with their birth parents.

Discussion and implications: These findings highlight the deleterious effects of institutional care on children's developing neuroendocrine regulation and socio-emotional functioning. Diurnal cortisol was an important predictor of social and emotional problems but only among children living in institutional care.

An experimental parent-training program for adoptive parents of children and adolescents with FASD

Tuesday, 6th July - 13:30: (Negri da Oleggio Room) - Oral

Claudio Bissoli (Ospedale Maggiore Policlinico di Milano), Stefania Bazzo (Associazione Italiana Disordini da Esposizione Fetale ad Alcol e/o Droghe), Giulia Bonizzoni (Associazione Italiana Disordini da Esposizione Fetale ad Alcol e/o Droghe), Patrizia Riscica (Associazione Italiana Disordini da Esposizione Fetale ad Alcol e/o Droghe), Carla Trevisan (Associazione Italiana Disordini da Esposizione Fetale ad Alcol e/o Droghe)

Introduction

Caring for children with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD) can lead adoptive parents to conditions of severe stress, which can negatively impact relationships within the family and aggravate the difficulties related to the management of the disability. Parent Training (PT) is a consolidated psychoeducational intervention to support parents of people with complex disabilities and is considered a useful tool to be used in the treatment of people with FASD. In 2020, an experimental PT program for adoptive parents of children and adolescents with FASD was developed and carried out in Italy.

Methods

Due to the COVID pandemic, the program was carried out in online mode, using the Zoom platform. The course consisted in eight meetings, which took place every two weeks from April to July, 2020. Each meeting lasted 90 minutes and was led by three experts.

Results

Ten couples of parents living in different areas of Italy attended the training. The age of children ranged from 6 to 18 years old. Despite the limitations due to the online mode, during the program parents were able to increase awareness of the problems they were living, reflecting on their role and their experiences as adoptive parents, so as to start offering a solid and proactive relationship to their children and better face everyday life.

Implications

The course obtained a positive feedback among participants, who asked to continue the experience. In addition, other families declared interest in participating. New PT programs are ongoing and findings will be included within this presentation.

Is psychological well-being in adult adoptees related to difficulties in previous life stages?

Tuesday, 6th July - 13:00: (Crypt) - Oral

Sandra Melero (Universidad de Cadiz), Yolanda Sánchez-Sandoval (Universidad de Cadiz)

Introduction: The study of positive variables of adjustment, such as psychological well-being in adult adoptees, is still scarce. Previous works suggest that adult adoptees have more adjustment difficulties than non-adoptees, supporting the idea of continuity in functioning.

Aims: The aim of this work is to assess the influence of behavioral and emotional difficulties in childhood and adolescence in adult well-being, as well as the role of social support in that relationship.

Methods: The sample is composed of 70 adult adoptees from a longitudinal project. They completed the Ryff Well-Being Scales and the Duke-UNC-11 Social Support questionnaires. In addition, their parents completed the RRPS, measuring their problems as children and adolescents.

Results: We used structural equation modeling to assess the relationships between the variables, finding that problems in adolescence are directly associated with adult well-being. The model also revealed two indirect effects: social support mediates the relationship between problems in adolescence and adult well-being, and problems in adolescence mediate the association between problems in childhood and adult well-being.

Discussion: Previous works also found some continuity in functioning over the lifecycle, as in this study. Results also advance knowledge about social support as a protective factor. There are some limitations to consider, such as sample size or the use of self-report measures.

Implications: This work reveals the importance of social support as a buffer to develop an adequate adjustment in adulthood, even when problems were present in previous stages. Professionals need to be aware of the importance of promoting social support.

Adult outcomes of young people placed in open adoption in Australia

Tuesday, 6th July - 13:10: (Crypt) - Oral

Harriet Ward (The Rees Centre, University of Oxford), Helen Trivedi (The Rees Centre, University of Oxford), Lynne Moggach (Barnardos Australia), Susan Tregeagle (Barnardos Australia)

Introduction

This paper reports on a study that examined the life trajectories of 210 children adopted from care in New South Wales and focuses on those who were aged eighteen or over at follow-up.

Aim

The aim is to explore whether open adoption promotes more positive adult outcomes than long term foster care for children who cannot return to their birth families.

Methods

Data concerning children's pre-adoption experiences were collected from administrative files and adoption records; data concerning subsequent experiences were collected through responses to an on-line survey and through interviews with adult adoptees and adoptive parents.

The outcomes achieved by the adult adoptees were compared with those reported from a cohort of Australian care leavers.

Results

After entering their adoptive homes most adoptees experienced improvements in physical and mental health and academic progress. Significantly more adult adoptees than care leavers used illegal drugs, and more of them had mental health issues; however, the adoptees did significantly better in terms of secondary and tertiary education and full-time employment, and a higher proportion were 'functioning successfully as adults'.

Discussion

The authors explore whether adoptive parents acted as a protective factor, supporting adoptees through vicissitudes as they negotiated adulthood; they suggest that adoptive parents' commitment may underlie better outcomes.

Implications

The findings indicate that adoption should be considered as a potential route to better outcomes when children cannot return to their birth families. Where adoption is contra-indicated, foster carers should be helped to support young people after they formally reach adulthood.

Adoptee-adopter relationship dynamics: perspectives of adult adoptees

Tuesday, 6th July - 13:20: (Crypt) - Oral

Irina Sirbu (University of East Anglia), Elsbeth Neil (University of East Anglia), Julia Rimmer (University of East Anglia)

For children adopted from child welfare systems, there are likely to be additional issues and vulnerabilities, with many facing a range of challenges as ‘emerging’ adults. This paper explores the reported change and continuity in adoptees’ relationships, as they become parents – a key milestone in many adults’ lives and a juncture where adoptees are likely to revisit identity, belonging and loss and rethink significant relationships. We here draw on a subset of narrative data from a two-generational study into the later lives of adoptive families in England and Wales (focussing on adoptions within the last 30 years).

The study employed adapted versions of McAdams’ Life Story Interview Method (1995) to invite narratives from adopter grandparents (n=40) and adoptee parents (n=40), including some ‘linked’ cases. Forty adult adoptee interviews (20 males, 20 females) are analysed to explore intergenerational dynamics within adoptive families from the adoptees’ perspective.

In this paper, we share preliminary findings on how the arrival of the next generation affects adoptee relationships. Primarily we explore continuity and change in the adoptee-adopter relationships, as adoptees progress to adulthood and become parents. What brings these generations together and what are the tensions that can drive them apart? Our analysis also details how participants position their narratives in relation to the wider ‘master narrative’ of adoptees as parents repeating or breaking generational cycles of abuse/neglect. Finally, we shed light on how becoming a parent affects adoptees’ relationships with their birth families, with whom many will have retained some form of contact.

What difference does adoption make? The lived experiences of young adults who were adopted as older teenagers by their long-term foster carers

Tuesday, 6th July - 13:30: (Crypt) - Oral

Sinéad Whiting (School of Social Work and Social Policy, Trinity College Dublin)

Young people adopted-from-care in Ireland tend to be in their late teen years at the time of their adoption. They are usually adopted by the long-term foster carers who have cared for them for most of their childhood. In these circumstances being adopted changes their legal status, but has little impact upon their day-to-day lives. Moreover, the young person is adopted as they are about to reach the age of legal independence (18 years) and age out of the care system.

This system of late adoption from long-term care, which is unusual in international terms, provides the context for a subset of participants in this ongoing PhD study. The study examines the current lives and youth transition experiences of young adults who grew up with either legal (i.e. adoption) or relational (i.e. long-term stable foster care) permanence in foster care. The study uses semi structured, qualitative interviews with young adults in their early 20s, who grew up in permanent foster care. Thematic analysis was used to identify patterns in the data and gain insights into the lived experience of permanence, including late adoption, in long-term care. Drawing on early findings from the interviews carried out with participant's who were adopted from long-term foster care the presentation will report on young adults' accounts of the unfolding meanings that late adoption, by their long-term foster carers, holds for them. It will also consider how these early findings may contribute to theoretical and policy approaches to late adoption.

Search and reunion in an era of legislative change: challenges met by practitioners

Tuesday, 6th July - 15:30: (Crypt) - Oral

Anne-Marie Piché (Université du Québec à Montréal), Geneviève Pagé (Université du Québec en Outaouais), Lara Boivin-Evangéliste (Université du Québec à Montréal)

Following implementation of Quebec's new adoption law in June 2018, allowing open access to sealed adoption records, the Info-Adoption central team has received over 45,000 requests for identity disclosure and reunion in the first year alone. While this legislative change was planned for over 10 years, practitioners in the field have had little guidance to adapt to this change. This oral presentation will outline the challenges and ethical dilemmas experienced by 9 practitioners working for two search and reunion services, individually interviewed in a qualitative study (2019). The main themes they brought up were: 1) the generational differences between adoptions from the past (prior to 1970) and more recent adoptions, mainly occurring in a child welfare setting ; 2) preoccupations about handling identity disclosure and reunion requests from minors adopted from care (with adoptive parents' consent if aged 10 to 13; without the need of adoptive parents' consent if aged 14 to 17) ; 3) ethical conflicts opposing transparency and truth telling to risk management and protection mandates; 4) the lack of training and support to handle delicate identity disclosure and reunion related issues. Implications for practice and improvement of psychosocial support for birth and adoptive families will be discussed.

Openness to post-adoption contact in intercountry adoption

Tuesday, 6th July - 15:40: (Crypt) - Oral

Kathleen Bergquist (University of Nevada, Las Vegas)

The idea of any kind of openness in intercountry adoption has often been viewed as a non-starter by adoptive parents and agencies, however adoptees routinely seek out birth country if not birth family connections. Additionally, search and reunion has become a post-adoption phenomenon in intercountry adoption that had not originally been anticipated. Given the fact that adoptees often seek out post-adoption contact, perhaps it is time to reconsider open-adoption. Grotevant et al. (2007) explored the varied “faces” of open adoption in the U.S., capturing the perspectives of parents and children. They importantly noted that much of the post-adoption contact was informal, without the benefit of a formal agreement. Dependency (or permanency) mediation is a facilitative process that has increasingly been utilized in child welfare relinquishment cases under the jurisdiction of juvenile and family courts. The proposed model would integrate the structure of dependency mediations with therapeutic models of family mediation. Specially trained mental health professionals would ensure the prioritization of the child’s best interest, while acknowledging that “family” can be inclusive of birth and adoptive parents in an intercountry context. This presentation will explore the possibility of open intercountry adoption, framing it within the context of children’s identity rights as articulated in the CRC and best interest in the Hague Convention.

Trauma-informed approaches to birth family contact for children adopted from out-of-home care

Tuesday, 6th July - 15:50: (Crypt) - Oral

Amy Conley Wright (The University of Sydney), Mandi MacDonald (Queens University Belfast)

Introduction: For children adopted from out-of-home care, maintaining connection with birth relatives can promote understanding of their life story and identity development. However, children may experience significant distress when contact visits do not go well. Moreover, parents of children who are taken into care often have their own complex trauma that can affect their ability to connect with their children.

Aims: A multi-disciplinary and international working group identified key approaches for applying trauma awareness to support children's contact with birth relatives, including the gaps in evidence and potential questions for research.

Method: This research collaboration draws upon a rapid evidence review conducted by MacDonald on trauma-informed child welfare systems, and qualitative research led by Wright on experiences of children, carers and birth parents with contact visits for children in permanent care and adoption. From this research and consultations with practitioners, case studies of children's experiences in contact were developed, highlighting scenarios that could be distressing and dysregulating for children.

Findings and discussion: Recommendations from the group identified approaches to changing practice and closing the research-to-practice gap by incorporating emerging evidence-based practices that address the neuroscience and treatment of complex childhood trauma and help families and communities to heal.

Implications: Trauma is central to the experiences of children in out-of-home care, including their experiences of face-to-face birth family contact. Direct contact, as is expected in adoptions from out-of-home care in Australia and Northern Ireland, needs to be planned and supported to minimize harm to children and promote their healing from trauma.

The contact between adoptees and their birth relatives.

Tuesday, 6th July - 16:00: (Crypt) - Oral

Marco Chistolini (CIAI, Centro Italiano Aiuti all'Infanzia (Italian Centre for Childhood Aid).), Diego Lasio (University of Cagliari, Department of Pedagogy, Psychology, Philosophy.)

In recent decades, the contact of adoptees with their birth relatives has become an important and sensitive topic of the adoptive experience. With the globalisation and diffusion of the Internet and the social networks the possibility of retrieving information and tracing one's own biological family has become simpler and more immediate, and searching for biological relatives much more widespread. While in other countries research has deepened this phenomenon, very few studies have been carried out in Italy.

This paper presents the results of a research conducted through an online questionnaire aimed at knowing adoption professionals' views on the contact between adoptees and their birth relatives. Professionals were asked to describe cases they dealt with in the course of their professional activity in which the adoptees searched for their birth relatives or birth relatives searched for the adoptees, and to express their opinion on the maintenance or re-establishment of contacts between adoptees and their birth relatives.

Data analysis revealed a wide variety of ways of getting in contact between adopted individuals and their birth relatives, as well as different outcomes of contacts, from maintaining a relationship over time to refusing further contacts after a first encounter.

Implications for supporting individuals who maintain or re-establish contacts with their biological family members are discussed.

“... origins and feelings of belonging to the family: the work of the group with parents towards the emergence of protective factors in adoptive families”

Tuesday, 6th July - 16:10: (Crypt) - Oral

Patrizia Conti (CIPA Centro Italiano Psicologia Analitica), Miriam Dambrosio (CIPA Centro Italiano Psicologia Analitica)

This clinical work intends to offer a contribution to the topics of origins, and the formation, and integration, of family relations in adoptive families. Furthermore, it looks at the value, reparative and protective, of these themes within the dynamic of the couple, the family and, not least, relations between groups of adoptive parents. We hope to highlight how those groups of adoptive parents, post adoption, can assist with the re-integration of the lived traumatic experiences of these families, providing meanings, perspectives and a space for reflection. We present a case study which concerns the journey of a group, over two years, within an NGO that assists adoptive parents, specifically parent couples that adopt children locally and internationally at pre-school age, two to three years after joining the family. We present and analyse this case study from a Jungian perspective. The journey brings us to the formation of a group mind providing stability for participating parents and their families. This group mind allows for the processing and sharing of anxiety and anguish, increasing feelings of personal efficacy within those couples, and allowing space for the movements and gestures of family crises. Furthermore, it provides a space for evolution and a potential for a sense of closeness and reciprocal participation between those parents.

Such work favours, therefore, the reinforcement of protective family factors with respect to the risks of adoptive failure and the management of the delicate adolescent phase that is often associated with post-traumatic, psychopathological aspects, especially within adoptive parents.

An exploration of birth parents (mothers) records in relation to ‘surrender’ of babies in the Indian and Irish context

Tuesday, 6th July - 18:00: (Negri da Oleggio Room) - Oral

Meera Oke (National College of Ireland), Jonathan Lambert (National College of Ireland)

Introduction and Background: There exists a gap in knowledge about birth parent characteristics and circumstances around the time of ‘surrender’ of babies to formal care. Ireland and India have different yet similar sociocultural dimensions. In India since the last decade, more since COVID19, returning adoptees have queried about their birthparents (BSSK, 2019).

Method: An analysis of 3609 (2491) birth mother records documented by a care agency (BSSK 1979-2019), a study by Groza et.al. (2014) on domestic adult adoptees in India, and A report on mother and baby homes (1922-1999) in Ireland (DCEDIY, 2021), informs this paper.

Results: Contrary to a narrative of poverty in India, findings indicate birth mothers surrendered their babies for adoption due to lack of social support and stigma of being unmarried similar to Ireland. Indian birth mothers (ages range 13 - 50 years), were predominantly from Hindu backgrounds. They were referred to the care agency by local practicing doctors and well-wishers. Babies were given into care soon after birth. An analysis of the birth mother relationship with birth fathers showed that the relationship was with a known person, either an immediate family member or a known relative/friend. In addition, the relationship was predominantly consensual. Deeper analysis within age categories indicate a significantly higher proportion of under 18s conceived from a coercive relationship as compared with over 18s. The paper discusses findings making some comparisons with mother and baby homes in Ireland, such as circumstances around surrender.

Implications: for post adoption and parent (birth and adoptive) services

Post-adoption contact experiences and hopes of birth mothers

Tuesday, 6th July - 18:10: (Negri da Oleggio Room) - Oral

Donna Aguiniga (University of Alaska Anchorage), Elissa Madden (Baylor University), Bonni Goodwin (Baylor University), Scott Ryan (University of Texas at Arlington)

Introduction: Researchers have increased efforts to understand how openness affects different members of the adoption triad (i.e., birth parents, adoptees, adoptive parents); however, the literature has largely focused on the experiences of adoptees and adoptive parents.

Aims: This research seeks to help fill the gap by examining the post-adoption experiences of birth mothers.

Methods: Using data from an online survey, this analysis examines the post-adoption contact experiences of 223 birth mothers who relinquished a child for adoption in the United States post-1989.

Results: More than two-thirds (n=155, 69.5%) of participants reported they had current contact with their child. Birth mothers who had current contact expressed greater satisfaction with their decision to relinquish their child for adoption than those who had contact in the past but no longer (n=38) or those who never had contact (n=30). A one-way ANOVA found that birth mothers' age at the time of relinquishment did not appear to be a factor in contact status [$F(2,220)=1.171, p=0.312$]. However, there were differences in contact status by the number of years since relinquishment occurred [$F(2,220)=12.007, p=.000$]. The majority of birth mothers (n=70.9%) desired to have increased contact with their child. On average, birth mothers expressed a strong desire for a future close relationship with their child regardless of current contact status.

Discussion and Implications: This study provides an updated picture of the experiences of women who have placed a child for adoption in the United States. Practice and policy recommendations based on this research will be addressed.

Investigating the Impact of Religion/Spirituality and Knowledge About Adoptive Parents on Birth Parents' Grief & Depression Post Adoption

Tuesday, 6th July - 18:20: (Negri da Oleggio Room) - Oral

Agnes Varghese (University of California, Riverside), Erick Perez (University of California, Riverside), Misaki Natsuaki (University of California, Riverside), Jenae Neiderhiser (Pennsylvania State University), Daniel Shaw (University of Pittsburgh), Jody Ganiban (George Washington University), David Reiss (Yale Child Study Center), Leslie Leve (University of Oregon)

Aim: The process of placing a child for adoption can be of great emotional difficulty. Prior studies have implied the importance of knowledge of adoptive parents in mitigating the distress of birth parents, but this topic deserves further empirical investigation, especially in birth fathers. Previous work has also explored the benefits of spirituality for adopted children in coming to terms with being placed for adoption, but not the role spirituality plays for birth parents in overcoming the grief associated with adoption. Our study explores the impact of birth parents' knowledge of adoptive parents and religion/spirituality on birth parents' perinatal grief/depression.

Method: This sample consisted of 337 birth mothers (BM) and 113 birth fathers (BF) who participated in the Early Growth and Development Study, a longitudinal adoption study. At 5 months post adoption, BM/BF knowledge of adoptive parents (APs), importance placed on religion/spirituality, and perinatal grief were ascertained. At 18 months post adoption, BM/BF depression was measured.

Results: Cross-sectionally, notable results include main effects of knowledge of APs on perinatal grief in both BMs and BFs. Longitudinally, in BFs, an interaction of knowledge and importance of religion/spirituality was observed in predicting depression.

Discussion: Findings reflect that knowledge plays a role in mitigating perinatal grief in birth parents, and that religion can function in a protective manner for BFs with low knowledge when coping with placing their child for adoption.

Invisible women: Microaggressions targeting first/birth mother's experiences in adoption

Tuesday, 6th July - 18:30: (Negri da Oleggio Room) - Oral

*Amanda Baden (Montclair State University), Suni Sharma (Montclair State University), Ebony White (Drexel University),
Alfonso Ferguson (Centenary University), Rebecca Randall (Montclair State University)*

Introduction: For generations, adoption as a “solution” to unwanted or unplanned pregnancies has been a prevalent societal attitude toward adoption. Throughout history, women have been pressured, coerced, and forced to relinquish their rights to parent their children. The context in which these relinquishments occur has shifted as historical, political, and cultural shifts have taken place both in the US and abroad. However, despite small shifts in the context of relinquishments, first/birth mothers remain the most understudied, stigmatized, and misunderstood stakeholder in the adoption and foster care world. In this study, we explored the stigma targeting first/birth mothers using a framework that applies the construct of microaggressions to the adoption experience.

Methods: In this qualitative interview study of microaggressions targeting birth mothers, we interviewed 8 birth mothers from the U.S. Using a grounded theory approach, we analyzed their experiences and recollections of oppression, discrimination, and stigma.

Findings: Interviews with birth mothers revealed an additional 10 adoption microaggressions. Some of these microaggressions include Secrecy & Lies in Adoption, Sacrificial Birth Parents, Search for Wholeness, and Institutional Microaggressions. Examples of adoption microaggressions both targeting birth parents and committed by them will be presented.

Implications: Within the attitudes targeting first/birth parents exist the assumptions that first/birth mothers are invisible yet are also viewed as self-sacrificing, immoral, irresponsible, negligent, and unprepared for parenting. The mixed messages sent by microaggressions that both express gratitude for birth mothers' sacrifices and judge them as shameful or immoral can lead to mental health challenges that become lifelong.

‘I loved them very much, enough for them to be able to have a proper future’: Birth parents’ perceptions of ‘consenting’ to adoption in England and Wales

Tuesday, 6th July - 18:40: (Negri da Oleggio Room) - Oral

Shirley Lewis (The Rees Centre, University of Oxford)

When a court decides that a child should be adopted in England, a child can be placed with or without parental consent (The Adoption and Children Act 2002). Placing children without consent has come under scrutiny both nationally and internationally (Featherstone et al. 2018, Fenton-Glynn 2016). Little is known, however, about how birth parents experience ‘consent’ in adoptions from care.

This presentation aims to contribute to a greater understanding of birth parents’ views. The study used a life history method to speak to 12 birth mothers and 2 birth fathers in England and Wales. The life history narratives were coded and analysed using thematic analysis.

Birth parents’ views of consent were complex and sometimes contradictory. Birth parents did not understand the court process, and often felt that their voices were not heard. Their ability to ‘consent’ was constrained by powerlessness experienced within their wider lives. However, some parents went on to demonstrate significant changes in their lives and parented a younger child.

Implications for practice include the need for support during the adoption process, to help birth parents understand what is happening and provide a greater opportunity for them to make changes, or to express their views. It also highlights a need for post-adoption support, to manage the trauma of child removal and help birth parents make positive changes in their lives.

Different ways of parents experiencing adoption: Impact on adoptees' social competence

Wednesday, 7th July - 12:00: (Negri da Oleggio Room) - Oral

Isabel-Sofia Costa (Faculty of Psychology and Education Sciences, University of Porto), Maria Barbosa-Ducharne (Faculty of Psychology and Education Sciences, University of Porto), Raquel Barroso (Center for Research in Higher Education Policies)

Introduction:Not all adoptive families are alike. There is significant heterogeneity among them. This heterogeneity can be related to the adopters' and the adoptees' characteristics or to the adoption process itself. **Aims:**The present study aims at identifying different types of parents' adoption experiences and the variables accounting for a fully achieved adoption experience. **Method:**Seventy-one adoptive parents with adolescent children, aged 12 to 19, participated in this study. The parents' adoption experience was assessed using the *Parent's Interview about the Adoption Process*. The parents also reported on their children's school adaptation and achievement, relationship with peers, and affection. The adoptees' social skills and behaviour problems were evaluated using the *Social Skills Improvement System-Rating Scales*. **Results:**A cluster analysis allowed for the identification of two different clusters related to the parents' adoption experience. Most parents (62%) experienced a "Fully Achieved Adoption" whereas 38% of parents reported a "Less Positively Achieved Adoption". The findings also demonstrated that the adoptees, whose parents reported a fully achieved adoption experience, showed better school adaptation and achievement, more positive relationships with peers, and were more affectionate with their parents. These adoptees also showed higher levels of social skills and lower levels of behaviour problems. **Implications:**The study findings contribute to a deeper understanding of the variability among adoptive families considering the parents' experience of adoption as well as adoptees' variables.

Adolescent adoptees' experiences at school. An analysis of social support and adjustment difficulties

Wednesday, 7th July - 12:10: (Negri da Oleggio Room) - Oral

Carmen Paniagua (University of Seville), Irene García-Moya (University of Seville), Carmen Moreno (University of Seville), Antonia Jiménez-Iglesias (University of Seville), Ana Villafuerte-Díaz (University of Seville), Esther Ciria-Barreiro (University of Seville)

Introduction: Previous research has shown that adoptees have difficulties in social relationships at their classroom, as well as adjustment difficulties. **Aims:** Comparing non-adoptees, domestic adoptees and intercountry adoptees, the aims of this study are: (1) to analyze whether adoptees have more negative socialization experiences at school (classmate support and teacher support) than non-adopted students; and (2) to explore potential adjustment differences in emotional problems, conduct problems and hyperactivity-inattention.

Method: Participants come from a representative sample of Spanish adolescents aged 11 to 18 years who had participated in the 2018 edition of the WHO-collaborative survey *Health Behaviour in School-aged Children* (HBSC). The group of adoptees consists of 541 adolescents; 67.1% are intercountry adoptees. A group of non-adoptees (n = 582) was used as a comparison group.

Results: Domestic adoptees reported significantly lower levels of classmate support than their non-adopted peers, with the magnitude of this difference being small. Similarly, significant differences with a small effect size were found in teacher support, with domestic adoptees reporting lower levels of teacher support than intercountry adoptees. Domestic adoptees also had significantly higher scores in conduct problems and hyperactivity-inattention than both non-adopted and intercountry adoptees.

Discussion: As in previous studies, we found difficulties in adoptees' relationships at school and adjustment, but taking diversity among adopted students into consideration led to more nuanced findings, with difficulties being found among domestic adoptees.

Implications: Schools should increase their attention to adoptees' social needs (both in relationships with teachers and classmates) and potential adjustment difficulties, especially among domestic adoptees.

Alexithymia and internalizing-externalizing problems in late-adopted and community adolescents: a multi-method comparative study

Wednesday, 7th July - 12:20: (Negri da Oleggio Room) - Oral

Stefania Muzi (University of Genoa), Cecilia Pace (University of Genoa)

Introduction. Late-adopted adolescents, i.e. adopted after 12 months, have a greater likelihood to have been exposed to pre-adoption traumatic experiences, showing consequent difficulties in affective awareness. An index of affective awareness' difficulties during adolescence is alexithymia, which is greater along with early traumas, and it also represents a risk factor for internalizing-externalizing problems during adolescence. However, no studies investigated alexithymia in late-adoptees. **Aims:** 1) to compare late-adopted adolescents and community controls in alexithymia using a multi-method approach; 2) to explore relations between alexithymia and internalizing-externalizing problems in both groups; 3) to measure convergence between alexithymia assessed with TAS-20 and TSIA in both groups.

Methods. 30 late-adopted and 30 community adolescents aged 12-18 years old (matched for gender and age) were assessed in alexithymia, using the Toronto Alexithymia Scale (TAS-20) and the Toronto Structured Interview for Alexithymia (TSIA), and in internalizing-externalizing problems with the Child Behavior Check List 6-18 years (CBCL).

Results:1) No between-groups differences in alexithymia and internalizing-externalizing problems were revealed. 2) In both groups, alexithymia's factor Difficulty to Identifying Feelings (DIF) was positively related to higher total and externalizing problems only when the interview TSIA was employed; 3) TAS-20 and TSIA showed convergent results only in community adolescents.

Discussion: Late-adopted teenagers did not differ from community peers in levels of alexithymia and internalizing-externalizing problems, nor in their relationships. However, **implications** include the greater need to use a multi-method approach to assess alexithymia in adoptees, due to a lack of convergent validity TAS-20/TSIA in this group.

How are the adopted adolescents? A comparison with non-adopted peers in attachment, emotional-behavioral problems and verbal skills

Wednesday, 7th July - 12:30: (Negri da Oleggio Room) - Oral

Cecilia Pace (University of Genoa), Stefania Muzi (University of Genoa), Fabiola Bizzi (University of Genoa), Donatella Cavanna (University of Genoa)

Introduction. Late-adopted adolescents (i.e. adopted after 12 months of age) may show more insecurity or disorganization in attachment, more emotional-behavioral problems and lower verbal skills than non-adopted peers, due to adverse and under-stimulated pre-adoption experiences. However, the extent of these differences is uncertain due to few and contrasting findings of international and national studies. This study **aims** to compare late-adopted adolescents with non-adopted peers in attachment, emotional-behavioral problems and verbal-skills during adolescence.

Method. Participants were 98 adolescents living in North-West Italy (aged 11-18 years, $M=14.58$, $SD=2.15$), 49 late-adoptees (45% girls) and 49 non-adopted peers raised by their own biological parents (43% girls), matched for age. We administered the *Friends and Family Interview* for attachment representations, the *Children Behaviour Checklist 6-18* for emotional-behavioral problems, the *Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children-IV (CVI-WISC-IV)* for verbal skills.

Results. There were no differences between adopted and non-adopted adolescents in secure, dismissing and preoccupied attachment patterns, but adoptees showed higher disorganization than controls ($p = .04$). Regarding emotional-behavioral problems, adopted adolescents showed higher scores of withdrawal/depression ($p = .04$) and attention problems ($p = .02$) than non-adopted ones. No between-groups difference in verbal skills was found.

Discussion. Unlike in childhood, adopted adolescents show little or no differences with non-adopted peers, even if areas of vulnerability remain, such as attachment disorganization and emotional problems.

Implications. Practitioners should work on late-adoptees' vulnerabilities to promote their psychological adjustment, designing preventive and clinical interventions, and planning the follow up along all the long-life process of adoption.

Participation bias in adoption surveys: lesson from a survey in France

Wednesday, 7th July - 12:40: (Negri da Oleggio Room) - Oral

Jacques Vaugelade (Enfance et Familles d'Adoption and Institut de Recherche pour le Développement), Michel Duyme (University of Montpellier: Épidémiologie, Biostatistique et Santé Publique, Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique), Janice Peyre (Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique and Enfance et Familles d'Adoption)

Aims

Surveys are generally conducted with people who accept to answer a questionnaire. It is rare to know the characteristics of people who do not answer.

Method

Data are issued from a two-stage survey conducted by scholars for “Enfance & Familles d'Adoption” and funded by the Île-de-France Regional Authority. Adoptive parents completed a questionnaire for each of their adopted and biological children aged 15-30 years old (n=1241), who were then invited to answer a different questionnaire (n=451). The characteristics of young adoptees who did not take part in the survey were known through the parents' questionnaires.

Results:

33% of adopted offspring responded, and 51% of biological offspring.

Place of birth (France or 4 continents) and age were not significant.

Explanatory variables for adopted non-respondents were:

- Gender: female adoptees responded more than male adoptees (41% versus 27%).
- Academic success: more graduates responded than non-graduates (38% versus 19%).
- Externalized disorders resulted in fewer responses (23% versus 40%).
- Conflictual relationships with parents resulted in fewer responses (22% versus 40%).

Logistic regression analysis showed that all these variables were significant.

Discussion

Those who did not take part in the survey seem to be those presenting most difficulties. For biological offspring, explanatory variables were gender and academic success: externalized disorders and conflictual relationships with parents were below level of significance.

Implications

Surveys conducted on young adoptees should take into account the implications of possible biases in results.

Some variables involved in the development of foster care contact visits in Andalusia

Wednesday, 7th July - 12:00: (Crypt) - Oral

Lucía González Pasarín (University of Malaga), Isabel María Bernedo Muñoz (University of Malaga)

It has been argued that contact visits between foster children and birth parents can help maintain attachment bonds and support the child's development. The main aim of this study is to analyse the characteristics of contact visits between non-kinship foster children and their birth parents in Andalusia. This study was funded by the research project Application of a psychoeducational intervention program to improve visits between foster children and their biological families (EDU2016 77094-P). Participants were 212 non-kinship foster children and their respective birth families. We conducted frequency and non-parametric analysis of features of contact visits collected by the *Child File Summary Form* designed for this study. The results show that the main visitor is the mother; the frequency of the majority of visits is monthly; and most of them are supervised. Furthermore, there are significant differences between the development of visits and the following variables: attendance regularity, contact visits frequency, supervised contact and number of nuclear family who visits. By contrast, there are not significant differences with the number of main visitors and if they are from the extended family. Results highlight some variables that could be involved in the quality of contact visits. The implication for the practice of this study is to develop intervention strategies targeted at all those involved (foster child, birth family, foster family and social workers).

Strengths and difficulties in self-perception: a qualitative study of Italian emerging adults with foster care experience

Wednesday, 7th July - 12:10: (Crypt) - Oral

Paola Cardinali (University of Genoa), Fabiola Bizzi (University of Genoa), Donatella Cavanna (University of Genoa), Laura Migliorini (University of Genoa)

Introduction. During emerging adulthood young adults are self-focused, commonly experience instability, and feel contrasting feelings related to the definition of their identity. At the same time, this is a period of many possibilities and future opportunities. This passage towards adulthood could be more critical for people with past foster care experience for their experiences of loss, separation, and rejection in their birth families, the precarious placements, and transitory relationships with social workers.

Aim. The present study aimed to investigate self-perception during emerging adulthood of a group of Italian emancipated foster youth, gaining a better understanding of their perceived strengths and difficulties.

Method. 26 young adults (18-25 years; 46% male), recruited by social workers, completed an in-depth single interview. A qualitative thematic analysis was selected for this study.

Results. Results revealed two major themes in the data: Strengths, which includes feelings and competencies that in literature have been identified as characteristics associated with a good personal and relational adjustment (e.g. express a sense of care, to be grateful, to be capable of planning), and Difficulties which may lead to a critical personal functioning (e.g. feeling of refusing, lack of trust, perceived deprivation). Data show some gender differences.

Discussion. Foster care experience could lead to different self-perceptions in emerging adulthood, according to different processing ways of past experience connoted by critical life events.

Implications. Professionals could work on strengths and difficulties in self-perception, especially during a critical transition like emerging adulthood, to support young in making sense of their past experience.

Effects of an attachment-based intervention on foster parents' sensitivity and foster children's attachment development

Wednesday, 7th July - 12:20: (Crypt) - Oral

Janin Zimmermann (German Youth Institute), Saskia Németh (German Youth Institute), Heinz Kindler (German Youth Institute)

Due to a history of maltreatment, neglect and disruption of care the formation of new attachment relationships often is a challenge for foster children. To master this task, foster children require sensitive and responsive care. Attachment and Biobehavioral Catch-Up (ABC) is a 10-session home visiting program designed to promote sensitive caregiving in parents of infants who experienced early adversity.

The efficacy of the ABC intervention has been demonstrated in several RCT studies in the USA. Within the present pilot study, the ABC program was implemented in Germany for the first time. The sample consisted of n=34 foster families with foster children in the age range of 6-24 months that received ABC.

Parenting quality (sensitivity, intrusiveness and delight) was assessed in a structured play situation pre and post training. Foster children's attachment quality was assessed with the Strange Situation, a standardized observational procedure, post training and with an attachment diary completed by the foster parents pre and post training.

Foster parents showed significant positive changes in the interaction quality and reported a significant increase in secure attachment behaviors in their foster children. Moreover, the distribution of attachment relationships classified as secure and organized in the present sample was comparable to distributions found in biological, middle class samples.

Although these results still need further validation by larger, RCT studies, they give a first indication that the ABC program might be a promising tool to promote attachment security and wellbeing of foster children in Germany.

Attachment security and inhibited attachment disorder symptoms in children raised in foster care: Prevalence and determinants

Wednesday, 7th July - 12:30: (Crypt) - Oral

Nino Jorjadze (University of Siegen), Ina Bovenschen (German Youth Institute), Gottfried Spangler (Friedrich-Alexander University Erlangen-Nürnberg)

The main focus of our study is the development of attachment and attachment disorder symptoms in children raised in normal and adverse caregiving environments. Specifically, we are interested in differences in the attachment security and the prevalence of inhibited attachment disorder symptoms, and how these differences relate to risk and protective factors in the children as well as their caregiving environment.

The study sample consists of the two groups of foster children, one with preceding institutional care (n=30) and one with preceding home care (n=30), and one control group of children being raised in their biological families (n=30). Data assessment included measures of attachment security (AQS), attachment disorder symptoms (DAI) and quality of caregiving behavior (NICHD scales), as well as additional risk factors.

Findings from the foster care sample indicated a heightened prevalence of attachment disorder symptoms and lower attachment security scores. Furthermore, we are currently analyzing the contribution of the foster parents' caregiving behaviors to attachment security and inhibited attachment disorder symptoms. The findings of this analysis will also be covered in the presentation. Discussion of study findings will include practical implications for foster care.

“Nothing about me without me”. The children’s participation in foster care. Reflections starting from a quantitative research on foster care in Italy

Wednesday, 7th July - 12:40: (Crypt) - Oral

Camilla Landi (Catholic University of Milan - “Relational Social Work” Research Centre), Valentina Calcaterra (Catholic University of Milan - “Relational Social Work” Research Centre)

Children in foster care experience feelings of sadness and anxiety at the time of separation from their family and in the ensuing months (Fernandez, 2007). Children were able to cope better with the transition in foster care if they could participate (Reimer, 2010). Therefore, children must be provided with clear information about their rights, the reasons for coming into care, the meaning of foster care, and the social workers’ roles (Strolin-Goltzman et al., 2010). Many studies (Holland, 2010; Leeson, 2007; Pölkki et al., 2012) provide further evidence about the importance of listening to children and to take into account their perspectives in assessment, planning and decision-making processes. Social workers play a crucial role in encouraging foster children’ participation. This contribute presents a quantitative research on foster care placements decided by the Juvenile Court of Milan from 2010 to 2014. The study approach is documentary analysis of case files. The research aimed to collect information about children’s participation in foster care planning and implementation. The sample consisted of 308 children in fostering.

The analysis highlighted that children’s participation in decision-making processes is poorly documented. Only the 35% of children have been listened to about their out-of-family placement and the contacts with their birth families’ members during fostering. The results stimulate important reflections on child protection professionals’ practices and the role of social worker in promoting children’s participation.

A case file review of sibling contact and relationships for children adopted from out-of-home care in NSW, Australia

Wednesday, 7th July - 14:30: (Crypt) - Oral

Betty Luu (The University of Sydney), Amy Conley Wright (University of Syd), Judith Cashmore (The University of Sydney)

Introduction: Relationships with siblings can be one of the most important connections for children in out-of-home care. Despite limited research, there is clear recognition of the value of maintaining sibling connections when it is in children's best interests. In New South Wales (NSW), adoption orders also specify the nature of post-adoption contact children will have with birth family, including siblings.

Aims: This presentation describes the nature and complexity of the sibling networks of children adopted from care in NSW, Australia.

Method: A case file analysis was conducted of the applications of 117 children whose adoptions were finalised by the Supreme Court in 2017. De-identified information about children and siblings' contact arrangements and relationships were extracted.

Results: Including all full, maternal and paternal siblings, the average size of external sibling groups is about 4.5, with a mean age gap of 12.5 years between the oldest sibling and the adopted child, and many are currently or have previous experience living in out-of-home care. Children are more often familiar with full siblings, less familiar with maternal siblings, and many have never met their paternal siblings. Sibling relationships established prior to an adoption order affect decisions made about contact post-adoption.

Discussion and Implications: These complexities present challenges for keeping children connected to siblings. Where sibling co-placement is not possible, regularity of contact is important for promoting relationships. Hence, it is critical that adequate resources are available to support children and their families with establishing and maintaining relationships.

Perfect strangers: searches and contacts with siblings of people adopted in Chile

Wednesday, 7th July - 14:40: (Crypt) - Oral

Irene Salvo Agoglia (Alberto Hurtado University)

Closed adoptions surrounded by secrets resulted in many biological siblings growing up unaware of each other's existence. Evidence shows that siblings are very relevant and many adopted persons want to know or seek them (Cossar, & Neil, 2013; Jones, 2016; Muller, & Perry, 2001; O'Neill et. al, 2018). Post-adoptive relationships between siblings have not been studied in Latin America. I analyze some results from the first research conducted in Chile with 35 adopted persons who sought their origins in adult life. Most of the searchers were firstborn children and the only ones given up for adoption in secret, without their birth mother revealing it to others. Others siblings knew of their existence and the contacts were made after knowing the birth mother. Some expressed feelings of satisfaction and surprise at almost "magical" connections and built close "fraternal" relationships; others were satisfied with knowing them and then maintained cordial relationships sporadic and punctual and others expressed painful feelings to verify that they were the only children given up for adoption, distinguishing that they were not siblings, but "other children" of the mother of origin with whom they had no affinity for being "different worlds". The participants reflected on the different life trajectories, strongly marked by the dominant narrative of adoption as a "rescue" or "opportunity", within the framework of social inequities between them. I discuss the importance of knowing this kinship relationships to promote greater contact between siblings in current Chilean adoptions and to improve the support of search for origins.

“Members of one another”. On the feeling of some adoptees to be closely related to their siblings by birth

Wednesday, 7th July - 14:50: (Crypt) - Oral

Mylène Hernandez (CNRS)

It is not uncommon for an adopted person involved in the search for their origins to know or discover the existence of so-called “biological” sisters or brothers. Connected by the circumstances of their birth without being legally related, these sisters and brothers do not share any shared daily life, they often do not have a common language, they are socially and culturally distant. And yet, they sometimes establish enduring bonds between one another. Despite an abundance of scientific and testimonial literature about the search for biological mothers, research or unexpected discoveries of sisters and brothers during quests for origins of adopted people has not been documented or truly analyzed. Even less so for the relationships they possibly could establish with them. In this paper, I offer to present the results of a survey conducted in France with transnationally adopted persons. After a presentation of the survey methodology, I will describe the relational modalities established between the people surveyed and their sisters and brothers by birth. From the perspective of the anthropology of kinship, based on the collected ethnographic material and by exploring the concept of “mutuality of being” developed by Marshall Sahlins, I will analyze the way in which the respondents mobilize and manipulate a varied set of kinship operators such as affects, biogenetic links, everyday life, phenotypic resemblance, moral obligation, etc., to shore up their links and relationships.

“Blood is thicker than water”: shaping adopted children’s belongingness and cultural identity in Ethiopia.

Wednesday, 7th July - 15:00: (Crypt) - Oral

Chiara Costa (Canterbury Christ Church University)

This oral presentation aims to contribute to the debate concerning post-adoption reconnections in Ethiopia. Working from an anthropological perspective, the intervention intends to discuss how inter-country adoptees’ belongingness and identities are framed in the Ethiopian context.

Catching mobility – of bodies, expectations, ties, categories, beliefs – interconnected to belongingness has been the object of a year-long ethnographic field research conducted in Ethiopia. From this starting point, the purpose is to deconstruct the main Ethiopian post-adoptive narrative to explore how adoptees’ mobility is incorporated and reworked on a local level. The presentation will focus on the expectations regarding adoptees’ return – otherwise referred to as “returnees”, or “children of the diaspora” –, and on legal, collective, private discourses and practices of reappropriation of these politically and socially dis/possessed bodies. These interpretations involve both adoptees and first families, and when translated into practice affect the understanding and conceptualisation of inter-country adoption praxes, and their outcomes.

Participant observation and fifty-six in-depth interviews shed light on the opposition between local and global care practices. The interpretation and complexity of categories like *adoption* and *family* in Ethiopia clash both culturally and socially with the Global North narrative of a single phenomenology of the filial relationship, which has guided and shaped current policies on citizenship, belonging and identity. Nonetheless, the first families of Ethiopian children adopted abroad continue to wait for them, and attempts of reconnection are practised and silently encouraged, knowing family blood ties persist over time and space.

How does my sibling's relationship with their origins influence my own?

Wednesday, 7th July - 15:10: (Crypt) - Oral

Nerea Martín (University of Deusto), Susana Corral (University of Deusto)

Farr, Flood, and Grotevant (2016) note that emotional contagion can occur among siblings. For example, when one sibling has a positive experience with his/her origins it is probable that his/her adopted sibling would share such positive view of his/her own experience.

The main aim of this research was to gather the lived experience of young adopted adults with the role their siblings play in the way they feel about their origins. Seven young adopted adults took part, all of them had at least one adopted sibling. Data were collected through semi-structured in-depth interviews and analyzed by means of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (Smith, Flower, & Larkin, 2009).

As a result of the analysis, three superordinated themes emerged. The first theme reflects the role older siblings have in the feelings generated by their origins. The second illustrates the impact of sharing or not perspectives about the origins and the reasons participants feel are behind such perspectives. The third theme refers to participants experiences' with their siblings regarding the communication about origins between them.

So, as captured in the literature, results show how siblings may influence one another's feelings (McHale, Updegraff, & Whiteman, 2012), specially in the sense of the older sibling influencing the younger (Cotte & Wood, 2004). Such influence seems to increase when siblings share perspectives towards their origins. These results contribute to shed light on the mechanisms behind the relationships of adopted siblings, specifically, on how feelings and intentions related to origins are impacted by such relationship.

Successful cloud-based technological solutions for identifying permanent families for institutionalized children within low and middle income countries. The missing piece of the child welfare puzzle

Wednesday, 7th July - 15:30: (Crypt) - Oral

Dana Johnson (University of Minnesota), Frank Garrott (Both Ends Believing), Mark Schwartz (Both Ends Believing), Lisa Frazier (Tyler Technologies)

One of the barriers inhibiting the transition of children from institutional to family care is the inability of government social workers to access child data in a timely fashion.

In response to this need, Both Ends Believing (BEB) <https://www.bothendsbelieving.org>, partnering with Tyler Technologies < <https://www.tylertech.com>>, developed Children First Software (CFS).

CFS begins with the Profile Module, whereby a child is registered via the creation of a comprehensive electronic record. Profile is the foundation for Planning, Placement and Monitoring Modules, which support a social worker in their decision process for the best permanency option for the child and their desire to assure positive post-placement outcomes. Countries sign an agreement in which they pay a \$1 licensing fee, allowing BEB and Tyler to retain control over CFS. Training, upgrades, bug remediation and long-term support are provided for free. The security protocols for CFS are those employed by Tyler, which provides software for 40% of the Courts and Justice System of the U.S.

CFS has been embraced at the federal government level in 5 countries – Honduras, Uganda, Dominican Republic, Haiti and Guatemala with over 17,500 children registered using CFS. In the Dominican Republic, 100% of institutionalized children are registered and on the path to a family via reunification or adoption. In all our client countries, over 500 children have been reunified and over 100 adopted.

The software is proven. The challenge in expanding CFS is spreading awareness. Next steps are to deploy all modules in existing countries and engage new nations.

Children's perspectives about preparation for adoption: a focus group approach

Wednesday, 7th July - 15:40: (Crypt) - Oral

Isabel Fidalgo (Center for Psychology at University of Porto, Faculty of Psychology and Education Sciences, University of Porto),

Margarida Henriques (Faculty of Psychology and Education Sciences, University of Porto)

Child preparation for adoption is considered a key element for the success of adoption. Children's participation in development of interventions, decision-making and research is entrenched in an ethical perspective of participation and shaped by the universal convention of children's rights.

This study aims to identify residential care children's ideas about preparation for adoption and to obtain their contributions for evaluating the effects of a child preparation program for adoption.

Three focus groups were carried out involving 20 children, aged 10 to 13 years old, from three residential care institutions in Portugal, using a convenience sample. Interviews were video-recorded and transcribed, and data content analyzed through thematic analysis.

Two major themes were identified: (1) "adoption challenges and fears" describing the difficulty of entering an unknown family, strange situations resulting from the novelty, and fears that abandonment and neglect could happen again; (2) "what makes adoption easier" covering the need of preparation, the importance of willingness for being adopted, the grief of significant relations and the opportunity for a progressive transition to the new family. Results will be discussed in light of current trends in preparation for adoption and ongoing practice.

Results also highlight clues for recognizing the readiness for the transition to the new family, based on children's reactions, that will be integrated in assessment instruments of the research project.

In conclusion, preparation for adoption is recognized by the children as a fundamental process. Addressing children's views and recruiting their participation is a successful way to promote child-centered interventions.

Resilience and family resources of foster parents' applicants

Wednesday, 7th July - 15:50: (Crypt) - Oral

Alexander Makhnach (Institute of Psychology of the Russian Academy of Sciences), Anna Laktionova (Institute of Psychology of the Russian Academy of Sciences), Yulya Postylyakova (Institute of Psychology of the Russian Academy of Sciences)

The principles and basic requirements for the selecting, training and supporting foster parents' applicants, which are set out in a threefold program are presented. The program is based on resource and environmental approaches and the concept of family resilience. The purpose of the first stage (selection) is to identify the motivation for taking care for a child and obvious contra indications to perform the functions of a foster parent (psychopathological symptoms, alcohol, drug addiction, etc.), as well as individual and family resources and resilience components. Selection is performed by using tests and a semi-structured interview. The purpose of the second stage (training) is to make parents familiar with the specific needs and problems of children in need, as well as the possible problems that a foster family can face in the period of adaptation and upbringing of the foster child. The training focuses on developing and strengthening family resilience and resource potential of foster parents, which were identified at the first stage. The purpose of the third stage (support) is to provide social and psychological-pedagogical assistance, including individual and group psychotherapy, family counseling, social patronage, additional classes with the child at home, etc. As is being showed, integration of a foster child into the family, based on the evaluating, forming, maintaining and developing strong, resourceful aspects of the foster child, foster parents and the family as a whole, is to be carried out within the framework of the concept of resilience and resource potential.

Supporting an informed choice: Online training program for future parents

Wednesday, 7th July - 16:00: (Crypt) - Oral

Caroline Dubé (Ministry of Health and Social Services (MSSS), Quebec)

“Intercountry adoption: The first steps of my reflection”

Objectives

1. Understand the context for the implementation of this program
2. Describe the program and demonstrate the strategies used towards the program’s approach

Author, Caroline Dubé, MSSS

In the last few years, the face of international adoption has transformed significantly.

The partners involved in adoption have observed a lack of awareness and preparation of applicants with respect to this new reality, which is a risk factor in child protection. The Ministry of health and social services (MSSS) of Quebec has therefore taken the initiative to implement a mandatory preliminary training program to complete before the start of process.

In the context of this presentation, the 9 themes developed in the form of a web series in 9 episodes will be discussed. These themes were chosen from evidence-based research and a consensus of experts. Different pedagogical tools are used to facilitate knowledge acquisition in the participant. Interviews, audio tapes, animations and quizzes lead participants to reflect on their beliefs, perceptions, knowledge base, strengths and limitations. The participant who subsequently decides to undertake an adoption project will be better informed and sensitized to the challenges ahead. This preliminary questioning should enhance the level of interaction and questioning of the applicant during their psychosocial evaluation. This initial step should ultimately prepare the candidate to move forward with the psychosocial evaluation process with openness.

Consequences of adoption-related stress for adoptive parents' emotional distress

Wednesday, 7th July - 18:00: (Crypt) - Oral

Lee Raby (University of Utah)

Adoptive parents are often assumed to be at low risk for problematic parenting outcomes (Van IJzendoorn & Juffer, 2006). This is partly because adoptive families tend to have few sociodemographic risk factors. However, the adoption process often involves unexpected and unusual events that adults may perceive as stressful. The aim of the current study was to test whether adoptive parents' experiences of stress specifically related to adoption are associated their levels emotional distress shortly after placement.

A sample of 160 parents (90% female) who adopted a child under the age of 18 months between 2016 and 2021 completed a revised version of Bird, Peterson, and Miller's (2002) adoptive strains questionnaire. An exploratory factor analysis indicated this questionnaire assessed parents' perceptions of stress related to infertility, lack of social support regarding adoption, the adoption process, discussing the adoption with their child and others, and parents' insecurities about adoption. Parents also reported their current depressive symptoms and perceived parental stress.

Results indicate that stress related to the perceived lack of social support regarding the adoption and parents' personal insecurities about adoption were both uniquely associated with more symptoms of depression and more stress in the parental role. These associations were robust to controlling for the other aspects of adoption stress, sociodemographic risk factors (i.e., marital status, educational attainment, and family income), parent' age and parents' biological sex. Altogether, these findings suggest that adoptive parents have a unique set of potentially stressful experiences and concerns that can heighten their feelings of emotional distress.

The first four years after international adoption: a multi-wave prospective study on the role of parental reflective functioning and parenting stress in the development of socio-emotional problems in internationally adopted children

Wednesday, 7th July - 18:10: (Crypt) - Oral

Saskia Malcorps (KU Leuven clinical psychology), Patrick Luyten (KU Leuven clinical psychology), Nicole Vliegen (KU Leuven clinical psychology), Eva Bervoets (KU Leuven clinical psychology)

Introduction and aims. Parental Reflective Functioning (PRF), or the extent to which parents are able to think about their child as motivated by inner mental states, has been shown to play an important role in establishing secure attachment relationships and safeguarding the socio-emotional development of children more generally. As recent evidence indicates that PRF is particularly protective for the development of children who have experienced early adversity, it is hypothesized that PRF may be highly relevant to foster the development of adopted children, of whom a substantial group has a history characterized by substantial trauma. Yet, research on PRF in adoptive families is almost non-existent.

Aims and methods. Therefore, the current study aims to investigate both the evolution and relations of adoptive parents' PRF (Parental Reflective Functioning Questionnaire) and adopted children's socio-emotional problems (Child Behavioral Checklist) in the first four years after international adoption (N = 48 families). Furthermore, the moderating impact of age upon adoption, gender of parent and child and the mediating role of parenting stress (Parenting Stress Index) were examined. Given dependencies within families and within persons multilevel growth and multilevel mediation analyses were used.

Results. Results indicated that older age upon adoption affected the evolution of both PRF and child socio-emotional problems in the first years after arrival. Decreases in PRF were found to be associated with more child SE problems, and these relations were mediated by increases in parental feelings of incompetence and marital dissatisfaction. Implications regarding the need for post-adoptive support will be discussed.

Post-adoption parental difficulties: An exploration of child, parent and adoption correlates in a Portuguese sample of adoptive parents

Wednesday, 7th July - 18:20: (Crypt) - Oral

Stephanie Alves (ProChild CoLAB Against Child Poverty and Social Exclusion), Raquel Pires (Center for Research in Neuropsychology and Cognitive Behavioral Intervention, Faculty of Psychology and Education Sciences, University of Coimbra), Isabel Pastor (Santa Casa da Misericórdia de Lisboa), Ana Luz Chorão (Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences of the University of Coimbra), Margarida Henriques (Faculty of Psychology and Education Sciences, University of Porto)

Introduction: Past research has well-documented the variety of parental difficulties that parents may experience in the post-adoption period. However, effective post-adoption interventions implementation should be based on an accurate understanding of when and for whom these difficulties most emerged, and less is known about these topics.

Aim: To describe parental difficulties of Portuguese adoptive parents and to explore its associations with child, parent, and adoption characteristics.

Method: Cross-sectional data from 471 adoptive parents (59% females; children's age $M=10$ years) was collected through an online survey disseminated by national adoption agencies.

Results: The most frequent difficulties experienced by adoptive parents since placement were related to their own well-being ($M=2.37$; $SD=1.50$), normative parenting challenges ($M=2.30$; $SD=1.54$), parent-child relationship ($M=2.06$; $SD=1.56$), and children's developmental/emotional/behavioral problems ($M=2.00$; $SD=1.69$); for 60% of the struggling parents, the most severe difficulties started during the first year of placement. Females ($M=1.59$; $SD=0.97$) reported greater difficulties than Males ($M=1.40$; $SD=1.01$). Previous child emotional neglect, higher length of stay in care, and older child age at placement were associated with both greater parental difficulties and an early onset of these difficulties. The effect of cumulative child maltreatment on these variables will be described, as well as associations between child, parent, and adoption characteristics and each specific type of post-adoption parental difficulties.

Discussion: The first year following placement may be especially challenging for adoptive parents, namely for those who adopted older children with specific preadoption adversities.

Implications: Findings highlight specific parental difficulties and subgroups that must be considered when planning post-adoption follow-up

Marital impact with children placed in residential treatment centers

Wednesday, 7th July - 18:30: (Crypt) - Oral

Catherine LaBrenz (University of Texas at Arlington), Kim Brown (Capital Adoptive Families Alliance), Rowena Fong (University of Texas at Austin)

Introduction: Adoption changes family relationships and several studies have examined the parent-child dyad among adoptive families. Yet, fewer studies have examined how other family relationships, such as the marital dyad, may change after the adoption of a child. This study filled that gap.

Methods: This study reports data from the North American Adoption Study that administered surveys to $N=119$ adoptive families in the U.S. and Canada who had placed at least one child in residential treatment post-adoption. Questions related to family composition and the impact of adoption on the marital relationship were quantitatively and qualitatively analyzed.

Results: The majority of parents were married at the time of the adoption and were still married when they completed the survey. Only 1.9% of parents reported that the adoption did not impact their marital relationship at all, while 17.1% reported considering divorce, in part because of stress from the adoption, and 74.2% reported additional stress on their marital relationship because of the adoption. A theme of “pushing through hard times” to “make it work” emerged from the qualitative coding.

Discussion: Over 98% of parents reported that adoption impacted their marital relationship. Notably, this sample only included adoptive families who had placed a child in residential treatment, possibly illuminating the impact of the child problem behaviors on the marital relationship more than the adoption itself. Implications include providing referrals for couples to navigate their marital relationship and strengthen family relationships to “push through hard times.”

Extreme suffering leading to Filial Trauma for adoptive parents

Wednesday, 7th July - 18:40: (Crypt) - Oral

Karine Tremblay (Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières), Geneviève Pagé (Université du Québec en Outaouais)

Introduction: Adopted children may present symptoms of developmental trauma that impacts their functioning in areas such as attachment, dysfunctional behaviors, emotion regulation, among others.

Aims: The purpose of this research was to understand the impact of developmental trauma on the experience of adoptive parents, as a secondary trauma, resulting from being in daily contact with traumatized children.

Method: A qualitative study was conducted with 10 adoptive parents to understand their experience during a semi-structured interview.

Results: All participants reported feeling strong emotions related to secondary trauma, as well as physical and mental health issues that appeared after the child's arrival in the family. Participants reported experiencing aggression from their child which led five of the ten families to placing their child in residential treatment program.

Discussion: Secondary trauma by itself does not explain the entire experience of these parents as it fails to account for all the suffering linked to their efforts to establish a parent-child relationship. We use "Filial Trauma" to describe this experience, which includes impacts on physical and mental health, extreme emotions, impact on their time, finances, social network, professional, couple and family life. Most importantly, "Filial Trauma" speaks to the struggle to establish a sense of being the parent when experiencing a "blocked" emotional bond.

Implications: A better understanding of Filial Trauma will allow us to improve post-adoption services to meet the needs of these parents, struggling to successfully fulfill one of the most important roles of their lives: to be the parent of their child.

Analysis of adult-child interactions in adoptive, foster and community families

Thursday, 8th July - 12:00: (Negri da Oleggio Room) - Oral

Nuria Molano (Department of Developmental and Educational Psychology (University of Seville)), Esperanza León (Department of Developmental and Educational Psychology (University of Seville)), Maite Román (Department of Developmental and Educational Psychology (University of Seville)), Jesús Miguel Jiménez Morago (Department of Developmental and Educational Psychology (University of Seville)), Carmen Moreno (Department of Developmental and Educational Psychology (University of Seville))

Many children who were separated from their family of origin after experiencing maltreatment have the opportunity to be adopted or placed in foster care. Their new carers are expected to show them nurturing patterns of relating through affective and stimulating interactions, so that these children can establish a new positive bond with them. In the present study, we explored the adult-child interactions that take place in 116 families from Spain: 34 adoptive families; 28 long-term non-kin foster families; and a community comparison group made of 54 families. Our main objectives were to analyze the adults' use of attachment-facilitating behaviors and to compare the use of these behaviors between the different groups. The interaction between the child and the main caregiver was explored using a microanalytic observational approach that examined in detail the exchange of verbal and non-verbal behaviors in each dyad during a co-construction task. Results revealed that all the dyads made a coherent use of attachment-facilitating behaviors. The adoptive and foster parents' interaction profiles were close, as they used most of the attachment-promoting behaviors more frequently than the parents in the comparison group, but similarly between them. Given the importance of the family affective bonding for the success of these placements, implications for intervention should be focused on the promotion of quality interaction and the prevention against negative interaction patterns. In these cases, professional support through video-feedback techniques is suggested.

Parent-child interactions in adoptive families: a comparative and longitudinal analysis

Thursday, 8th July - 12:10: (Negri da Oleggio Room) - Oral

Esperanza León (Department of Developmental and Educational Psychology (University of Seville)), Nuria Molano (University of Sevi), Concepción Moreno-Maldonado (University of Seville), Maite Román (University of Seville), Jesús Palacios (University of Seville)

Studies on intra- and inter-personal processes are still scarce in adoption research. Longitudinal studies are even more infrequent. In an attempt to overcome these limitations, parent-child interactions were included in a longitudinal study of adoptive families. The adopted children had been born in Russia and were adopted into Spanish families. In the context of the broader project *Longitudinal Adoption & Institutionalization Study at the University of Seville (LAIS.US)*, carried out from middle childhood to adolescence, parent-child interactions were analyzed using a co-construction task. Data were collected at three different times: three years (on average) after the child's adoption (T1); three and half years later (T2); and around ten years after the first assessment (T3). In all data collection times, parent-child dyads were observed while interacting in a joint construction task. The initial sample consisted of 88 parent-child dyads (34 adoptive and 54 non-adoptive). The longitudinal analysis demonstrated a notable continuity from T1 to T2 and from T2 to T3 in the behaviors evaluated during the interactions, especially those corresponding to the parents. Also, a significant coherence of different interaction contents was observed in both samples. Focusing on T3, the results generally showed the lack of significant differences between the adoptive and non-adoptive dyads. Nevertheless, the significantly greater presence in the adoptive dyads of some attachment promoting behaviors stood out, a consistent finding across time in our longitudinal study. Our findings will be analyzed in the context of what is known about parent-child interaction in adoptive families.

Relations between children's and parents' behavior in adoptive families – a longitudinal analysis

Thursday, 8th July - 12:20: (Negri da Oleggio Room) - Oral

Fabienne Hornfeck (German Youth Institute), Selina Kappler (German Youth Institute), Ina Bovenschen (German Youth Institute), Heinz Kindler (German Youth Institute)

To date, there is only a small number of studies investigating the interaction between child and parental behavior in adoptive families. According to the existing literature, parenting behavior can have a crucial impact on behavioral outcomes of children (Pitula et al., 2017). However, results indicate that children's problem behavior may also affect parenting behavior (Verhoeven et al., 2010). Based on these complex findings, the present longitudinal study aims at investigating the relation between parenting and children's psychosocial adjustment in adoptive families.

In a nationwide study, adoptive families were contacted via adoption agencies in all regions of Germany. 257 adoptive parents, who had adopted a child within the two years before assessment (domestic: n=197; intercountry: n=57) participated in wave 1 (2016-2017). In the second wave (2020), all families were contacted again. 94 families were included in the final analysis. The Alabama Parenting Questionnaire (APQ) was used to assess parenting behavior of the adoptive parents. Children's emotional and behavioral problems were assessed with the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) at both waves. Adoptive parents' well-being was assessed with several questionnaires (BSI, EBI and PSS-4).

Results indicate that adoptive children's emotional and behavior problems increase over the first 6 years after placement. Stressregulation capacities of adoptive parents influence childrens psychosocial adjustment (and vice versa) and children's problems reduce parental involvement over time. Specifically, increasing problems were found for children with both maltreatment experiences and parents with limited stressregulation capacities.

Normalities and crises in the first decade of becoming an adoptive family. Results from the longitudinal Zurich Adoption Study

Thursday, 8th July - 12:30: (Negri da Oleggio Room) - Oral

Thomas Gabriel (Zurich University of Applied Sciences. School of Social Work), Samuel Keller (Zurich University of Applied Sciences. School of Social Work)

The “Zurich Adoption Study” is a longitudinal mixed methods study. It asks about the interaction of protection and risk factors in adoption processes for the child-well-being and for the family system. The aim is to improve a matching between everyday family life and assessments or post-adoption services.

The study started in 2009 with a quantitative full survey: We surveyed all 195 families who had adopted a child in the Canton of Zurich between 2003 and 2009 using a standardised questionnaire (CBCL). In the following year, after having evaluated the quantitative data, we selected 23 families for qualitative interviews. Here, the focus was on their intersubjective experiences on their way to family life. In 2014/2015 we repeated the quantitative and qualitative approach with the same families.

In the first quantitative survey (2009) young adopted children showed behavioural abnormalities “above average” according to CBCL. The qualitative interviews (2010), on the other hand, pointed to highly challenging ways of dealing with sudden transitions to family life after long, emotionally charged preparation-phases.

The quantitative results in 2014 show tendencies of “normalisation”: Most children behaved now within the expected CBCL-norm-scales. At the same time, however, critical cases of behavioural problems have increased. The second qualitative interviews (2015) confirm: Many families had to overcome existential crises in comparable dimensions in recent years to find their own normalities - and some didn't.

We can learn a lot if we understand why crises occur, how and why adoptive families have overcome them and what role the child played.

Adoption outcomes. How the events experienced before adoption could affect the adaptation to new contexts

Thursday, 8th July - 12:40: (Negri da Oleggio Room) - Oral

Alessandra Santona (University Bicocca-Milan), Giacomo Tognasso (University Bicocca - Milan), Giovanna Beck (CIAI, Centro Italiano Aiuti all'Infanzia (Italian Centre for Childhood Aid), Milan, Italy), Laura Gorla (University Bicocca - Milan), Carla Miscioscia (CIAI, Centro Italiano Aiuti all'Infanzia (Italian Centre for Childhood Aid), Milan, Italy)

Introduction: A lot of research underlined the possibility of increased psychological difficulties in adopted children compared with nonadopted children. The literature highlighted that adopted people are more vulnerable to various emotional, behavioral and academic problems than their nonadopted peers.

Aims: This study aims to explore the outcomes of adopted children and their families by investigating the adaptation process to new social and familiar context.

Method: The present research includes post-adoption follow-up reports based on the interviews that clinicians working at the CIAI conducted during the post-adoption evaluation. To analyze the post adoption reports, we used a specific coding grid created *ad hoc* to operationalize different topics. In this study, we decided to consider only the follow-up fulfilled after 1 year from the adoption.

Results: The sample is composed of 573 children (313 males). The results underline that in the majority of adopted minors the state of health has improved; the presence of abandonment trauma could lead to a negative adjustment to the new family; the scholastic performance and the score about the acquisition of a new language are lower than scores reported in the literature.

Discussion: In addition, we must say that the presence of memories of events experienced before the adoption, and the inclination to express these memories is one of the most important factors that could help or obstruct the adjustment of an adopted minor in a new context.

Implication: In this research, we created an instrument able to underline the main dimensions of follow-up reports.

Domestic adoption in Switzerland 1940-2000. Biographical and historical approaches to continuities and changes of adoption practices and their outcomes

Thursday, 8th July - 12:00: (Crypt) - Oral

Susanne Businger (Zurich University of Applied Sciences. School of Social Work), Nicolette Seiterle (PACH - Foster and Adopted Children Switzerland), Lukas Emmenegger (Zurich University of Applied Sciences. School of Social Work), Adrian Seitz (Zurich University of Applied Sciences. School of Social Work)

While residential and foster care have received quite a lot of empirical attention in Switzerland, adoption is historiographical 'terra incognita'. Today over 10'000 domestic adopted people live in Switzerland. But neither a systematic review of reasonings for adoption by authorities nor insights into outcomes of adoption on life courses exist. This knowledge gap is the reason why the Swiss National Science Foundation funds this study. It runs from 2019-2022 and aims to gain scientific expertise on former and current domestic adoption practices in Switzerland as well as on biographies of Swiss adoptees and their birth parents.

For this presentation we analysed a) archives with adoption dossiers, b) biographical interviews.

The archives in German-speaking Switzerland contain 30 adoption dossiers from the 20th century. These data allow us to analyse continuities and changes of practices and reasonings of domestic adoptions from the perspective of the authorities.

Furthermore, we conducted 50 biographical interviews with people adopted in the years 1950-2000 and analysed 7 in depth for this presentation, using the method of the Grounded Theory. We are interested in how adoptions affect biographies of adopted people, what images they have of mother- and fatherhood, and what moments of agency as well as of pressure and coercion they (and their birth parents) experience(d).

We give insights in our preliminary findings - they allow us to discuss possible understandings of the past, implications for recent and future practices as well as comparisons to similar studies from other countries.

One million children moving; towards a demographic history of international adoption since the end of World War II

Thursday, 8th July - 12:10: (Crypt) - Oral

Peter Selman (Newcastle University)

This paper would explore the demographic history of international adoption since the Second World War and attempt an estimate of the total number of children sent during this period, with a consideration of both key sending countries (states of origin) and receiving/destination countries.

Particular attention will be paid to changes over time in the countries sending and receiving children and the number sent/received with consideration of reasons for initiating or ending the practice, including evidence of illegal practices and the impact of the 1993 Hague Convention.

More detailed analysis will be presented of adoptions from South Korea after the end of the Korean War through to 2019 by which time more than 165,000 adoptions had been recorded, the largest total from any state of origin. Data provided by government sources are summarised for the period 1948-69 and by decade from 1970 to 2019, which indicate that over one million international adoptions are recorded. Estimates are made of additional adoptions not recorded in available documents which indicate that the figure of one million was probably reached by 2010 and that about half of these adoptions were to the United States.

The presentation will conclude with some reflections on these seventy years and ask what we can learn from past experience, and how the story of intercountry adoption may be viewed in years to come. It will also touch on the impact of COVID 19. on trends in 2020 , which is discussed further in the COVID symposium.

A comparison of non-family domestic adoptions across India and Ireland

Thursday, 8th July - 12:20: (Crypt) - Oral

Sahana Mitra (Royal University for Women), Valerie O'Brien (University College Dublin)

Adoption is an age old tradition which has been shaped in particular by religious and social factors in both India and Ireland. This comparative paper traces the historical evolution of non-family domestic adoptions across India and Ireland. Both countries differ enormously in geographical location and population size but share common socio-cultural legacy as former British colonies, use of informal kinship care and in derogatory treatment of unwed mothers. While Ireland's societal position of children born outside marriage is changing, the stigma and shame continues to be a feature of Indian society. However, a shift in India's context is the change in respect of peoples' willingness to engage with the adoption of children born outside their family and kinship groups.

With constant interplay between the State, religion and the family, both countries have come a long way to develop the system of regularized and centralized adoption policies and practices. Drawing on the analysis from government reports, literature reviews and available secondary data, this paper explains the shifting paradigms occurring in these two countries. The analysis from individual countries' experiences presents what each country can learn from the other in areas of 'children placed for adoption', 'eligibility and suitability' of prospective adoptive parents and social work practice.

Changing contexts. Social workers views of adoption out of the care system in Ireland

Thursday, 8th July - 14:30: (Negri da Oleggio Room) - Oral

Valerie O'Brien (University College Dublin)

Adoption and child welfare practice in Ireland has undergone major change arising from the 2017 Adoption Act. The 2017 Act expands the provisions for the adoption of children from the care system. Against a backdrop of declining adoption rates in Ireland and heightened socio-political focus on the legacy of past adoption practices, this paper elucidates the views of Irish social workers of the changes. The paper also discusses how the legislative change fits within the international context.

The study aims to capture views and experiences surrounding the changing place of adoption within the care system, both before legislation commencement and since its implementation. The research is based on focus group interviews undertaken with front-line Irish social workers, first conducted in 2017 -2018. A follow on study planned for 2020 could not take place due to Covid.

In this paper findings are presented relating to adoption decision-making; contact, search and reunion; supports and therapeutic interventions.

These findings are framed within a discussion of the consequences for (a) the long term foster care system (LTFC) which up to this time has been the predominant permanent option for children in care in Ireland; (b) children in long term care; (c) birth / first parents and families – present and future generations and (d) social work professional practices and identity.

The paper concludes by exploring how the findings fit with the practice of using adoption as part of public care in other countries.

Competing rights and contested futures. How child and parental rights influence questions of post-adoption contact in the UK courts

Thursday, 8th July - 14:40: (Negri da Oleggio Room) - Oral

Sarah Hansen (Queens University Belfast), Mandi MaCDonald (Queens University Belfast)

Introduction: court proceedings leading to the compulsory adoption of children in out-of-home care engage the rights of birth families, children and prospective adopters. This paper will explore how key rights provisions - the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights (ECHR) and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) - influence questions of post-adoption contact in the United Kingdom courts.

Aims and method: this paper reviews legal provisions relevant to post-adoption birth family contact, and reports on socio-legal analysis of selected case law to identify how rights and welfare are interpreted during public adoption proceedings, focusing particularly on the UK jurisdiction of Northern Ireland.

Results and discussion: courts' decision-making about post-adoption contact is influenced by: UNCRC Article 3, the best interests of the child, Article 7, the importance of children knowing their parents; and the legal right to respect for private and family life (Article 8 ECHR). We examine how this respect is demonstrated in relation to each of the parties, and outline the reasoning used in courts to balance the apparently competing rights of birth parents, adopters, children and their siblings.

Implications: decisions about post-adoption contact made in court have life-long effects for children's identity and belonging. Evidence-based principles for planning child-centred contact (eg. Neil and Beek) are reflected to some extent in court judgements, but there is an ongoing onus on adoption practitioners to propose plans that are purposeful, individualised, and take account of the particular needs, risks and strengths of the family.

Between foster care to adoption: Towards openness and post-adoptive contact?

Thursday, 8th July - 14:50: (Negri da Oleggio Room) - Oral

Irene Salvo Agoglia (Alberto Hurtado University)

Following global trends, the majority of adoptable children in Chile are considered “older”, are part of sibling groups, have transited through extended periods of time in the alternative care system and have been removed from the custody of their birth families, so many times lived or had some kind of contact or relationship with them. Despite the importance of the right to know one’s own origins, Chilean policies and adoptive practices of the Chilean reinforce the fact that children are “lost”, “disconnected” and “broken”. The current Chilean adoptive legislation (Law No.19,620) does not establish flexible legal figures that regulate arrangements with different degrees of openness or contact with birth families or foster carers. Based on this framework, I present results of a broader qualitative research conducted in Chile that explores the meanings and practices in relation to origins and identity in the adoption process. In particular, I analyze the adoptive parents’ narratives about the origins of their children, especially their positions on the degree of contact they should build and sustain with the foster caregivers. Finally, I discuss the importance of building a new adoption policy in Chile that puts children at the center, with practices of historicization, openness and contact that respond to the singular needs of each child.

Children's adoption under the European Court of Human Rights Case Law: Opportunities or threats for Italy?

Thursday, 8th July - 15:00: (Negri da Oleggio Room) - Oral

Joelle Long (University of Torino, Law Department)

According to the European Court of Human Rights, the removal of parental responsibilities and the authorisation for adoption are legitimate in cases of parental violence or maltreatment and effective harm towards the child (see *Strand Lobben and others v. Norway* decided by the Grand Chamber on 10 September 2019). However, serious neglect and the risk to the psycho-evolutionary development of the child do not justify the “termination of the bond of filiation” (*Zhou v. Italy*, 21 January 2014, paras. 57-59). In fact, European judges believe that in these cases national courts should evaluate alternative scenarios to full adoption, for example, long-term foster care or “simple” adoption, in the best interests of both the child and the parents [*Zhou c. Italy*, para. 60].

The comparison between the European Court's view and the Italian system of adoption calls for the rethinking of well-established domestic principles and practices. For instance, Strasbourg case law has been instrumental in getting courts to acknowledge that the adoptee's best interests may require contacts with the family of origin after adoption. Still, the European Court's emphasis on blood ties and parental rights (partly due to procedural rules) results in tightening excessively the conditions for adoptability and in favoring simple adoption over full adoption since it maintains a legal bond (and therefore a family life) with parents even if unfit to take care of their offspring. A disenchanted approach to the European Court of Human Rights Case Law seems therefore necessary.

Emotional experiences and thoughts of social workers on crises and adoption breakdown

Thursday, 8th July - 14:30: (Crypt) - Oral

Enrica Ciucci (University of Florence), Daniela Carpenzano (University of Florence), Laura Bini (University of Florence)

A growing body of research about adoption breakdown has accumulated in recent years. Although studies differ substantially in labeling this experience, they agreed on factors associated with (Palacios et al., 2019): child, adoptive parents, and support and service-related factors. In this study we refer to this last factor, aiming to in-depth explore the point of view of social workers on crises and adoption breakdown. A semistructured interview were created *ad hoc* and administered to 11 female social workers from Center of Italy (mean years of professional experience = 21.60, SD 8.65 years). The interview consisted of three sections but the current study focused only on the third one that explores social workers' strategies to cope crises and adoption breakdown, their related beliefs and affects, needs of psychological support. The answers were coded with the software QCAmap (Mayring, 2014) in 4 core categories. Social workers do not perceive themselves well trained to deal with post-adoption and to support adoptive families during crises; they ask for specific guidelines that could help them in supporting families, for greater connection with psychologists during adoption practice, for obtaining support in managing their emotions. In the event of adoption breakdown they felt guilt and frustration for having failed in suitability assessment. Although these results require to be verified on a larger sample, they stress the importance of orienting efforts on the post-adoption period to support social workers in order to prevent their burnout and to foster their socio-emotional competence in caring adoptive families.

Special needs adoptions... in search of special parents

Thursday, 8th July - 14:40: (Crypt) - Oral

Anneke Vinke (Adoptiepraktijk Vinke)

Intercountry adoptions in the Netherland are mainly special needs adoptions: 95 % of the 145 children that arrived in 2019 had one or more special needs. This demands a different preparation of parents as well as a different way of assessing prospective adopters.

In this oral presentation I focus on the assessment process of prospective adopters. I present the curriculum for training of the Child Protection Council social workers that perform home studies in the Netherlands. The social workers work in teams and each team has a psychologist. The curriculum consists of blended learning: an extensive e-learning is provided prior and during the training, then a three day training follows. A number of assignments has to be completed in order to be complete the course. As of 2013 a total number of 41 social workers and 4 psychologists have been trained this way.

Because practice changes, childrens' special needs have become more clear, research and adult adoptees experiences give new insights adding up to parents needing different parenting skills to meet the special needs of the children. The focus of the assessment as well as training has to shift to incorporate these changes. In this presentation I will present the revised training, the modules and content and discuss the changes in choice of topics that were made in order to be as well prepared as can be for raising a special needs adoptee born in a foreign country. Experiences of social workers after being trained will be shortly addressed.

High-performance parents for special needs children: have we gone too far?

Thursday, 8th July - 14:50: (Crypt) - Oral

Geneviève Pagé (Université du Québec en Outaouais), Marie-Andrée Poirier (Université de Montréal), Sophie Leveille (CIUSSS Centre-sud-de-l'Île-de-Montréal), Johanne Thomson-Sweeny (University of Montréal), Maude Robitaille (University of Montréal), Veronique Noel (CIUSSS Centre-sud-de-l'Île-de-Montréal)

Introduction. Transition to adoptive parenthood can be challenging, especially considering the growing number of special needs children in intercountry adoption. While some studies have focused on the experience of adoptive parents after the child first arrives in the family, very few have documented the experience of adoptive parents both prior and immediately after the arrival of the child.

Aims. To explore the experience of intercountry adoptive parents during the preadoption period and the first year postadoption.

Method. Individual qualitative semi-structured interviews were conducted with 39 intercountry adoptive parents across the province of Quebec, Canada. Transcripts were submitted to thematic analysis.

Results. Adoptive parents talked about being thoroughly assessed and highly active in documenting themselves about special needs adoption during the preadoption period. During the first year after the child's arrival, they feel the need to religiously follow what they were told to do in order to nurture the child's attachment. While the focus seems to be on parenting competence, very little attention is given to the adoptive parents' emotional experience of transition to adoptive parenthood.

Discussion. Current scientific knowledge on adoptive children's special needs have helped to better prepare prospective adoptive parents, but may have also put aside other important aspects to take into consideration, such as the adoptive parent's wellbeing in this challenging transition.

Implications. Implications for early post-adoption support (like peer support groups and access to adoption-competent professionals) will be discussed.

Preparing special needs adopters- are we getting it right?

Thursday, 8th July - 15:00: (Crypt) - Oral

Julie Selwyn (The Rees Centre, University of Oxford)

In England, prospective adopters must complete at least 3 days of training, in addition to their home assessment, before they are approved to adopt a child from foster care. This presentation focuses on findings from a survey of the views of 350 adults who completed training programmes in 5 different English regions and considers whether adopters initial preferences and attitudes changed as a result of training. Preferences were examined in respect of willingness to consider various child characteristics (e.g. age, type of abuse) and birth parent's characteristics (e.g. mental illness, drug misuse) and attitudes to birth family contact, staying in touch with the agency and talking about adoption with the child. Findings were that preferences barely changed after training but there were statistically significant differences in attitudes to openness. Preferences that were least likely to change were willingness to accept a child with a disability or a child of a different ethnicity to their own and the greatest change was in willingness to consider contact with the birth family. Attachment/trauma theory dominated the theoretical input of the training raising questions about whether it is a lack of alternative explanations that is leading to many adopters' certainty about the kind of support and insistence on the type of interventions that are needed when problems arise. Concerns have been raised that common mental health problems are being missed or misdiagnosed as attachment difficulties. Does current training produce a rigidity in adoptive parent's understanding of their child's difficulties?

Post-adoption help-seeking: A comprehensive study on parents' perceived utility of professional support and barriers to seek help

Thursday, 8th July - 15:10: (Crypt) - Oral

Stephanie Alves (ProChild CoLAB Against Child Poverty and Social Exclusion), Margarida Henriques (Faculty of Psychology and Education Sciences, University of Porto), Isabel Pastor (Santa Casa da Misericórdia de Lisboa), Ana Luz Chorão (Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences of the University of Coimbra), Raquel Pires (Center for Research in Neuropsychology and Cognitive Behavioral Intervention, Faculty of Psychology and Education Sciences, University of Coimbra)

Introduction: Effective post-adoption services may help struggling families to achieve a healthy adjustment. However, more knowledge is needed about adoptive parents' help-seeking behaviors and their correlates to inform intervention efforts.

Aim: To describe help-seeking behaviors, perceived utility of, and barriers to seek, professional support, and acceptability of psychological interventions among Portuguese adoptive parents. Comparisons with biological parents and associations with different types of parental difficulties were explored.

Method: Cross-sectional data from 471 adoptive and 552 biological parents of children under 18 years was collected through an online survey.

Results: Most parents reported parental difficulties across the family life cycle. However, adoptive parents experienced these difficulties and sought professional support more frequently than biological parents (80% vs. 43%). Despite only 42% of adoptive parents have sought adoption-specialized services, these parents perceived professional support as more useful than those who seek non-specialized services. The most frequent difficulties among adoptive parents who sought adoption-specialized services were related to their own well-being. Fewer difficulties and/or the non-recognition of parental difficulties as a problem requiring professional intervention were the most frequent reasons to not seek support. Most adoptive parents reported the high utility of (95%), and availability to participate in (62%), psychological interventions aimed to promote their own well-being and the parent-child relationship quality.

Discussion: Despite no structured governmental post-adoption services are yet available in Portugal, Portuguese adoptive parents are likely to perceive adoption-specialized services, including psychological interventions for themselves, as worthwhile.

Implications: Findings highlight the need for specialized post-adoption interventions targeting specific types of parental difficulties.

The importance of cultural discrimination in relation to mental health problems among international adoptees as young adults

Thursday, 8th July - 18:00: (Negri da Oleggio Room) - Oral

Kristin Gärtner Askeland (NORCE Norwegian Research Centre), Mari Hysing (University of Bergen), Børge Sivertsen (Norwegian Institute of Public Health)

Introduction and aim

Previous studies indicate an increased risk of mental health problems among international adoptees in young adulthood. Early adversities have been confirmed as risk factors, however, less is known about factors in the time after adoption. The main aim of the study was to investigate the influence of cultural discrimination on the mental health of international adoptees in the student population.

Method

Data stem from the SHoT study, a national student health survey for higher education in Norway, conducted in 2018. A total of 50 054 fulltime students aged 18-15 years responded, 417 of whom identified themselves as international adoptees.

Results

Preliminary analyses show no significant differences between the international adoptees and their peers regarding self-reported diagnosis of mental health problems. Still, internationally adopted students had a higher score on the HSCL-25, measuring symptoms of anxiety and depression, with a small effect size ($d=0.14$, $p=.005$). The international adoptees further had higher odds of reporting thoughts of self-harm, self-harm, suicidal ideation, and suicide attempts than their peers. Within the group of adoptees, scores on the HSCL were predicted by cultural discrimination, loneliness, and quality of life, but not age at adoption or country of origin. Similar results were found for thoughts of self-harm and suicidal ideation. Cultural discrimination was not significantly related to self-harm or suicide attempts.

Discussion and implications

The findings suggest cultural discrimination as an important risk factor for negative development in young adulthood, while factors related to the adoption itself were of less importance.

“I’m afraid for his future”. Adoptive families and the betrayal of white privilege on their children

Thursday, 8th July - 18:10: (Negri da Oleggio Room) - Oral

Anna Guerrieri (Coordinamento CARE), Monya Ferritti (Coordinamento CARE), Luca Mattei (ANPAL)

Between 2001 (ratification of the Hague Convention, L.149/2001) and 2018, around 66,000 children were adopted in Italy by national and international adoption, however, at the national level, little is done to understand the ways in which racism and micro-aggressions impact on adoptees. We proceeded with a qualitative research targeted at adoptive parents and adoptees. Adoptive parents, who adopted between 2001 and 2019 nationally and internationally, were involved via an avalanche sampling, randomly distributed, without statistical significance. Questionnaires were distributed with closed and open CAWI questions providing 2418 valid questionnaires. Adoptees (20) were involved via interviews, their questionnaires being with closed and open questions CAPI.

The intention was to address the issue from both point of view: that of adopted youths and that of adoptive families with attention at the way they dealt with the phenomenon. The research aimed to describe the characteristics of discrimination perceived and/or detected by adoptive parents focusing on the age of the children (current and arrival in the family), the contexts (school, sports facilities, etc.), the contents (the attributed negative value), the type of perpetrators, the character traits of parents and children (optimist/pessimist; safe/insecure, etc.). The collected data actually confirm that, in Italy, if you are phenotypically different, you can be victim of racist episodes (even when you have Italian citizenship). In fact, 70% of the adoptive parents with children of different ethnical backgrounds declares that their children suffered at least one episode of racism (almost 61% of which are parents of children of African origin).

Adopted adolescent religious exploration: A qualitative analysis

Thursday, 8th July - 18:20: (Negri da Oleggio Room) - Oral

Gretchen Miller Wrobel (Bethel University), Meg Thorison (Bethel University), Sydney Sybrant (Bethel University), Barrette Keefe (Bethel University)

Using data from the Minnesota-Texas Adoption Research Project (MTARP: Grotevant, McRoy, Wrobel, & Ayers-Lopez, 2013), a 30 year longitudinal study of contact in adoptive families, themes of adopted adolescent religious identity were identified using the Consensual Qualitative Research (CQR); (Hill, 2012) method. Participants included 10 adopted adolescents from Wave 2 (1996-2000) of data collection. The adopted adolescents ranged in age from 15 to 17 (Mean = 16.37). All 10 participants ranked religion/spirituality/morality as either first or second in importance to them of the six areas of identity domains measured at Wave 2. All 10 participants were ranked as having a moderate or high depth of religious exploration (Mean= 3.4, 4-point scale).

Four theme domains with associated categories were identified; 1. Religious Exploration and Questioning (3 categories), 2. Religious Participation (5 categories), 3. Formation of Personal Views on Faith (6 categories), 4. External Influence on Religious Views (6 categories). A cross-analysis of categories within each domain indicated that two categories, Attendance at Corporate/Group Religious Activities (Domain 2) and Influence of Religious Views by Others (Domain 4), met the criteria for General (9 to 10 participants). There were also seven Typical categories (6 to 8 participants) and 11 Variant categories (2 to 5 participants). In-depth qualitative description of domains and categories will be presented. A focus on implications for adoption professionals will be provided.

Identity construction of the internationally adopted adolescent: Integrating the ethnic and bicultural aspects through family adoption communicative openness

Thursday, 8th July - 18:30: (Negri da Oleggio Room) - Oral

*Judith Lorente (Universitat Ramon Llull), Inés Aramburu (Universitat Ramon Llull), Josep Mercadal (Universitat Ramon Llull),
Carlos Perez-Testor (Universitat Ramon Llull)*

Identity development is a more complex process for adoptees, who in addition of having to integrate their pre-adoptive experiences, which include episodes of institutionalization, abuse, neglect or rejection by their biological family, they face the need to integrate the ethnic and cultural aspects from their origin country and that ones from the new family and society to which they belong. This quantitative study evaluated the predictive relationship between Ethnic identity, Bicultural identity integration, Adoption communication openness and Psychological adjustment of the adopted adolescent. The sample consisted of 50 internationally adopted adolescents aged between 12 and 17 and their respective families. Data has been gathered by a structured interview, the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure - Revised, the Bicultural Identity Integration Scale, the Adoption Communication Scale and the Behavior Assessment System for Children. Results show that families are generally having good Adoption Communication Openness, and it predicts the Bicultural identity integration, what is positively correlated at the same time with Psychological adjustment.

“We do not talk to my family”: A phenomenological inquiry of black transracially adoptive families

Thursday, 8th July - 18:40: (Negri da Oleggio Room) - Oral

Charmaine Conner (Roosevelt University)

In the United States, approximately 40% of adopted children are transracially adopted (Vandivere, Malm, & Radel 2009). According to Godon and Ramsey (2018) transracially adopted children experience the following: a) racial isolation, discrimination, and identity conflicts exacerbating psychological difficulties or adoption discontent, b) greater feelings of dissimilarity from adoptive families, c) potential for racial incidents to be ignored or dismissed by adoptive parents, and d) sociocultural norms, which may be even more burdensome for transracial adoptees growing up in White communities. Children of all races are transracially adopted; however, there is a scarcity of research on Black transracially adopted children and families (Padilla, Vargas, & Chavez, 2010).

Therefore, the researcher sought to understand what Black transracially adoptive parent's perceptions of their child's racial/cultural identity development are and what are Black transracially adoptive parent's perceptions of the parent-child relationship. A phenomenological study was conducted, using semi-structured interviews for five participants. Results from this study reflected themes related to racism and discrimination, lack of pre-adoption training, parent's empathy for race relations in the United States, and the need for qualified mental health professionals specializing in adoption. Implications of this study reflect the need for counselors to receive adequate training for counseling adoptees. Furthermore, transracially adoptive parents could benefit from pre-adoption training catered towards their children's racial/cultural identity development. Future studies could focus on the benefit of play therapy for Black transracially adopted children.

Systematic review of post-adoption resources for adult adoptees

Thursday, 8th July - 18:00: (Crypt) - Oral

Sandra Melero (Universidad de Cadiz), Natalia Jiménez-Luque (Universidad de Cadiz), Yolanda Sánchez-Sandoval (Universidad de Cadiz)

Introduction: The purpose of post-adoption services is to assist families after the process, considering different situations. However, most of those services are for adopted children/adolescents and their families. Adult adoptees also need support and guidance.

Aims: The aim of this work is to compile adult adoptees' demands and the post-adoption resources offered to them.

Methods: We performed a systematic review and found forty studies in accordance with the established criteria (adults, adoption, publication year 2005-2018).

Results: Findings about adult adoptees' needs show the following main points: contact and search for their birth relatives, ethnic identity issues, and psychological support. In addition, this review compiles different resources that are provided in order to meet those needs: some structured programs, particular post-adoption services, support groups and other meetings, and mental health services (although they are not adoption-specific, they are an important resource). Some of the included works draw attention to the professionals' training in adoption as an important issue beyond the mentioned needs, so there are also specific programs to prepare professionals for adoption-competence.

Discussion: This work is a unique compilation of post-adoption resources from different cultural backgrounds, but with common purposes. Despite its advantages, it is important to highlight the weaknesses of this work. For instance, the lack of evidence-based interventions or the existence of unpublished post-adoption resources.

Implications: The search process provided many works that included recommendations, from research to practice, that might be useful to consider, especially in terms of becoming an adoption-competent professional.

“...So I sent him a friend request”: The role of social media and technology in search and reunion in intercountry adoption

Thursday, 8th July - 18:10: (Crypt) - Oral

Anne Marie Shier (Technological University Dublin and University College Cork)

This oral presentation is drawn from a larger doctoral study of the reunion experiences of intercountry adoptees in Ireland and focuses on the role and impact of social media and technology in reunion for internationally adopted adults. An interpretivist approach was used to provide an insight into adoptees experiences of reunion. Qualitative data was gathered using semi-structured interviews with twelve intercountry adoptees, aged eighteen to thirty, adopted to Ireland. Social media and technology use in reunion in intercountry adoption has not been the focus of specific empirical research prior to this study. The findings demonstrate that social media and other technologies have significantly transformed and are now a central feature of reunion in intercountry adoption. This study also highlights the changes that have occurred for social work practice in the area of adoption search and reunion. The study indicates that social media and technology have facilitated, ‘normalised’ and casualised aspects of contact with birth family; increased the pace of contact and can be challenging in relation to managing contact and boundaries for adoptees and birth family members. A key finding in this study relates to the particular importance of contact with birth siblings and their role as mediators and facilitators of contact with birth parents. Participants report that while social media has facilitated their contact with birth family, prepared them for initial in-person contact and acts as a substitute for in-person contact between meetings, it cannot and does not replace the need for ‘real-life’, in-person contact.

Going back “home”: Adoptees share their experiences of Hong Kong adoptee Gathering

Thursday, 8th July - 18:20: (Crypt) - Oral

Kit Myers (University of California, Merced), Amanda Baden (Montclair State University), Alfonso Ferguson (Centenary University)

In this mixed-methods study, 22 adult Hong Kong adoptees (HKADs) who attended a Gathering of HKADs in Hong Kong participated in a pre- and post-survey and an interview. This study is unique for a variety of reasons. With an average age of 53.7, the HKADs in our study are older and of a different generation than children adopted from mainland China post-1990. Scholarship on Hong Kong adoptees has been extremely limited and has focused on the United Kingdom context. Additionally, most research on transnational adoptees has centered adoptees identity and outcomes during their childhood or early adulthood. There is much less research on middle adulthood and experiences at all-adoptee gatherings. Research that has examined adult adoptee gatherings has only addressed Korean adoptee gatherings.

Comparisons between pre- and post-Gathering responses for the HKADs revealed significantly increased comfort with their Hong Kong identities following the visit to Hong Kong. Interviews with 20 of the attendees yielded numerous themes surrounding their reasons for attending the gathering; experiences and emotions while attending the gathering; and the significance of HKADs, the gathering, and returning to Hong Kong. Furthermore, the implications of this research highlight the possible importance and benefit of adult adoptee gatherings (as socialization experiences) and returning to one's birth country for all transnationally adopted groups. These dual activities can provide HKADs meaningful connections with other adoptees and to aspects of their birth family and birth place that tourist and family-only trips do not provide.

Return trips to the birth countries: a way to explore the native culture and to facilitate the knowledge and understanding the adoptees' personal story

Thursday, 8th July - 18:30: (Crypt) - Oral

Marco Chistolini (CIAI, Centro Italiano Aiuti all'Infanzia (Italian Centre for Childhood Aid)), Cristiana Carella (CIAI, Centro Italiano Aiuti all'Infanzia (Italian Centre for Childhood Aid), Milan, Italy.), Marina Raymondi (CIAI, Centro Italiano Aiuti all'Infanzia (Italian Centre for Childhood Aid), Milan, Italy.), Alessandra Santona (University Bicocca-Milan), Giacomo Tognasso (University Bicocca - Milan)

Introduction: Since more than 30th years CIAI has been organizing journeys to the birth country for international adoptees and their families, to consent them: a) to know the sites and the culture of their native countries; b) the opportunity to go over their personal story, visiting the institute where they lived and meeting people they knew.

Aims: To describe and investigate the personal experience that a group of adult adoptees and their parents had of the trip to their native countries.

Method: We investigated the personal experience of return trip using a specific questionnaire created *ad hoc* by the CIAI. We used The Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure – Revised and the Psychological Well-Beings Scale.

Results: Our sample is composed of 92 participants (37 adopted people and 55 companions). Joy was the most significant emotion arise during the trip, followed by surprise and a medium level of confusion and sadness. The main motivations were: desire to see again the native country; need to find information about personal history.

Discussion: The most significant relationship underlined by our research was between the ethnic identity's dimension of exploration and the autonomy regarding the wellbeing. For this reason, an increase of exploration about ethnic identity seemed connected to more autonomy in wellbeing.

Implication: Our experience and this study allow us to understand the main psychological dimensions related to return trip.

“One click on Facebook, and my life completely changed”: The impact of an unexpected social media contact with the biological family in international adoption

Thursday, 8th July - 18:40: (Crypt) - Oral

Johanne Thomson-Sweeny (Universite de Montreal, doctorate student)

Introduction: The search for information about their origins and their birth families through social media can be overwhelming and distressing for adopted people, even more so when it is the birth family who finds them. This presentation aims to demonstrate the impact of such contact.

Aims: The aim of the research was to understand how internationally adopted adults experience contact initiated through social media with their biological families.

Method: Through a qualitative interpretative phenomenological analysis approach, eight Quebec internationally adopted adults aged 22 to 37 who experienced a Facebook contact with their birth family participated in individual semi-directed interviews. Their discourses were analysed by using thematic analysis through which 10 main themes were identified.

Results: Finding their biological families or being found by them through social media can be destabilising for adopted adults. Such contact can be unexpected, fast, emotionally difficult, time-consuming and bring on different challenges, such as linguistic and culture differences, or having to deal with difficulties with the adoptive family.

Discussion: Unexpected virtual contact with the biological family can be disturbing for adult adoptees on several fronts. Their age does not determine how they will experience such a contact or how they will handle the different repercussions.

Implications: The knowledge produced by this study enables a better understanding of adult adoptees' experience of a newly common reality in today's world. The results will help professionals who work with adoptees to better assist them to navigate such contact and to diminish the risk of a negative outcome.

Attachment representations and early adversity in internationally adopted children using the Friends and Family Interview

Friday, 9th July - 12:00: (Negri da Oleggio Room) - Oral

Jesús Palacios (University of Seville), Maria Gracia Peñarrubia (Universidad Loyola), Maite Román (University of Seville), Isabel Caceres (University of Seville), Pablo Carrera (Department of Developmental and Educational Psychology (University of Seville))

Adoption studies provides a ‘natural experiment’ to examine, on one hand, the impact of negative experiences on the development of insecure-disorganized attachment representations (ARs), and, on the other hand, the impact of adoption on the revision of ARs based on the ‘new’ relationships with adoptive caregivers. Adopted children show an impressive although incomplete catch-up after placement. The aims of this research were to explore the ARs in children adopted from the Russian Federation and the relation between ARs and placement variables. The sample was composed by 8- to 13-year-old children adopted by Spanish families in Russian orphanages, and a control group formed by children who lived with their biological families. ARs were assessed using the Spanish version of the Friends and Family Interview (FFI; Steele & Steele, 2005). Statistical tests were used to compare ARs between adoptees and the control group, and the relation of ARs with variables related to early adversity. The attachment distribution found was similar to other studies reporting data on children adopted in Eastern European countries, but no relation was found between ARs and placement variables. The difficulties in attachment that the adopted children showed justify the need to prepare the adoptive parents so that their expectations about the child’s abilities and limitations are more realistic and equip them with strategies that allow them to most adequately satisfy their child’s needs.

Early adversity in adoption and attachment representations: Narratives of adolescent adoptees long after placement

Friday, 9th July - 12:10: (Negri da Oleggio Room) - Oral

Elisabeth Ballús (Ramón Llull University of Barcelona), Mar Casas (Ramón Llull University of Barcelona), Edurne Urrutia (University of Deusto), Carlos Perez-Testor (Ramón Llull University of Barcelona)

Adverse early experiences of adopted children tend to entail emotional deprivation, which may have impaired their attachment relationships. Using the APS projective test (Attachment Picture Story, Ballús et al. 2019), specifically devised to assess internal representations of attachment in teenagers, the relational histories of 70 Spanish adolescent international adoptees were explored and compared to non-adopted peers. The results show more prevalent representations of insecure attachment in international adopted adolescent, compared to their non-adopted peers and particularly in adopted boys than in adopted girls. However, there were no differences based on countries of origin. In addition, a significant association between insecure attachment and difficulties with internal representation of parental figures (birth and adoptive) appeared in young adoptees, despite the years since placement (8 to 17). The simultaneous presence of two specific adverse pre-adoption experiences, namely poor pre-placement care and late adoption, appears as a risk of factor in developing insecure attachment. With knowledge of internal attachment's working models, professionals can improve their understanding and support of the adopted adolescent and their families.

Domestic adoption in Romania: behavioral adjustment and attachment representations

Friday, 9th July - 12:20: (Negri da Oleggio Room) - Oral

Paola Molina (Università degli studi di Torino), Ana Muntean (West University of Timisoara)

A considerable body of research has analysed the development of children internationally adopted from Romania. However, domestic adoption remains largely un-investigated.

Our study examined the behavioural adjustment of 52 Romanian adolescents domestically adopted.

Adoptive mothers and their children completed ASEBA school-age assessment forms (Achenbach & Rescorla, 2001); adolescents' attachment representations were evaluated by the *Friend and Family Interview* (Steele, Steele, Kriss, 2009; Pace, 2014, Pace, Muzi, Steele, 2019).

While overall our sample did not differ from the normative population, the rate of subjects obtaining clinical scores was higher. Behavioural problems did not appear to be linked to the considered pre-adoption risk factors, like age at adoption, institutionalisation or number of placements (Casonato, Muntean & Molina, *in press*). On the contrary, the adolescents showing secure attachment displayed systematically a minor number of problems, both Internalizing and Externalising.

Our results support the effective role of attachment in respect to the adolescents' adjustment, despite the pre-adoptive risk factors.

The overall positive adjustment of this rare sample of Romanian domestic adoptees encourages a deeper understanding of the mechanisms involved in the success of this child-welfare policy.

What is essential is invisible to the eye... about dissociation in intercountry adoptees

Friday, 9th July - 12:30: (Negri da Oleggio Room) - Oral

Anneke Vinke (Adoptiepraktijk Vinke)

In this paper I focus on the treatment of dissociation and its relationship to attachment formation in Dutch intercountry adoptees and children growing up in foster care.

Intercountry adoptees have often developed a trauma-driven survival mode due to experiences prior to the adoption. In my practice I often see that dissociation is one of the trauma driven strategies used. This strategy has a lot of consequences on general functioning as well as the formation of attachment relationship. Often this essential survival mode is hard to detect or not recognized.

In the period leading to the adoption, adoptees might have developed - in various ways - dissociation from the hard feelings and tough experiences. When looked for these survival modes, often not immediately visible in therapy, they can be detected, named, framed and become focus of therapy. The therapeutic focus has to be neurobiologically, trauma and attachment informed.

By introducing the theoretical background next to case material I focus on how dissociation in adoptees can present itself. I will give an example of the simultaneous proces of treating dissociation as trauma response next to very slowly building inner and outer trust and relationships. By using a combination of assessment and therapeutical interventions starting of with the Neurosequential Model of Therapeutics® for assessment and treatment planning and then delivering therapy in which elements from Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy®, Sensorimotor Psychotherapy®, Theraplay®, EMDR, therapeutic storytelling and Polyvagal exercises are combined. The implicit , becomes visible, a tailormade approach for each client is made.

Social representations of adoptive family in national and international contexts. A survey addressed to Psychology students

Friday, 9th July - 12:00: (Crypt) - Oral

Nicola Giacomini (IUSVE – Istituto Universitario Salesiano Venezia), Anna Pileri (IUSVE – Istituto Universitario Salesiano Venezia)

INTRODUCTION

The topic of social representations of adoption by the professional category of Psychologists has not yet been systematically studied. A research with actual psychology students is therefore the most strategic choice, both for university education and for the future of the profession.

AIMS

- emerging and studying the social representations on adoptive family by IUSVE Psychology students
- identify how much and at what level (implicit/explicit) the Symbolic Relational Model constructs on family are present in the core social representation of the students

METHOD

The research questions have been investigated by a specific quali-quantitative questionnaire according to methods applied on Social Representation studies (Jodelet, Abric).

RESULTS

Data analysis are still ongoing.

From a very first data analysis (112 students) we can already point out some interesting outcomes on couple's motivation for embarking on the adoption process: 92% to overcome the impossibility of having children, while 85% to providing a family for the child. Students are aware of the polarity of adoption pact (couple-child).

As far as student's social representation of adopted child (central core analysis) the results confirms the relevance of the principles of the symbolic relational model (particularly trust and hope) and the complexity of the adoption process (worry, difficulty).

IMPLICATIONS

Results are interesting in educational and training field as follows: academic and professional training of psychologists on couple's motivations, on the needs of the couple and of the child (cf. theme of origin, double default); the specificities of international adoption (interculturality) and student's training and experiences of volunteering.

Expectations about becoming an adoptive parent: Enrichment or threat for young adults' identity motives?

Friday, 9th July - 12:15: (Crypt) - Oral

Elena Canzi (Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore di Milano), Miriam Parise (Family Studies and Research University Centre, Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, Milano), Rosa Rosnati (Catholic University of Milan), Eugenia Scabini (Family Studies and Research University Centre, Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, Milano), Claudia Manzi (Family Studies and Research University Centre, Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, Milano)

Great changes have occurred with regard to how becoming a parent. Individuals may become parents via experiences that differ from natural conception, through adoption or by recurring to assisted reproductive technologies. These different paths share some similarities, but they are also unique. In particular, individuals, when anticipating different procreative options, may have different expectations on how their identity will be redefined. The current study was aimed at exploring whether and the extent to which adoption was perceived as enriching or threatening for young adults' expectation of identity motives fulfillment, compared to natural conception, homologous techniques, and heterologous techniques. Specifically, we focused on the motives of meaning in life (i.e., the need to find significance in one's own existence), self-esteem (i.e., the motivation to maintain and enhance a positive self-concept), and belonging (i.e., the need to maintain and enhance feelings of closeness to other people). Our sample consisted in 1380 Italian young adults (62.9% females) aged between 18 and 33 who were asked to participate in a survey. Results revealed a positive attitude toward adoption as a form of parenthood in the event of sterility: adopting a child was found to be perceived more enriching one's own identity with regard to esteem and belonging, when compared to homologous and heterologous techniques. Nevertheless, young adults expected natural conception to be more enriching their identity, compared to all the other procreative options. These findings contribute to a deeper understanding of how the different procreative options guide young adults' identity construction and future behaviors.

Stereotypical representation and emotional reactions of Italians toward adoption

Friday, 9th July - 12:30: (Crypt) - Oral

Cinzia Novara (UNI of Palermo), Lavinia Barone (UNI of Pavia), Davide Dragone (UNI of Bologna), Chiara Oldani (Università degli Studi della Toscana), Laura Ferrari (Catholic University), Rosa Rosnati (Catholic University of Milan), Maurizio Corte (Università degli Studi di Verona), Venanzio Raspa (Università degli Studi di Urbino Carlo Bo)

Since 2003 Italy has been the second receiving country for inter-country adoptions (ICA), after the U.S., but after 2014 adoptions dropped from over 4,000 to less than 1,500 per year. The ICONA research, promoted by ItaliAAdozioni, analyzed if the reduced number of adoptions could be also the result of social stereotypical constructions of Italians toward this challenging family choice. Aim of this paper is to investigate this stereotypical representation, basing on data coming from a survey submitted to a representative sample of Italian households in July 2019.

We look at the statistical relations among socio-demographic characteristics (age, sex, income, having an active social life, size of the city of residence, geographic zone), stereotypical representations with respect to family, parent and child and emotional reactions towards adoption (positive or negative).

ANOVA results show that geographical area, age, direct knowledge of an adoption, educational qualification and income are variables that bring out differences on the way of representing adoptive families; while the variables that play a role about emotional reactions toward an adoption project are sex, age, number of inhabitants and income.

In summary, our research shows that male younger people residing in metropolitan cities in north-west Italy and with no direct knowledge of adoptive families could benefit from awareness-raising interventions on adoption issues.

Implications of results are provided for social services, and for policy makers.

Acting generativity: The decision-making process of foster families

Friday, 9th July - 12:45: (Crypt) - Oral

Giulia Lopez (Family Studies and Research University Centre, Department of Psychology, Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore - Milano), Francesco Sichel (Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, Milan), Ariela Francesca Pagani (Family Studies and Research University Centre, Department of Psychology, Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore - Milano), Viola Sallay (Szeged University, Department of Health, Personality and Clinical Psychology – Szeged), Raffaella Iafrate (- Family Studies and Research University Centre, Department of Psychology, Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore - Milano)

In order to improve actions and good practices in the foster care system and to promote people's openness to foster care, the present study is aimed at investigating the decision-making process that leads people to choose foster care.

The methodological approach followed the principles of Grounded Theory: A theoretical sampling and a simultaneous three-level data encoding stage were adopted. Eighteen couples and two single women, who are living different phases of their foster care experience (foster parents who are in the decision phase, foster parents who have just started foster care, foster parents with an ongoing experience of foster care, and foster parents who have finished their experience of foster care), were interviewed in order to explore what factors facilitate or hinder their decision.

The basic social process of "acting generativity" was identified through the analysis. This process represents the tension to act lived by the people who approach the foster care and who are guided by the desire to go beyond the self, to spend themselves for the other and to take care of the successive generations. The theoretical model emerged from the analysis showed that the process of decision-making of foster parents developed in a series of phases (values awareness; generative ideation; generative agreement; evaluation; generative intention; generative action) profoundly characterized from a socio-relational point of view.

This study adds new knowledge on the decision-making process of foster families and provides useful information for social services in order to improve the recruitment and selection of foster families.

Blitz Presentation

Migrating Toward Wholeness: Adult Adoptees and Writing to Heal During COVID-19 and Beyond

Wednesday, 7th July - 19:30: (Bramante's cloisters) - Blitz presentation

Liz DeBetta (Utah Valley University)

COVID-19 has meant more social isolation for individuals and for adoptees who already have higher rates of mental health concerns. Additionally, the pandemic has had an impact on well-being by reducing access to tools and activities that promote healthy ways of coping with and healing from the lifelong effects of trauma. Therefore, COVID-19 might be viewed as a retraumatizing event that requires intervention. Adoptees consider ourselves chameleons in the sense that we can adapt to any situation due to our experience of trauma and the need to stay safe. Our lives begin with preverbal trauma that is embodied and the ability to express feelings creatively helps to process the grief of ambiguous loss. Expressive writing is an opportunity to begin to migrate trauma through the body and rewire the brain in order to heal the deep primal wound that comes from maternal separation and the mental health effects of being isolated during COVID-19. Over the course of seven weeks a group of twelve adopted adults ranging in age from 20s through 60s met to engage in the process of using writing as a tool for managing and healing trauma with the goal of exploring how writing about their experience of being adopted can help facilitate healing and an integration of self. Participants kept reflection journals and self-reported changes in mood, affect, emotion, and outlook on life. Writing and sharing in an adoptee only space provided validation and safety to explore identity, express grief, and narrate their experiences in healthy ways.

Living betwixt: a thematic narrative analysis of transracial adoptees' online stories

Wednesday, 7th July - 19:45: (Bramante's cloisters) - Blitz presentation

Jana Hockersmith (University of Missouri)

Racial difference can complicate the identity development of the transracial adoptee. Personal stories about adoption experiences can provide insight into these complications from the adoptee perspective. Thus, it is important to examine how adult transracial adoptees narrate their experiences with adoption as racial and ethnic minorities. The current study analyzes 11 personal narratives written by transracial adoptees. Narratives were collected through keyword searches on Google use terms relating to transracial adoption. Gloria Anzaldúa's borderlands and nepantla theories guided the narrative analysis, revealing the structure and themes of adoptee stories. Three themes emerged: meanings of adoption in the borderland, adoptees and families in the borderland, and adoptees as nepantleras. The first theme captured societal influences on the perception of adoption and the subsequent outcomes that has on adoptees. The second theme illuminated the role parents play in helping, or hindering, the adoptees' feelings of belonging. The third theme revealed that being a transracial adoptee puts one in a state of constant in-between. Consistent with prior research, this study found that that transracial adoption is a complex process that often leaves adoptees feeling stuck between two worlds: their adoptive family's race and their birth race. This study highlights the importance and value of narrative analysis as well as communication-based approaches to transracial adoption research. The results of this study suggest understanding how race impacts adoptees and their families is imperative to shifting public discourse surrounding transracial adoption.

From being to becoming: experiences of being adopted and Māori in the bio-genealogical context

Wednesday, 7th July - 20:00: (Bramante's cloisters) - Blitz presentation

Annabel Ahuriri-Driscoll (University of Canterbury), Denise Blake (Victoria University of Wellington), Alison Dixon (University of Canterbury)

Introduction: Contact/reunion is a critical but often overlooked part of an adoption trajectory. While most adoptees yearn for biological connection, for indigenous Māori adoptees, reunion hold the very powerful promise of learning about *whakapapa* – bio-genealogical knowledge and kinship relationships that are constitutive of personal, *whānau* (family) and social identities. However, reunion is also a messy and complicated time, replete with the tensions produced by the paradoxes of closed adoption.

Aim: This presentation explores Māori adoptees' experiences of contact and reunion with their birth families, and what this has meant for their identities as Māori.

Method: In-depth interviews conducted with 15 Māori men and women adopted between 1960 and 1976, in the closed stranger adoption period, were analysed thematically and narratively.

Results: All but two participants had met their (predominantly white) birth mothers. In contrast, six participants had not been able to meet their Māori birth fathers, who in most cases were the primary means by which to access *whakapapa* information. Relationships with birth mothers were much less likely to be close and much more likely to be described as tense, distant, or involving no contact. In contrast, relationships with birth fathers, siblings and *whānau* were experienced as more positive and less fraught.

Implications: Study findings demonstrate the enduring impact of adoption, manifested in post-reunion losses. Participants discovered that while adoptive kinship is distinct from biological kinship, post-adoption biological kinship is *also* distinct from biological kinship. Search and reunion mark the very beginnings rather than endpoint of a bio-genealogical identity.

Covid-19 and best practices for empowerment and resilience from adoptive families

Wednesday, 7th July - 20:15: (Bramante's cloisters) - Blitz presentation

Alessia Tabacchi (Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, Milan)

The Covid-19 pandemic has marked families' lives in a significant and disruptive way. On the one hand, it involved a reorganization of the pace of life, in a precarious work and family balance. On the other hand, it required development of unprecedented skills to recognize such uncertainty as the immediate horizon for any future plans. Family pedagogy reflects on the families' life situations. In this regard, this contribution originates from some thoughts that arose from analysis of adoptive parents' narratives voiced during online meetings organized by Afaiv, an association of adoptive families based in the province of Varese (Italy). The researcher attended as a participating observer and found significant links between the adoptive experience and the ongoing health emergency. From a pedagogical perspective, an attempt will be made to highlight some useful dimensions for the development of family resilience and empowerment.

Being adoptive adolescents. Stories of experiential groups

Wednesday, 7th July - 20:30: (Bramante's cloisters) - Blitz presentation

Daria Vettori (private practice), Massimo Maini (private practice)

The authors try to give an original perspective on adoption, inspired by their personal experience with groups of adoptive teenagers. Boys and girls looking for their identity, harmony, beauty, similarities and differences. Normal processes become amplified in adoption.

Through these groups, adolescents can make experience of sharing, understanding and identification. They felt a reciprocal trust, finding the primary sensation of being hold. Through this kind of "intersubjective dance" (Stern 1985) participants were not simple observer of others' experience, but were deeply involved with the possibility to care for each other.

The authors lead these groups for almost ten years (2011-2021), meeting more than 100 adoptees (11-21 years old), coming from different countries, with different ages of adoption and stories. Using active and narrative techniques, they shared feelings and fantasies with the adolescents. They assisted to the emergence of a developed thought, where gesture and feelings become "trace" to follow, "clues" around which building hypotheses and possible narratives. Experiences in which everybody could bring own questions, doubts and needs, making their own intimate journey, searching for their roots.

With our presentation, we don't want just to describe and report the stories emerged in these groups, but we would like to bring the attention on the idea this kind of intervention can be a way to prevent adoptive breakdown. Moreover, the materials and contents that we collected could become fundamental lesson for actual and future parents and professionals

Different constellation and shining stars: A qualitative investigation of lesbian parents' experiences of accessing healthcare for their adopted children in England

Wednesday, 7th July - 20:45: (Bramante's cloisters) - Blitz presentation

Lucille Kelsall-Knight (University of Birmingham)

Background:

Minimal research exists regarding LGBT people's experiences of accessing healthcare for their children. In 2020, one in six children placed for adoption in England was adopted by same-sex parents. Adopted children have an increased incidence of health care needs in comparison to children who remain with biological parents.

Aims:

This study explored the experiences of lesbian parents accessing healthcare for their adopted children in England.

Method:

Qualitative inductive design, utilising purposive sampling and Narrative Inquiry. Three stage Skype interviews were held between October 2018 and March 2019 and utilised critical incident recall with six lesbian adoptive parents. Interviews were analysed using critical event analysis (Webster and Mertova, 2007) and broadening, burrowing, storying and restorying (Clandinin and Connelly, 1990).

Results:

Lesbian parents had mixed experiences when accessing healthcare for their adopted children. Five overarching themes were: navigating heteronormativity, navigating healthcare settings and professionals and having an 'adopted' status, intersectional identity of lesbian parented adoptive families accessing healthcare, reflective imagery of lesbian parents and adoptive families, and professional expectations.

Discussion:

The needs and challenges of lesbian adoptive families may be different to those of heterosexual and biological families when accessing healthcare. Discriminatory practice shown by some professionals is a problem, coupled with lack of understanding of the adoption process and knowledge surrounding a child's history.

Conclusion:

Practitioners must adhere to Equality legislation and professional standards when supporting same-sex parents and their adopted children. Appropriate training is required to equip practitioners with the skills to practice in a non-discriminatory, supportive way.

Needs of Quebec families adopting through the international adoption process in Quebec: Perception of first-line registered nurses

Wednesday, 7th July - 21:00: (Bramante's cloisters) - Blitz presentation

Roxanne Brault (Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières), Patricia Germain (Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières)

While the number of intercountry adoptions decreases, the needs of adoptive families increase particularly in terms of health, due to changes in the profile of adopted children (Germain et al. 2019). However, currently in Quebec, no official follow-up is in place post-adoption. Families must therefore turn to first-line services (Emergency, family and community services) in order to obtain care and services for their children.

Knowing that post-adoption services have an impact on the risk of adoptive dissolution and that the literature reports a lack of knowledge on the subject, this project was set up.

The purpose of this descriptive qualitative study was therefore to explore the perception of first-line registered nurses on the needs of Quebec families adopting through the international adoption process. Taking Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecosystem model as a frame of reference, this study was carried out with 9 first-line registered nurses from the *Centre-du-Québec (Québec, Canada)*. The data were collected by a semi-structured interview, a clinical vignette and a socio-demographic questionnaire.

The preliminary analysis of the data according to the thematic analysis by Paillé and Muchielli (2012) raises important elements in terms of first-line family interventions. The clientele as a family and the particularities of pediatrics are challenges. The vulnerability and reality of internationally adopting families also seem to be overlooked. Finally, the nursing interventions carried out around these families raise questions at the level of practice, training, clinical research and teaching in nursing sciences.

Creating an adoption friendly higher education campus

Wednesday, 7th July - 21:15: (Bramante's cloisters) - Blitz presentation

Jen Dolan (The University of Massachusetts)

Participants will learn how the University of Massachusetts Amherst in the United States strives to make the campus welcoming to those who are part o. UMass offers the Adoption Mentoring Partnership (AMP), the Adopted Student Advisory Panel (ASAP) student club, monthly lunch gatherings for foster and adoptive parents (staff & faculty), in-person and online undergraduate courses along with numerous adoption related research opportunities for undergraduates, graduate students and postdoc students. In addition, we offer leadership opportunities to members of the adoption community with the primary focus being on those who are adopted. Aim – The aim of this presentation is to share with audience members how universities can make their campuses welcoming and empowering to those who are adopted.

Method – This talk is program and descriptive based rather than a traditional research oriented presentation. My methods involve disseminating information regarding our programs.

Results – I do have qualitative narratives and quantitative data analysis I can share about our programs.

Discussion and implications – Ideally there will be time for discussion with audience members. My hunch is that some universities offer programs for their students who are adopted or who have experienced foster care and I think it would be great for us to learn from one another and collectively support/mentor those who are interested. What works in one country may not, for cultural reasons, work in another country but ideas can be tweaked and altered to fit the context for which the programs are potentially offered.

Predicting changes in parenting stress of adoptive parents: a longitudinal analysis

Wednesday, 7th July - 21:30: (Bramante's cloisters) - Blitz presentation

Selina Kappler (German Youth Institute), Ina Bovenschen (German Youth Institute), Fabienne Hornfeck (German Youth Institute), Heinz Kindler (German Youth Institute)

As a sign of family strain and strength, parental stress is a key component of family functioning and one of the most important indicators of family well-being. Although recent studies revealed no significant differences between adoptive parents and non-adoptive parents in terms of parental stress (e.g., León et al. 2015; Vorria et al., 2006), empirical findings also indicate that parental stress may negatively affect adopted children's adjustment (e.g., León et al. 2015) highlighting the importance of investigating factors increasing or reducing adoptive parents' stress. Therefore, the current longitudinal study aims at analyzing factors predicting different pathways of adoptive parents' stress over time.

The first wave of the longitudinal study was carried out between 2016 and 2017. The sample consisted of N=254 adoptive families (197 domestic adoptions, 57 intercountry adoptions) who had adopted a child within the last two years before assessment. In wave 2 (2020), all families were contacted again. In both waves, parental stress was assessed by means of the Parenting Stress Index (PSI). Potential predictors include parental age, gender, perceived self-efficacy, stressful life events, marital satisfaction, satisfaction with adoption, and family as well as professional support.

Data assessment of wave 2 is currently ongoing and will be finished by April 2020. The main focus of the analysis is to explore parental stress in adoptive families using a longitudinal perspective and the factors which predict different pathways of parental stress over time. Implications for adoption policy and support of adoptive families are going to be discussed.

One decade of decline of international adoption in France

Wednesday, 7th July - 21:45: (Bramante's cloisters) - Blitz presentation

Jacques Chomilier (Mouvement pour l'Adoption sans Frontières), Stéphanie Toutain (CERMES3 Université Paris Descartes)

The number of visas emitted by the ministry of French Foreign Affairs continuously increased since the beginning of the 1980's. The maximum was reached on 2005 and the decline was increased in the early 2010. Amazingly, the number of new applicants started to decrease at the exact year of the peak in the number of international adoptions by French people.

The question of the reason of this decrease in the number of children adopted from abroad is a difficult topic. On one hand the scientific literature, as measured through the number of entries in the bibliographic database Pubmed, shows an increase in the occurrence of the issue of ethics. This is also linked to the recommendation of the Hague convention. On the other hand one can question the distribution of would be parents according to their socio economics classes. From preliminary data, available from the French public agency, AFA (Agence Française de l'Adoption) this distribution presents a trend that is rather similar among the various social groups. From these two points, one may hypothesize that the emergence and domination of the point of view of ethics is the major cause for the decline of international adoption, at least compared to some endogenous variable such a breaking in the distribution of the social groups historically the major contributors to international adoption.

Forgetful storks and others actors in the narrative of adoption

Wednesday, 7th July - 22:00: (Bramante's cloisters) - Blitz presentation

Anna Miliotti (Professor in post university masters in adoption, Florence)

The results of my workshops with adoptive parents (in Mantova, Prato and Grosseto) and with children at school (Grosseto) and with adoptees. (*Anna Genni Miliotti, "Le fiabe per... parlare di adozione, Milan, Franco Angeli editore, 2018)*

Adoptive parents like to write stories on their adoption, where forgetful storks make many mistakes: first of all to give "their" baby to the wrong family. We know why: the second new parents want to be confirmed as the "real" ones, meant to be theirs from the beginning of the story. To change this attitude we need to make him conscious how a different story could better help the adopted child. The new story they can write has to begin with him: his birth, the missing of his first family, "abandonment", solitude, pain... then the renaissance in a community and finally the new adoptive family. At the end of the workshops the stories will be totally different and really nourishing for the adopted child.

The same could be done in a class room of the primary school, working with children to "create" an adoption story. All the mates will understand what really adoption means: a chain of love where many actors can help a child to find a new and permanent family.

The child has to be the central actor of the story, a chain of lovely persons who have been taking care of him. Doing so we will reinforce his self-esteem, in a very healthy way.

A study on children with parental drug abuse in CWLF adoption program

Wednesday, 7th July - 22:15: (Bramante's cloisters) - Blitz presentation

Fangling Li (Child Welfare League Foundation), Tan Chi Yang (Child Welfare League Foundation)

Child Welfare League Foundation (CWLF), a non-governmental organization in Taiwan, has provided adoption services since 1992. Since 2010 the children referred to adoption program with parental drug abuse background have increased significantly in Taiwan. They inherit the stigma of “drug abuse” from their birth parents, which reduces their chances of being adopted. To destigmatize these children, the study aims to examine the long-term developmental outcomes and parent-child relationships of these children. The study also analyzes profiles of the adopters, including their attitudes, concerns, resources and coping strategies to mitigate the effects.

Through a three-staged method, the study collects quantitative and qualitative data from 75 children aged 1.5 to 11 years by 2020 and their adoptive parents. These children either are in the adoption process or have been adopted through CWLF. The first stage is to analyze profiles of the adopters. Secondly, to understand the children's health condition, the adopters are invited to complete an online questionnaire with Achenbach System of Empirically Based Assessment (ASEBA). Lastly, in-depth interviews are conducted to understand the adopters' parenting resources and coping strategies.

The study identifies the characteristics of adoptive parents. They bear less Taiwanese traditional expectations to “continue the family line” and are open to uncertainties concerning the children's developmental outcomes. The findings suggest lessening prospective adopters' concerns and anxieties by enhancing their knowledge of children with parental drug use. Strategies include providing prospective adopters with research on long-term outcomes of these children and launching parent to parent programs among experienced and prospective adopters.

Post Adoption Services in EurAdopt countries

Wednesday, 7th July - 22:30: (Bramante's cloisters) - Blitz presentation

Gera ter Meulen (EurAdopt)

In order to inventorize Post Adoption Services (PAS) in different countries and the contribution of adoption agencies in PAS, a questionnaire was answered by 24 EurAdopt members in eleven countries. The results show that the actual situation in the different countries does not guarantee the minimum requirements on PAS as suggested by the HCCH and the Guide to Good Practice. Many of the Post Adoption Services are delegated to the Accredited Bodies, but usually without financial support. In most countries facilities for roots services are only available from Accredited Bodies. Due to the increasing number of adoptees the Accredited Bodies mediated for and the decreasing fees due to the severely decreasing numbers of new adoptions, Accredited Bodies are increasingly struggling to provide these services without public funding. Moreover, EurAdopt signals a growing concern on behalf of PAS for birthparents in sending countries, both for relinquishing birth families and for birth families confronted with searching adoptees, without being provided with necessary mental support. Therefore a EurAdopt working group on Post Adoption Services developed minimum standards they perceive as indispensable in modern intercountry adoption, combined with existing examples of good practices. EurAdopt believes that PAS should receive the right legal base to secure availability and quality, promotes adoption-competent specialized care, life-long, dynamic, tailor-made and easily accessible. As intercountry post-adoption services in all countries will have to deal with similar complex issues, an international expert and expertise centre on Post Adoption Services, helping both sending and receiving countries, is advised.

The imaginary correspondence

Wednesday, 7th July - 22:45: (Bramante's cloisters) - Blitz presentation

Sara Lombardi (CTA- Centro di Terapia dell'Adolescenza), Irene Ratti (CTA- Centro di Terapia dell'Adolescenza), Francesco Vadilonga (CTA- Centro di Terapia dell'Adolescenza)

In the adoption the topic of origins it's closely connected with the topic of identity.

Self research starts at birth and continues throughout life, but for adoptive children the process of identity construction represents a very hard homework.

It's necessary a support from parents to explore past and to attribute a correct meaning to the experience. For adoptive child, the possibility to receive support to read otherwise his history and to attribute a correct meaning to painful events, in wich is the protagonist, becomes an indispensable action.

If the child will feel adoptive parents as secure base, he will be able to explore his past, properly accompanied (Vadilonga F., 2010).

The intervention has the aim to show to partecipants, also through reading some "letters", an original application of the technique "the imaginary correspondence"(Brodzinsky D.M., 2014) in two areas: in therapy with adoptive families and in experiential paths with groups.

Through writing and reading of the letters, two goals are pursued:

- Allow adoptive parents to put themselves in shoes of biological parents, with the aim also to understand the deeper reasons of their abandonment and/or strongly inadequate and/or harmful behaviours;
- Encourage the sharing of a lot of emotions, also much different from their own.

For adoptive parents the possibility to share thoughts, questions, doubts and fears about biological parents of their children allow them to elaborate representations of biological parents in order to support the comparison with origins and history of their adoptive children with more effectiveness.

Educational support to couples who are approaching adoption

Wednesday, 7th July - 23:00: (Bramante's cloisters) - Blitz presentation

Alessia Tabacchi (Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, Milan)

The study of scientific literature and the context analysis about adoption reveal many unexplored areas in interdisciplinary research, particularly with regard to the pre-adoption phase, as well as some contributions coming from the educational area. This research aims to investigate the support offered to couples who are approaching adoption, within the context of family pedagogy. The empirical study involved a group of adoptive parents to whom semi-structured interviews were administered. Analysis of the data collected provides some pedagogical categories that involve educational activities aimed at supporting parenting in adoptive families. It is believed that to talk about the experience and to reflect on it, should encourage an epistemological content definition of the educational subject in adoption. Within the constant exchange between theory and practice, the process unfolds according to a recursive trend and moments of reflexivity. The study highlights the necessity to invest in the preparation of adoptive couples and the importance of family networks and associations. Acknowledgement of the considerable role played by pedagogy during training of both individuals and couples, as well as during self-training, within the transition to parenthood, has become urgent.

Experiences of connection in intercountry adoption between Taiwan and Australia

Wednesday, 7th July - 23:15: (Bramante's cloisters) - Blitz presentation

Chin-Hsuan Lin (National Taiwan University), Amy Conley Wright (University of Sydney), Chin-Wan Wang (National Taiwan University), Yu-Wen Chen (National Taiwan University), Margaret Spencer (University of Sydney)

Introduction: To meet the identity needs of adoptees, to know their family of origin, history and culture, there is an international movement toward greater openness in adoption. Yet geographic, social, cultural and linguistic distances in intercountry adoption can affect the potential development of a relationship between a child's family of origin and adoptive family. How can professionals support connection among those affected by adoption?

Aims: By examining the intercountry adoption as practiced between Taiwan (a sending country) and Australia (a receiving country), this study illuminates issues related to connection, drawing on the perspectives of adopted adults (n=11), adoptive parents (n=17), birth mothers (n=12), and adoption professionals (n=27). The study was undertaken in collaboration by research teams from National Taiwan University and University of Sydney.

Method: Given the significant variation in adoption experiences, this study used semi-structured, narrative-based interviews. This style of interview and analysis enabled multiple possibilities for the research participants to describe their own understanding of personal events and experiences.

Results: The narratives of adoptees and birth mothers highlighted the need for choice when it comes to connection. A lifespan perspective provides insight into how the needs and wants toward connection change over time. Adoptees and adoptive parents identified different needs in childhood, adolescence and adulthood. For birth mothers, changing needs for connection related to special life events or changes in personal circumstances.

Discussion and Implications: The study has implications for openness in intercountry adoption, highlighting considerations related to individual needs for choice and changing needs related to connection.

Poster

An audit of child adoption research in Ireland from 1952 to 2017

Tuesday, 6th July - 19:30: (Bramante's cloisters) - Poster

Valerie O'Brien (University College Dublin), Sahana Mitra (Independent Researcher)

Adoption in Ireland is a complex field, especially when the socio-cultural history of adoption in Ireland has been characterized as secretive and closed and there is a continuing lag between Ireland's adoption laws and practices. The audit was commissioned by the Adoption Authority of Ireland (AAI) in 2017 with an aim to provide a comprehensive overview of adoption-research work in Ireland from 1952, when adoption was first legalized in Ireland, till 2017. The research spanning a 65 years period was identified, collected, organized and categorized with the help of 'step-by-step sequential approach methodology'. This resulted in the identification of 404 studies/works across five categories which included journals, books/book chapters, government documents, postgraduate theses and conference/seminar presentations. These categories were further segregated on the basis of kinds of method (i.e., qualitative, quantitative, mixed method, documentary analysis and commentary) and on the basis of primary/secondary data.

Following which, a thematic analysis was undertaken through thematic analysis which focused on 'who was researched', 'what was researched', 'how it was researched' and the 'gaps in the research'. Eight major themes were identified related to birth parents, adopted people (adopted children and adopted adults), adoptive parents, legislation, policy, service provision, stages of adoption and overview of domestic adoption and inter-country adoption.

A summary of the recommendations made to address gaps in the Irish research base are provided. It is intended that this work will assist academicians, policy makers, and service providers and practitioners involved in the adoption field.

Search and reunion in Italy: who, when and what scenarios

Tuesday, 6th July - 19:30: (Bramante's cloisters) - Poster

Anna Miliotti (Professor in post university masters in adoption, Florence)

Now in Italy it's time to search and time for reunions in national and international adoptions. The research examines this recent phenomenon in Italy, with a special focus on anonymous birthparents and birth family reunions. A recent Court of Cassation judgment now allows adoptees over 25 to access the Juvenile Court for an "interpello", a quest for a contact with anonymous birthparents. They have the chance to change their mind, and withdraw the old request for anonymity. First case of reunion was through the Court of Florence, on August 2014, and it was a real success. Now many other cases are changing adoption rules and minds, and many more adoptees are searching. Italy in 50's was a society where secrets and lies were common norm, and anonymity was spread enough. What is actually happening now: are reunions actually possible and accepted? and what about post reunion time? what kind of reunion could an adoptee of our time figure and find out? And how this phenomenon affects the relationship into the adoptive family? The research deals these issues, through statistic, interviews format, and social media groups investigation.

The research will be published on 2020 by Franco Angeli publisher in Milan.

Interethnic adoptions, racism problems? The look of a qualitative research on the last twenty years in Italy

Tuesday, 6th July - 19:30: (Bramante's cloisters) - Poster

Stefania Lorenzini (Università di Bologna)

The research shows how the complexity of the adoption experience is linked to a variety of elements, from the difficulties experienced in pre-adoptive life to the discontinuity produced by adoption itself, up to the changes involved in living in a new environment on a relational, affective and communicative, cultural and linguistic level. These peculiarities may intertwine with other areas of complexity present in the new life context. For example, in the Italian socio-cultural context, which is often imbued with stereotypes and prejudices that demean certain cultural backgrounds and skin colours, there can be episodes of discrimination that also involve adopted children of different origins. Discrimination can be occasional or repeated, explicit or implicit and pervasive, but in all cases it can significantly affect personal well-being, self-esteem and identity building. Numerous interviewees - also in relation to these issues - express being and feeling partly Italian and partly linked to their origins in the form of a split, and not of the coexistence of heterogeneous elements, harmoniously present in a single identity: their own identity. Testimonies, collected through qualitative interviews - carried out between 2000 and 2019 - make it possible to identify elements of racism present in our socio-cultural context and to understand how they may affect the experience of adoptees. These experiences strongly point to the need to become promoters of a far-reaching cultural transformation and they provide important food for thought to rethink the educational responsibilities of adults in the family and at school, from an intercultural perspective.

Group-based social skill intervention for adopted teens

Tuesday, 6th July - 19:30: (Bramante's cloisters) - Poster

Emily Helder (Calvin University), Tami Rigterink (Calvin University), Jennifer Bultsma (Calvin University), Jakob Panzer (Calvin University), Stacia Hoeksema (Calvin University)

Children who have been adopted, especially those who have experienced orphanage care, are at increased risk for difficulties with social functioning (Caprin, 2017). This can include difficulties reading social cues, accurately detecting facial expression of emotions in others, and initiating social relationships with peers. Thus, identifying treatment approaches that can address social difficulties in adoptees fills a key gap in existing literature. The current pilot study investigates the efficacy of the Program for the Education and Enrichment of Relational Skills (PEERS), a 16-week group-based intervention for adolescents and their parents originally developed for autism (Laugeson, et al., 2012). Adolescents sessions consist of didactics and behavioral rehearsal while in a concurrent separate group, parents learn how to help their child practice these new skills outside of the treatment setting. Forty-five teens (mean age = 14.4 years, SD = 1.76; 25% male) participated and had a mean age at adoption of 4.8 years. Results revealed significant improvement in social skill knowledge and in the frequency and quality of “get-togethers” between participants and other adolescents. Teens reported less social anxiety and better self-concept following the intervention. Additionally, improved parent and teen emotional and social adjustment ratings were observed. The pilot study provides initial support for the use of a group-based social skills curriculum to address difficulties in making and keeping friends among adoptees.

Pre-adoptive risk and adoptees' outcomes: The mediating role of adoptive parental competences

Tuesday, 6th July - 19:30: (Bramante's cloisters) - Poster

Caterina Balenzano (Department of Political Sciences, University of Bari), Sabrina Girardi (independent psychologist), Pasquale Musso (Department of Educational Sciences, Psychology, Communication, University of Bari), Rosalinda Cassibba (Department of Educational Sciences, Psychology, Communication University of Bari)

Introduction and aims

Although pre-adoption adversities lived in birth-family and institutional settings negatively influence adoptees (Barcons et al. 2012), the role of adoptive parenting is almost controversial (Audet & Le Mare, 2010) and needs to be better explored. The present study examined adoptive parental competences as a mediator of the relationship between pre-adoptive adversities and adoptees' outcomes.

Method

Adoptive parental couples ($M_{mother} = 48.13$ years; $SD = 5.79$; $M_{father} = 50.08$ years; $SD = 6.32$) of 155 adoptees (current $M_{adoptee} = 9.78$ years; $SD = 4.19$) participated in the study. Parental competences were measured in terms of adoptive mother's and father's acceptance/rejection (PARQ/Control, Rohner & Khaleque, 2005), while adoption outcomes were defined as current emotional and behavioral difficulties (SDQ, Goodman, 1997), socio-relational functioning and auto-regulation skills (frustration tolerance and compliance with the rules). Children gender, age at adoption and length of adoption were used as controlling variables. A SEM approach was applied to investigate the mediation model.

Results

The tested model showed a good fit, $\chi^2(38)=49.29$, $p=.10$, CFI=.970, RMSEA=.044, SRMR=.046. Pre-adoptive risk was related to adoptees' emotional and behavioral difficulties and auto-regulation skills through mother's, but not father's parenting style. A direct association between pre-adoptive risk and adoptees' socio-relational functioning was founded.

Discussion and Implications

Despite the study design limitations, the findings reveal how pre-adoption history may be linked to adoptive mother's parental competences that, in turn, may be related to adoptee's adjustment. Implications for adoption practice are considered, highlighting the importance of pre-adoption parents' training and post-adoption parents' support.

Exploring openness over time in domestic adoption placements within the United States

Tuesday, 6th July - 19:30: (Bramante's cloisters) - Poster

Sally Guyer (University of Oregon), Alyssa Rayhel (University of Oregon), Amy Whitesel (George Washington University), Jody Ganiban (George Washington University), Jenae Neiderhiser (Pennsylvania State University), Misaki Natsuaki (University of California, Riverside), David Reiss (Yale Child Study Center), Daniel Shaw (University of Pittsburgh), Leslie Leve (University of Oregon)

The Early Growth and Development Study is a longitudinal study of 561 linked adoptive and birth families in the United States. Data collection began 3-6 months post-partum and is ongoing through child age 15 years. Adoptive and birth parent reports of openness level and satisfaction with openness were collected multiple times, with current assessments during adolescence.

During infancy, adoptive and birth parents reported their adoption to be 'moderately open' to 'open.' Openness slightly declined over time. Satisfaction with openness was high during infancy, with 69% of adoptive parents and 62% of birth parents reporting they were very satisfied. Satisfaction declined over time with 61% of adoptive parents and 53% of birth parents reporting that they were very satisfied up to 15 years later. At all assessments, more adoptive and birth parents desired the relationship to be more open than those who wished it was more closed.

Preliminary data from our adolescents (n=13) show that adoptees are more likely to have contact with their birth mothers (62%) than fathers (18%). Openness satisfaction varied, with lower ratings for birth fathers than mothers (Satisfied: BM 31%, BF 8%; Neutral: BM 46%, BF 42%; Dissatisfied: BM 23%, BF 50%). The majority of adoptees who had not met one or both of their birth parents indicated they wish to in the future. Additional analyses will examine factors that may influence decreases in openness and satisfaction. We will also examine potential positive effects of openness and satisfaction on adoptees' relationships with their adoptive parents and peers.

Adoptive crisis: true stories, support needs, resources and perspectives

Tuesday, 6th July - 19:30: (Bramante's cloisters) - Poster

Mariagrazia La Rosa (M.A.C. Mamme Adottive Coraggiose), Simonetta Balbi (M.A.C. Mamme Adottive Coraggiose)

introduction,

Behaviour issues in adoptees' adolescence and beyond. Adverse circumstances experienced in childhood. Attachment disorder, lack of positive mirroring, trauma effects, lack of self-confidence

aims,

Bring to light real cases to improve knowledge, require prevention and sustain families with empathy and support instead of judgment

method,

Collection of adoptive mothers' conversations in a virtual forum dedicated to adoptive parents experiencing family crisis. Surveys and graphs

results,

Malaise in the whole family, lack of adequate supports. Need for an effective recovery project to be implemented. Temporary removal: not a failure of adoption. Difficulties and resilience due to Covid-19 pandemic. Parents experience a sense of solitude and difficulty in asking for help. Need for overcoming the shame to access the necessary supports

discussion,

The whole family must be taken over and supported by the institutions. In the pandemic, lack of support from public services. Collaboration among family, institutions, schools and specialists is strongly needed to prevent crisis situations

Implications

Is the children's age of adoption a risk factor? In the forum the average age is significantly higher than for adoptions of the corresponding period, but near to the adoptions of this year. Still, knowledge has increased! What do we expect in ten years from now?

Anonymous births, donor-conception, surrogacy, and the child's right to know their origin: France's ethical quandary

Tuesday, 6th July - 19:30: (Bramante's cloisters) - Poster

Janice Peyre (Enfance & Familles d'Adoption)

Anonymous births, donor conception and surrogacy reflect social attitudes in different countries regarding children's rights to know their origins. In France, these rights differ among these 3 paradigms. Each year, ~600 babies (most eventually adopted), are born anonymously (mothers withhold their identity), ~1250 babies are donor conceived (mostly abroad), and despite a nation ban on surrogacy, ~300 children are born via this route. For children born anonymously, disclosure of their origins depends on the express consent of the mother. For donor-conceived persons, a law scheduled for vote in spring 2020 may end anonymity. In contrast, for children conceived in a surrogacy arrangement, two recent rulings by France's highest court of appeals authorized direct registration of children under their prospective parents' names, essentially expunging their earlier history.

Using statistics, interdisciplinary studies, court rulings, and legislation, the rights of children to know their origins in these varying circumstances of conception and birth will be reviewed.

What emerges is a compartmentalized approach in which the children's interests are not necessarily paramount. Anonymous births are primarily viewed as protecting vulnerable women. Donors, it was thought, needed to be "protected" for fear of shortages. Debates on surrogacy reflect an uncomfortable ethical balancing act.

New legislation on donor conception may lead to other changes (e.g. anonymous births). Viewing these different paradigms of conception and birth from the child's best interest may help avoid future suffering caused by deregulated situations. Ultimately, respecting the children entails respect for donors, birth, and surrogate parents.

Adult adoptees' demands to post-adoption services in Spain

Tuesday, 6th July - 19:30: (Bramante's cloisters) - Poster

Yolanda Sánchez-Sandoval (Universidad de C), Natalia Jiménez-Luque (Universidad de Cadiz), Sebastián Vivas (Universidad de Cadiz)

The number of adoptions increased considerably in Spain as of 1995, with a higher increase between 2004-2005. This means that children adopted during that interval have reached or are near the age of majority. Post-adoption services often focus on the care of children, adolescents, and their families. However, as adoption is a lifelong process, it is also important to know the demands and interventions these services offer to adult adoptees.

This work focuses on determining the post-adoption services that currently exist in Spain, the demands posed by adult adoptees to these services, and their responses to the adoptees.

The services were requested to complete an online questionnaire about adult adoptees' demands to the services during 2018 and the responses offered by those services.

The services of 15 autonomous communities and 11 private entities in Spain participated. The results show a higher proportion of demands in female adult adoptees' aged 18-29 years. There are also more demands for national than for international adoptions. Users come to services voluntarily or by referral from other professionals, and the main demands and responses of the services are oriented to information about their biological families.

This work is particularly important at this time, as the results show that many adoptees have just reached the age of majority or are about to reach it, and they may present new needs. It is necessary to know and strengthen post-adoption services in this group, focusing on the networking of adoption.

Rearing environments and attachment security: a comparison across types of surrogate care

Tuesday, 6th July - 19:30: (Bramante's cloisters) - Poster

Rosalinda Cassibba (Department of Educational Sciences, Psychology, Communication University of Bari), Gabrielle Coppola (Department of Educational Sciences, Psychology, Communication, University of Bari), Alessandro Costantini (Department of Political Sciences, University of Bari), Pasquale Musso (Department of Educational Sciences, Psychology, Communication, University of Bari), Caterina Balenzano (Department of Political Sciences, University of Bari)

The exposure to adverse rearing experiences interferes with attachment security and puts at risk the child's development. In such cases, the removal of the child from the biological family, whether temporary or permanent, is thought to offer positive relational experiences which might compensate for the socio-emotional deficiencies experienced before. The present study aims at testing which type of surrogate care is effective in promoting attachment security and socio-emotional adjustment.

The sample includes 130 Italian adolescents experiencing four types of surrogate care: closed adoption ($n=28$), open adoption ($n=32$), foster care ($n=32$) and institutional care ($n=38$). We used the Attachment Interview for Childhood and Adolescence (Ammaniti et al., 1990) to measure attachment models and the Youth Self-Report (Achenbach & Rescorla, 2001) to assess adolescents' adjustment. The time between the first reporting by social services for child protection and the placement on alternative care was used as proxy for pre-placement risk.

ANOVAs tests showed significant multivariate effects of type of surrogate care. Specifically, both the dependent variables differed significantly across types of alternative care. Adolescents in the closed adoption group reported significantly higher levels of attachment security than their peers in the other groups of alternative care, while adolescents in open adoption scored significantly higher on problem behaviours than those in other groups.

The findings suggest that closed adoption is the most effective type of surrogate care in promoting attachment security, and highlight the importance of choosing the type of care which fits the best with the child's needs and supporting adolescents' adjustment.

What information about intercountry adoptees' past is provided and is this enough, given advances in technologies?

Tuesday, 6th July - 19:30: (Bramante's cloisters) - Poster

Wendy Hawke (Inter-Country Adoption New Zealand), Heather Lear (Inter-Country Adoption New Zealand)

Introduction:

The right to information about one's origins is recognised in the Hague Convention on Inter-country Adoption 1993 (Convention), requiring information to be preserved and accessible.

The information available may have a different significance to today's adoptees, who have access to social media and DNA testing to assist them search and fill in gaps.

Aims:

This study reviewed current practice on the collection and preservation of information and the information seeking process of intercountry adoptees.

Method:

Information provided on 150 children was analysed in terms of twelve information categories. Comparisons were made between countries, over time and between reasons for out-of-home care (abandonment, relinquishment or care and protection). Current young adult adoptees were surveyed on levels of satisfaction and methods for accessing information.

Results:

This study reports on the trends seen over time, the differences between countries, on child backgrounds and the views of current adoptees.

Discussion:

The Convention has raised standards for collection and preservation of information, yet understanding what adult adoptees see as important and how they wish to search, places an obligation to aim for greater information for adoptees. The survey suggests many are using this initial information as a "jumping off" point to help them obtain further information by using social media and DNA testing.

Implications:

Practitioners must aim for greater access to information for adoptees and instead of lamenting over the dangers of utilising social media and genetic testing, must support adoptees who have embraced these modern technologies as a search tool.

Beyond telling: a phenomenology of adoptive parents' adoption communication openness with early adolescents

Tuesday, 6th July - 19:30: (Bramante's cloisters) - Poster

Jane Samuel (University of Kentucky)

Despite calls for increased Adoption Communication Openness (ACO) within the adoption triad, and more specifically within the adoptive family, research indicates that adoptive families still struggle to accomplish the recommended elements and levels of openness. What could be holding families back from this key process? Data from three focus groups comprised of 17 adoptive parents of early adolescents (aged 10-14) who were placed in the adoptive home between the ages 0-2 were thematically coded. This inductive analysis revealed the complexity rooted in being communicatively open. Four key themes emerged painting a vivid picture of a) the breadth and depth of this experience; b) the work entailed; c) the emotionality of it; and d) the grief and loss embedded in it. This phenomenological report strengthens the understanding of the lived-experience of the adoptive parent thus magnifying the call for not only further research into what drives ACO in the adoption triad, but also consistent and supportive pre- and post-adoption services and clinical work.

Foster children mental health and parenting stress in non-kin foster care

Tuesday, 6th July - 19:30: (Bramante's cloisters) - Poster

Jesús Miguel Jiménez Morago (Department of Developmental and Educational Psychology (University of Seville)), Pablo Carrera (Department of Developmental and Educational Psychology (University of Seville)), Nuria Molano (University of Seville), Esperanza León (Department of Developmental and Educational Psychology (University of Seville)), Maite Román (University of Seville)

Despite being a vulnerable population, mental health of looked after children in Spain has been scarcely studied. The present research aims to analyze the children's mental health in non-kinship foster care in two Andalusian provinces and its relation with parental stress in foster caregivers. The sample consisted of 51 children between the ages of 4 and 9 years and their foster families. The instruments used were the Development and Well-Being Assessment (DAWBA) and the Parenting Stress Index-Short Form (PSI-SF). The results showed a high prevalence of mental disorders compared to the general children population (49 % presented at least one disorder). The most prevalent symptomatology was of separation anxiety and of posttraumatic stress. None of the variables in the foster children's past was related with the presence of any disorder or number of disorders except for the birth parents opposition to the foster placement. Consequently, the foster children whose birth parents opposed to the foster placement were more likely to have a mental disorder and presented a higher number of disorders than those foster children whose parents did not oppose. In addition, the presence of children's disorders was related to higher levels of parental stress in foster caregivers. The high prevalence of mental disorders in the foster children point to the need of adequate services and support for foster families. Furthermore, efforts should be made to cultivate a cooperative relationship between the birth and the foster family to promote foster children's mental health.

Attachment in internationally adopted children and its relationship with family functioning

Tuesday, 6th July - 19:30: (Bramante's cloisters) - Poster

Maite Román (University of Seville), Esperanza León (Department of Developmental and Educational Psychology (University of Seville)), Jesús Palacios (University of Seville), Maria Gracia Peñarrubia (Universidad Loyola), Isabel Caceres (University of Seville)

Research into the attachment theory has shown a clear correlation between the child attachment and parental functioning (adult attachment, reflective functioning, maternal sensitivity...) within the context of intergenerational transmission of attachment. In the field of adoption, children have undergone a drastic change of context and caregivers, moving from an environment of adversity to another of protection. Although attachment can be restructured when circumstances change (Bowlby, 1969), there is still much to be learned about the influence of the adoptive family on the attachment system in adopted children. The main goal of this intergenerational study was to examine the relationship between the attachment system in internationally adopted children and the functioning of their adoptive families. This paper is part of the broader project titled *Longitudinal Adoption & Institutionalization Study at the University of Seville* (LAIS.US). The sample consisted of children from the Russian Federation adopted by families in Spain. At the moment of the study, all children were between four and eight years of age, with the adopted children having spent an average of three years with their adoptive families. Attachment was measured in children and the parental functioning and the dynamics of the family were examined too. Results showed the relationship between the attachment system in internationally adopted children and the functioning of their adoptive families. The study provides empirical evidence for intergenerational links within the context of the adoptive family.

Reflections on the Irish domestic adoption process 1952 - 2020

Tuesday, 6th July - 19:30: (Bramante's cloisters) - Poster

Judy Lovett (Adoption Authority of Ireland)

The facilitation of domestic adoption in Ireland was underpinned by State legislation in 1952. Since then, the Irish adoption process has developed and operated within a framework of successive legislative changes, against a backdrop of rapid societal progression. Its implementation incorporates individuals from the areas of social work, law, medicine, and public administration, regularly working alongside volunteer advocates and support group personnel.

Some research on adoption in Ireland has focused on those directly affected – adopted individuals, their birth and adoptive families. Frequently conducted by professionals and volunteers working in the area of adoption, it has led to a wide variety of their viewpoints in the literature. This group are less often direct participants in adoption research. Yet their experiences of being key stakeholders in the process are central to the understanding and further development of adoption policy and practice in Ireland.

The aim of this qualitative study is to capture the experiences of a sample of individuals (n = 12-15) who worked either professionally or voluntarily in the area of adoption in Ireland since its legal inception. In-depth individual interviews will be conducted using elite interviewing techniques. Transcripts will be presented individually, and will also be collated and analysed thematically, and the findings presented in a publicly available written report.

Fieldwork for this study is currently underway, yielding very early interim findings from n=7 participants for discussion at ICAR-7. It is anticipated that the final report will be of use to policymakers and practitioners.

Use of research designs from health studies to evaluate interventions for adopted people

Tuesday, 6th July - 19:30: (Bramante's cloisters) - Poster

Kathleen Whitten (Georgia State University [retired])

Introduction. Studies comparing general outcomes of adopted and non-adopted children have been published since 1960, but simple comparisons give little direction for effective psychological interventions. Recent empirical research has demonstrated significant variability among groups of adopted people and indicates that interventions are most effective if tailored to particular sub-groups or even to individuals.

Aim/methods. This poster presents two relatively new research designs that could be especially useful to evaluate effectiveness of tailored interventions: Sequential, multiple assignment randomized trials (SMART), and micro-randomized optimization trials (MRT).

Results. SMART designs randomly assign participants to one or more interventions for a first phase. Those who do not respond adequately to this phase are re-assigned randomly to one or more interventions in a second phase, and so on. For example, the effectiveness of usual post-adoption follow-up on parent-child attachment could be compared to an enhanced intervention with adoption-specific family counseling in phase one. Families who did not respond during phase one could be re-randomized into additional interventions in phase 2; these could include both family counseling and/or individual education. MRTs provide interventions tailored to individuals and randomized for delivery at particular times through mobile phones or wearable technology. For example, anxiety-reduction interventions can deliver messages to encourage stress reduction, contacting a counselor, or engaging in meditation. Ineffective messages are replaced by other messages to determine the most effective interventions.

Discussion and Implications. SMART and MRT designs meet the need for evaluating interventions tailored to various subgroups of adopted people or to adopted individuals.

Adoptive parents' expectations and the transition to parenthood: effect on child outcomes

Tuesday, 6th July - 19:30: (Bramante's cloisters) - Poster

Kathleen Whitten (Georgia State University (retired))

Introduction. Pre-adoption education for prospective parents addresses expectations, with some curricula considering low expectations for adopted children “realistic.” However, studies show that multiple factors influence the effect of parental expectations on the transition to parenthood and subsequent healthy family functioning.

Aims. This poster presents a review of literature on parental expectations and their interaction with mental health, depression, social support, and couple relationships. It integrates a developmental perspective on changes in expectations from pre-placement throughout the transition to parenthood.

Method. Content comes from a systematic review of 16 empirical studies published since 1991.

Results. Parents with social support had high expectations for their child, themselves as parents, their child's integration with their extended family, and the community. Parents with higher expectations had less depression after adoption. Parents with more cognitive flexibility, especially about their previous losses and infertility, experienced less anxiety. Couples who supported each other also reported less stress during the transition to parenthood. High expectations helped adoptive parents have a more positive transition to parenthood. High expectations for children's academic achievement led to higher grades, but parents' low expectations of children with physical differences hampered their development.

Discussion and Implications. Adoption professionals can assess parents' strengths in social support, couple relationship, and acceptance of adoption by the extended family. They should also emphasize the ways that positive expectations can smooth the transition to parenthood and help buffer pre-placement trauma the child might have experienced.

Promoting support to adopted people with FASD and their families: the experience of the “Italian Association on Disorders due to Prenatal Exposure to Alcohol and Drugs”

Tuesday, 6th July - 19:30: (Bramante's cloisters) - Poster

Claudio Diaz (Associazione Italiana Disordini da Esposizione Fetale ad Alcol e/o Droghe), Massimo Castrucci (Associazione Italiana Disordini da Esposizione Fetale ad Alcol e/o Droghe), Enrica Berton (Associazione Italiana Disordini da Esposizione Fetale ad Alcol e/o Droghe), Alessandra Pisa (Associazione Italiana Disordini da Esposizione Fetale ad Alcol e/o Droghe), Stefania Bazzo (Associazione Italiana Disordini da Esposizione Fetale ad Alcol e/o Droghe)

The “Italian Association on Disorders due to Prenatal Exposure to Alcohol and Drugs” (AIDEFAD – ets/aps) was born on September, 9, 2018, on the occasion of the international FASD awareness day. The association was founded by an initiative of its current president, an adopted man with FASD who discovered only later in adulthood that his disability was due to prenatal exposure to alcohol. The Association is the first organization of patients with FASD in Italy: it was born thanks to the strong motivation of some family members of adopted people with FASD and to the involvement of professionals specialized in FASD, in order to improve the quality of life of people living with this permanent disability. The aims of the association are:

- the implementation of early and correct diagnosis of FASD throughout Italy;
- the dissemination of correct information on the risk and harm caused by the use of alcohol and psychoactive substances during pregnancy;
- the development of treatment and supporting strategies for people with FASD and their family members;
- the promotion of actions to avoid stigma against birth mothers.

Currently the association has more than 70 associates, most of them are adoptive families of people with FASD. The Association is member of the EUFASD Alliance and is developing a broad network of specialists and organizations dealing with the FASD issue, in order to promote activities targeted to people with FASD, families, professionals and the entire community.

AdoPt Project - Adoptive families' strengths, difficulties and service needs: a Portuguese follow-up study

Tuesday, 6th July - 19:30: (Bramante's cloisters) - Poster

Maria Barbosa-Ducharne (Faculty of Psychology and Education Sciences, University of Porto), Joana Soares (Faculty of Psychology and Education Sciences, University of Porto), Joana Baptista (ISCTE- IUL), Diana Alves (Faculty of Psychology and Education Sciences, University of Porto), Orlanda Cruz (Faculty of Psychology and Education Sciences, University of Porto), Isabel Abreu-Lima (Faculty of Psychology and Education Sciences, University of Porto), Catarina Canário (Faculty of Psychology and Education Sciences, University of Porto), Eunice Magalhães (ISCTE- IUL)

Introduction: Together with many positive experiences, adoption brings stress and difficulties. In Portugal, about 1/15 preadoption placements is disrupted. In Europe, 1 in 25 adoptions fail. International data show that around 1/4 adoptions undergo major difficulties that threaten stability/permanence. Portuguese research on these matters is currently very limited. **Aims:** The goal of this poster is to present a recently funded project (AdoPt) aiming at identifying risk/protective factors of postadoption instability/permanence in variables related to adoptees, adopters, parent-child relationships, formal and informal sources of support, and developing, validating and sustaining an online survey system to monitor postadoption pathways and needs. **Method:** Using a cross-sequential design, 3 cohorts of 90 children each, adopted in 2013, 2016 and 2019, will be followed for 3 years with data collection times 12 months apart. Each cohort will include children adopted at ages 0-2, 3-5 and 6-10, ensuring a final age-span of adoptees between 2 and 20 years. Data will be collected online, using adopters and professionals as informants. At the end, data from a representative sub-sample of 90 families will be collected at in-home visits to cross-validate online data (adoptees will also participate). A user-friendly online monitoring and follow-up system will be set up. Families will be provided with feedback and educational resources. Annual sessions with adoption professionals will provide the opportunity to share ongoing findings and design new services. **Expected Results:** With ground-breaking innovations, AdoPt will respond to the need of sound knowledge/better practices for the development of urgently needed postadoption services in Portugal.

Parent perceptions of children's progress & Agency/Service Support

Tuesday, 6th July - 19:30: (Bramante's cloisters) - Poster

Janice Way (IAC - The Centre for Adoption), Mary Mather (IAC- The Centre for Adoption)

Mather et al (2016) showed that in a cohort of 120 children adopted through IAC – The Centre for Adoption, key information on health and development was scant or absent. Prospective parents were therefore proceeding with many “unknowns”. Adopted children are acknowledged to have an increased incidence of health and development concerns which may become apparent only after adoption. Using a cohort of agency families, this study looked at the parent's perception of their child/ren's progress after placement. It also looked at the usefulness of support services during this period.

47 families were identified where children were placed between 2014-2016. 19 agreed to complete questionnaires on a total of 21 children born abroad between 2009-2015. (Age range 3 years 10 months to 10 years 2 months.) The children had been in placement for an average of 54 months. 5 families were also interviewed in detail.

12/21 children were currently meeting all their parent's and school's expectations. Although 7/18 had some initial health issues (e.g. malnutrition, infections) these had resolved.

Only 3/21 children, 2 of whom were special needs adoptees, still had significant health and educational concerns. Limitations of the study included the low response rates and lack of BAME/connected carers representation in the sample.

Responses to support services were a useful indicator for the development of future services both from the agency and other professionals.

In conclusion, over four years after placement, most children were making good progress. It would be useful to repeat this exercise as the group matures.

Adoption openness and adolescent experiences during the Covid-19 pandemic: preliminary findings from the early growth and development study (EGDS)

Tuesday, 6th July - 19:30: (Bramante's cloisters) - Poster

Emily Kelly (Pennsylvania State University), Rachel Level (Pennsylvania State University), Jenae Neiderhiser (Pennsylvania State University), Jody Ganiban (George Washington University), Leslie Leve (University of Oregon), Misaki Natsuaki (University of California, Riverside), David Reiss (Yale Child Study Center), Daniel Shaw (University of Pittsburgh)

The coronavirus pandemic has been a time of isolation and increased stress for adolescents across the country. Openness in adoption has been associated with positive outcomes in adoptees, but restrictions related to the COVID-19 pandemic may have limited openness. We predicted that adoptees with more open adoptions would experience more loneliness and report more negative changes due to the pandemic, because of a loss of some interaction with their birth family. Our sample consisted of 90 adopted children who have been followed from birth as part of the Early Growth and Development Study [54% female, $M_{age} = 14.6$ years, 61% White, 13 % Black/African American, 25% more than one race]. Data collection occurred between 12/2/2020 and 2/23/2021. Participants were asked about their experiences during the pandemic, including how lonely they were, whether COVID-19 changed their sleep, how much COVID-19 negatively affected their life, and how much COVID-19 affected their mental and emotional health. Adoption openness was measured from adoptive parent report of how open the adoption was at the previous wave of assessment (on average 10 months prior). Contrary to our predictions, preliminary findings showed that openness was not related to adolescents' adjustment during COVID-19. This may be related to the prominence of remote communication, which may enable adolescents to maintain similar levels of adoption openness and contact with birth families as before the pandemic. Additional analyses will control for covariates and explore differences in remote communication among adoptees with more open adoptions.

Adoption Communicative Openness in the Early Growth and Development Study (EGDS): An Examination of Parent and Adolescent Report

Tuesday, 6th July - 19:30: (Bramante's cloisters) - Poster

Courtney Wyche (The Pennsylvania State University), Amy Whitesel (George Washington University), Sally Guyer (University of Oregon), Jody Ganiban (George Washington University), Leslie Leve (University of Oregon), David Reiss (Yale Child Study Center), Daniel Shaw (University of Pittsburgh), Misaki Natsuaki (University of California, Riverside), Jenae Neiderhiser (Pennsylvania State University)

High levels of adoption openness predict positive outcomes for the adoption kinship network. This may be due, in part, to within-family communication about adoption. Adoption communicative openness (ACO) is a family's willingness to openly and honestly discuss the shared meaning of adoption. An existing measure designed to assess child perceptions of ACO with parents was adapted by the authors to assess adoptive parent perceptions of ACO with their child. This poster examines the validity of this measure and the agreement between parents and child(ren) on ACO.

The EGDS is a study of 561 adopted children, and their adoptive and birth parents who were recruited shortly after birth through domestic adoption agencies. ACO measures were administered to adoptive parents and children at age 15, with data collection ongoing. Preliminary analyses ($n = 70$ families) show high levels of ACO and high reliability across reporters (α range = .75 to .96). Correlations across parent-child dyads ranged from .07 to .15. The high internal consistency indicates that the ACO adaptation for parents is valid. The modest parent-child correlations indicate that the dyad members (i.e., mother-child or father-child) differ in their perceptions of the level of openness in their communication. Additional analyses will include categorizing levels of perceived ACO, associations with contact and satisfaction with openness level in the adoption kinship network, and comparison of parent and child reports of ACO in order to facilitate more broad use of ACO in adoption research.

Visible Adoption and Ethnic Diversity in Family Firms

Tuesday, 6th July - 19:30: (Bramante's cloisters) - Poster

Cinzia Dessì (Università degli Studi di Cagliari), Angela Dettori (Università degli Studi di Cagliari), Laura Ferrari (Catholic University), Michela Floris (Università degli Studi di Cagliari), Rosa Rosnati (Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore di Milano)

The “family business” refers to a specific family structure that simultaneously manages the internal family dynamic and the financial affairs, involving both parents and children. What happens when a family that owns a business decides to adopt? Facing with ethnic difference, that gives visibility to the adoption, represents one of the crucial challenge in the relational context of family business. Building on the family embeddedness perspective, this study aims to explore how ethnic diversity related to visible adoption is experienced within a family business. Through a single case study, the in-depth analysis of the interviews the manager-family owners allowed us to observe that: a. the importance of family acknowledge of ethnic diversity; b. diversity is involuntarily managed without the adoption of formal Diversity Management practices; c. ethnic diversity is a stress reliever in the family and in the business relationships; d. ethnic diversity is an essential entrepreneurial accelerator. Furthermore, the IOS graphic tool used in the interviews follow-up phase represents how close family members feel to their family and firm highlighting that the family-business relationship's overlapping. Findings show a threefold implication. First, results contribute to visible adoption literature and ethnic diversity studies by opening a new stream of research focused on family business management. Second, results extend the family embeddedness perspective by introducing the visible adoption as an understudied element of family dynamic that, in turn, may be related to family business management. Third, findings suggest visible adoptions as an entrepreneurial accelerator that can stimulate family firms' entrepreneurship orientation.

Adoptive mothers' and fathers' perception of parental relationships: The roles of marital and coparental relationship quality

Tuesday, 6th July - 19:30: (Bramante's cloisters) - Poster

Francesca Danioni (Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore di Milano), Sonia Ranieri (Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore di Milano), Laura Ferrari (Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore di Milano), Elena Canzi (Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore di Milano), Rosa Rosnati (Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore di Milano)

In the adoption field there is a growing evidence that parent-child relationship quality represents a crucial source of resilience for families. However, little is still known about the variables that may influence parental bond and the mediating role played by coparenting, well-documented within the literature on non-adoptive families. This study intended to explore the links among mothers' and fathers' perceptions of marital and parental relationships, assessing the mediating role of in adoptive families with internationally adopted adolescents, in comparison with non-adoptive families. Participants were 91 Italian internationally adoptive married couples, and 69 non-adoptive married couples, with an adolescent child. A self-report questionnaire was administered to participants. Results highlighted similarities and differences concerning mothers' and fathers' relationships within adoptive and non-adoptive families; the influence of marital relationship on parental relationship through coparenting especially emerged within adoptive families.

A new tool (D.A.V.Ad) to build a relationship between the adoptive family and post-adoption services: a case study

Tuesday, 6th July - 19:30: (Bramante's cloisters) - Poster

Barbara Cordella (Department of Dynamic and Clinical Psychology, University of Roma "Sapienza"), Paola Elia (S.P.I.G.A.), Marzia Pibiri (Department of Dynamic and Clinical Psychology, University of Roma "Sapienza"), Alessia Carleschi (Department of Dynamic and Clinical Psychology, University of Roma "Sapienza"), Silvia Monaco (Department of Dynamic and Clinical Psychology, University of Roma "Sapienza"), Fabiola Fedele (Università sapienza)

In literature, the breakdown into adoption is considered to be the result of multiple risk factors concerning: the couple of parents, children and adoption professionals who work with the family. Therefore, it is useful to identify strategies to support the relationship between couple and children but also between couple and services.

Experience the clinical utility of a new tool, a narrative diary, which explores what happens, in terms of emotional events and experiences, during the first meetings between the couple of parents and children, in an international adoption.

We present a diary that was written by a couple who left for a trip (two months) for the international adoption of two sisters, aged 8 and 9. We analyzed the text considering "When, how and what" was "said" and the Parental Reflective. The diary highlights emotions and behaviors that are difficult to understand and manage by the couple of parents. the functioning of the Parental Reflective was 3. The diary is not a diagnostic tool. It is useful for the clinician because it is possible to reflect with the couple on the relational episodes reported. It is useful for a preventive approach and to support in advance the "therapeutic" abilities of the adoptive parents. The diary is a good pretext to help the couple's ability to think about the family relationship and what happens inside it every day. Help the clinician support the adoptive bond.

Assessing vulnerability to prevent risks in adoptive and custodial parenting

Tuesday, 6th July - 19:30: (Bramante's cloisters) - Poster

Mariangela Martirani (ASP Cosenza), Serafina Lavigna (ASP Cosenza), Flaviana Tenuta (Department of Culture, Education and Society University of Cosenza), Martina Bruni (ASP Cosenza), Antonio Gravina (ASP Cosenza), Angela Costabile (Department of Culture, Education and Society University of Cosenza)

Introduction

Parenting is a demanding task that requires adequate support and care (Bornstein, 2005). The affective quality of care, both in natural and adoptive parenting, interacts with the quality of the child social, moral and educational development (Ramchandani, van Ijzendoorn, Bakermans-Kranenburg, 2010). Furthermore, the risk of a potential vicious circle between the vulnerability of the parent and the child's one is high (Neece, Green, Baker, 2012), hence implementation of Parenting Intervention programs is fundamental. The support to vulnerable families is a fundamental act of childhood protection.

The objective of the research

Early identification, during the assessment phases, of risk and protective factors in the parental couple requesting or experiencing temporary foster care or adoption, through the administration of the CUIDA Test in order to plan targeted interventions.

Method

The research sample is made of 30 adults attending a Parenting Group Intervention delivered by Family Consultancy Service ASP of Cosenza. Participants are adoptive parents or couples aspiring to adoption. The CUIDA questionnaire is composed of 189 items organized in 14 primary scales referred to affective, cognitive e social variables. The present work takes in consideration the scales: assertion; empathy; flexibility; reflection; sociability.

Results

A first descriptive statistics underline the following scores: assertion 93%; empathy 90%; flexibility 50%; reflection 80%; sociability 80%.

Conclusions

High scores obtained in the scales object of analysis suggest the presence of competences connected to parental functions that may contrast the risks of vulnerability during the adoption experience.

The “How many stories” laboratory: a bridge between adoptive families and school

Tuesday, 6th July - 19:30: (Bramante’s cloisters) - Poster

Giovanna Martinelli (Adoptive families Association Petali dal Mondo), Sonia Negri (Adoptive families Association Petali dal Mondo), Ester Antonella Vallini (Adoptive families Association Petali dal Mondo), Barbara Ticulin (Adoptive families Association Petali dal Mondo), Marnie Milani (Adoptive families Association Petali dal Mondo), Sonia Memmi (Adoptive families Association Petali dal Mondo), Katia Pazzaglia (Adoptive families Association Petali dal Mondo), Silvia Crespi (Adoptive families Association Petali dal Mondo), Silvia Montinaro (Adoptive families Association Petali dal Mondo), Paola Campomenosi (Adoptive families Association Petali dal Mondo), Elisa Manfredi (Adoptive families Association Petali dal Mondo)

Introduction

Adopted children have very different stories, experiences and families. When the school begins, the parents entrust their sons to teachers, confident that the school is a positive environment where the children can grow, learn, and be able to discover their full potential little by little. Petali dal Mondo, an Italian association of Adoptive families, has studied and applied an innovative and creative proposal: the laboratory “How many stories”.

Aims

The aim of the laboratory is to propose a tool for speaking of the personal history in the classroom, respecting the needs of all students, enhancing the history and uniqueness of each one.

Method

The laboratory is carried out in primary schools and it consists of an experience shared between children, teacher and parents at the start of history’s study.

Results

From 2010, 16 laboratories have been performed (2 for year). Each experience is based on a shared preparation with the teachers, an initial and final meeting with parents and four meetings with children, during which they will be led to explore the stages of their history through visual, auditory and written sources. A workshop for teachers has been made in 2018.

Discussion

The laboratory involved 9 schools in the province of Varese with a full active participation of teachers and children. The good practice has been described in a publication.

Implications

Some team of teachers has made the laboratory by themselves.

Feelings about adoption in domestic and intercountry adoptees

Tuesday, 6th July - 19:30: (Bramante's cloisters) - Poster

Carmen Paniagua (University of Seville), Francisco Rivera (University of Seville), Pilar Ramos (University of Seville), Inmaculada Sánchez-Queija (University of Seville), Concepción Moreno-Maldonado (University of Seville), Eva Leal-López (University of Seville)

Introduction: During adolescence, adoptees face relevant challenges, such as consider their adoption status in the exploration of their self concept and identity. Thus, their feelings about adoption are a relevant aspect of their self-evaluations. The aims of this poster are 1. To know which feelings toward the adoption are more frequent in adopted adolescents, 2. To examined the differences between domestic and intercountry adoption.

Method: Participants come from a representative sample of Spanish adolescents aged 11 to 18 years who participated in the 2018 wave of the WHO-collaborative survey *Health Behaviour in School-aged Children* (HBSC). The group of adoptees consists of 541 adolescents; 67.1% are intercountry adoptees.

Results: Positive feelings were more frequent than negative feelings in the adopted adolescents. Specifically, “adoption makes me feel good” and “adoption makes me feel loved” were the most frequent feelings. Some differences between domestic and intercountry adoption were found.

Discussion: The results described above are far from the conflict image that accompanies adolescents both adopted and non-adopted. Furthermore, our findings in the comparisons between domestic and intercountry adoption support previous studies about diversity in adoption.

Implications: Despite adolescence is a critical period in adoption, professionals working with adopted adolescents should consider that the positive feelings about adoption are more common than the negative feelings, which could be a key tool in promoting the positive development of this population.

A semi-structured interview to understand the operators' point of view about crises and breakdown in the adoption process

Tuesday, 6th July - 19:30: (Bramante's cloisters) - Poster

Daniela Carpenzano (University of Florence), Enrica Ciucci (University of Florence), Laura Bini (University of Florence)

The research on the adoption considering the adoption service providers' point of view is quite scarce (Palacios et al., 2019). The objective of this study is to identify, through the involvement of social workers and psychologists, strengths and difficulties of the adoption practices; in the current study we focus on social workers as participants. A semistructured interview was created ad hoc and administered to 11 female social workers from Center of Italy (mean years of professional experience = 21.60, SD = 8.65 years). The interview consisted of three sections: the first section focused on the suitability assessment of the couple for adoption and the related role of social workers; the second section focused on crises and dissolution in adoption with specific attention to parents' affects and needs as perceived by social workers as well as how to support parents with preventive practices and interventions; the third one further explores social workers' strategies to cope crises and adoption breakdown, their related beliefs and affects, needs of psychological support. The answers were coded with the software QCAmap (Mayring, 2014). Social workers declared the need to support the adoptive couple during the transition to parenthood and in post-adoption and, for themselves, the need for more personal support and multidisciplinary collaboration, especially in the event of crises and adoption breakdown.

Through the eyes of the adopted child: a new approach on disclosing research findings

Tuesday, 6th July - 19:30: (Bramante's cloisters) - Poster

Joana Soares (Faculty of Psychology and Education Sciences, University of Porto), Maria Barbosa-Ducharne (Faculty of Psychology and Education Sciences, University of Porto), Catarina Simas (Faculty of Psychology and Education Sciences, University of Porto), Henrique Silva (Faculty of Psychology and Education Sciences, University of Porto), Ana Catarina Matos (Faculty of Psychology and Education Sciences, University of Porto), Carla Ramos (Faculty of Psychology and Education Sciences, University of Porto), Inês Conceição (Faculty of Psychology and Education Sciences, University of Porto), Mariana Schwarz (Faculty of Psychology and Education Sciences, University of Porto), Marcia Rachide (Faculty of Psychology and Education Sciences, University of Porto)

Introduction: Adoption research should always have a dissemination plan, given its potential to influence adopted children, adoptive parents, adoption professionals, policymakers, the media, adoption practitioners or the community in general. Research is often published in scientific articles, books and/or congress proceedings. However, there are other ways of disclosing research findings, which may be of interest, and reach audiences, beyond the scientific community. In these cases, findings must be published in an appealing way, suited to the target population. **Aims:** To present alternative ways of disclosing/publishing research findings to other populations of interest. **Method:** Digital/printed leaflets and comic strips were used to disclose research findings, in an approachable language to adoptive parents, adoptees and the community in general. **Results/ Discussion:** This poster presents some of the leaflets and comic strips designed for the disclosure of research findings from the adopted child's perspective on his/her own experience of adoption. Topics such as the arrival at the adoptive family, the integration in the adoptive family and the new school, the adaptation to and the development of a sense of belonging to the family and adoption communication are addressed. These results stem from a broader project on the *Individual, Family and Out-of-Family Predictors of Social Competence in Adopted Children*, involving the participation of 103 adopted children, aged 8-10. **Implications:** Being able to share scientific knowledge in a simple and straightforward way with a broader audience who would not otherwise have had such an easy access to reliable and useful information.

Health of Haitian International Adoptees

Thursday, 8th July - 19:30: (Bramante's cloisters) - Poster

Priya George (University of Minnesota), Anna Wojcicki (University of Minnesota), Elise Palzer (University of Minnesota), Dana Johnson (University of Minnesota), Ann Brearley (University of Minnesota), Judith Eckerle (University of Minnesota)

Introduction: The low socioeconomic standing of Haiti has health implications for the country. To date, no research has studied the impact of the country's low development index on Haitian adoptees.

Aims: This project aims to determine whether Haitian adoptees face unique medical issues compared to the general international adoptee population.

Methods: A retrospective chart review of Haitian adoptees age and sex matched with international adoptees placed in the US from East Asia, South/Southeast Asia, and Latin America was conducted between January 2010 and November 2019. Risks were analyzed via logistic and multinomial regressions (N=280).

Results: Haitian adoptees were at higher risk for low hemoglobin (OR=2.95, 95% CI=0.96,9.06), increased lead levels (OR=17.55, CI=6.93,44.45), and increased tuberculosis (OR=3.7, CI=1.57,8.71). Haitian adoptees demonstrated increased active Hepatitis B infections (OR=3.59, CI=0.95,13.51) and lack of immunity to hepatitis B (OR=4.96, CI=2.55,9.64), yet increased immunity to hepatitis A (OR=0.18, CI=0.08,0.39). The odds of having two or more parasite infections were 12.65 times greater in Haitian adoptees (CI=5.16,31.02).

Discussion: High lead levels, parasites, and hepatitis A immunity may be attributed to water and soil contamination (ex: batteries) and poor sanitation. Tuberculosis is highly endemic in Haiti, while gaps in Haiti's vaccination program exacerbated by the earthquake may explain the lack of viral immunity. Malnutrition is likely responsible for hemoglobin deficiency.

Implications: Haitian adoptees face complex medical challenges related to the country's SES, worsened by the 2010 earthquake's impact on public health infrastructure. Providers should be aware of these risk factors and screen with vigilance to optimize the health of this vulnerable population.

Longer-term outcomes of adopted adults' reunions with birth relatives: systematic narrative review

Thursday, 8th July - 19:30: (Bramante's cloisters) - Poster

Donna Shields (Masters student at Ulster University, Northern Ireland)

Aim

An exploration of the emergent themes from fourteen studies, focussing on longer-term outcomes of adoption reunions that take place in adulthood.

Introduction

The Adoption (Northern Ireland) Order 1987 led to the creation of a specialist team, with an Intermediary service that assists with reunions. Involvement ends after initial introductions, so our knowledge as to longer-term outcomes is limited.

Method

A systematic and iterative search of 3 databases: PsycINFO, Social Care Online and Applied Social Sciences Index and Abstracts, sought peer-reviewed journals, from 1987 to 2020. Seven qualitative, five quantitative and two mixed methods papers were identified, quality appraised and thematically analysed.

Results

Although there is near universal endorsement as to the benefits of the reunion process – regardless of outcome, and while a majority retained contact, these relationships are often fragile and tenuous in nature. Six themes are common across the literature: unresolved emotions; expectations; differences in terms of lifestyle, attitudes or values; secrecy; unsupportive behaviour of others; and lack of shared history. Participants are often managing these unsettling relationships without recourse to professional guidance and support.

Discussion

Post-reunion relationships are often experienced as difficult and unsatisfactory. That said, the diversity of experience and complexity of post-reunion relationships make clear definitive conclusions difficult. It is important to appreciate the impact of differing legal, political and cultural contexts.

Implications

More intensive pre-contact support and counselling, plus the extension of professional input in the form of specialist counselling and support beyond the initial stages of reunion, is strongly recommended.

The relationship quality of same-sex couples going through an adoption process

Thursday, 8th July - 19:30: (Bramante's cloisters) - Poster

Margot Bracke (University of Antwerp), Dimitri Mortelmans (University of Antwerp)

An adoption process is considered a challenging life transition and is often described as a rollercoaster experience. In addition, same-sex couples experience additional stressors before and during the adoption process due to their sexual minority status (e.g. internalized homophobia, discrimination, sexism). However, it remains unclear to what extent the adoption process has an impact on the relationship quality of same-sex couples.

This research has three goals. First, we explore the relationship quality among same-sex couples during the adoption process. Second, we gain deeper insights in family stress factors and family reinforcing factors during an adoption process. Last, the insights gained about the perceived impact of the adoption process on same-sex couples' relationship quality can provide an impetus to revise the adoption process in Flanders.

To answer the research question, we used qualitative in-depth interviews conducted by 9 homosexual men. According to numbers provided by Kind en Gezin (Flemish Adoption Agency) we can see that of all same-sex couples who have adopted in Flanders, gay men are the vast majority. Since 2006, there were only 2 lesbian couples who have adopted. For this reason, we exclusively focused on homosexual couples. Questions on the course of the adoption process, relationship quality and the couple's broader context and environment were central. In order to broaden our perspective, we also attended general information sessions on (domestic) adoption to understand the context in which these couples operate.

Results, discussion and implications will be provided in the near future, as the study is currently ongoing.

Dancing alone is not enough: The bidirectional Influence of Parent and Child Characteristics during the first four Years after Adoption

Thursday, 8th July - 19:30: (Bramante's cloisters) - Poster

Simon Fiore (KU Leuven, Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences, Belgium; Ghent University, Department of Developmental, Social, and Personality Psychology, Belgium), Nicole Vliegen (KU Leuven, Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences, Belgium), Bart Soenens (Ghent University, Department of Developmental, Social, and Personality Psychology, Belgium), Patrick Luyten (KU Leuven, Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences, Belgium; University College London, United Kingdom)

Introduction. Child development is increasingly considered to involve bidirectional interactions among children and parents. Given that adoptive parents and adopted children are genetically unrelated, adoptive families provide interesting insights into purported bidirectional interactions between parents and children. Negative affectivity is likely to play an important role in this context, particularly in interaction with parent characteristics such as self-criticism.

Aims. This study will investigate potential bidirectional associations between self-criticism in adoptive mothers and fathers and negative affectivity in internationally adopted children during the first four years after child arrival. Parenting stress will be investigated as a possible mediator.

Method. This multi-informant study is part of a broader study focusing on the development of internationally adopted children and their adoptive parents in Belgium. For this study, analyses focus on self-report measures of parents' self-criticism and negative affectivity in a group of 48 adopted children up to four years after child arrival (M_{age} in months upon arrival=14.82, SD_{age} in months upon arrival = 6.65). A multilevel mediation analysis framework will be used.

Results, Discussion and Implications will be discussed.

Qualitative study of the experience and the determinants of two specific positions among adoptees regarding parenthood

Thursday, 8th July - 19:30: (Bramante's cloisters) - Poster

Johanna Despax (Aix-Marseille University), Evelyne Bouteyre (Aix-Marseille University), Onsua Halidi (Aix-Marseille University)

Most works studying adoptees has been carried out on children. Few studies have looked at adoptees as adults, let alone their attitude to the founding of a family. Adoptees and parenthood is a subject that has received little attention in previously published research. The few studies conducted on this subject present significant methodological bias and are not interested in adoptees refusing to become parents (as pointed out by Greco, Rosnati & Ferrari, 2015) or those who invest massively in this project. In this study, our objective is to better understand the experience and the determinants of two specific positions regarding parenthood taken by adoptees: refusal or massive investment. 13 semi-structured interviews were carried out with adopted adults with a “specific” position in respect of parenthood. The verbatim transcripts from these interviews were submitted to a thematic analysis carried out using QDA Miner 5 software. The results of this analysis provide information on the experience of adoptees who refuse parenthood (satisfaction, parenting by proxy, positioning regarding the adoption of a child, etc.) and of adoptees who invest massively in parenthood (parenting style, desire for children, difficulties encountered), as well as on the determinants of these specific positions (impact of adopted status, relationships with adoptive parents and with their partner). These results provide a better understanding of the potential suffering of adoptees regarding parenthood as well as the challenges that this stage of life can hold for adoptees and their children. Theoretical and clinical implications are discussed.

The decline of intercountry adoption from South Korea: A content analysis

Thursday, 8th July - 19:30: (Bramante's cloisters) - Poster

Camie Tomlinson (Virginia Commonwealth University)

Introduction: Negative media coverage of the “export of babies” from Korea during the 1988 Seoul Olympics is cited for the decline in Korean intercountry adoption (ICA). However, few studies have analyzed U.S. media coverage of ICA during this time.

Aims: This study explored how Korean ICA was framed within U.S. newspapers from 1983-1993, and sought to identify other factors that may have contributed to the Korean ICA decline.

Method: Qualitative content analysis was used to categorize the final sample of 47 articles as positive or negative portrayals of ICA.

Results: ICA was portrayed positively in a majority of articles (59.7%), while negative portrayals (36.17%) highlighted cases of fraud or abandonment. Between 1983-1988, only one negative portrayal was published, but starting in 1988 negative portrayals increased in frequency. Korean cultural and economic changes, fraudulent practices, and increased cost emerged as themes that may have contributed to the decline in ICA.

Discussion: The co-occurrence of increases in negative portrayals and the decline in Korean ICA in 1988 supports prior claims that negative media portrayals may have influenced rates of Korean ICA. This study builds on and expands prior work by identifying other factors that may have contributed to the decline in ICA.

Implications: Implications for policy and practice are discussed in the context of current media portrayals of ICA. Future research should examine how media portrays adoptees and birth/adoptive parents and how those portrayals impact their lived experiences.

Parental sensitivity and socio-emotional child development in Russian substitute families

Thursday, 8th July - 19:30: (Bramante's cloisters) - Poster

Karina Tumanian (Saint Petersburg State University), Rifkat Muhamedrahimov (Saint Petersburg State University), Daria Chernego (Saint Petersburg State University), Mary Dozier (University of Delaware)

Introduction: According to the attachment theory (Ainsworth et al., 1978) sensitive parental care is fundamental for the child's ability to form secure attachment and for the healthy development. Mothers in substitute families often struggle to respond sensitively to the cues of children with early institutional experience.

Aim: The present study examined parental sensitivity of mothers in substitute families (adoption; foster care; custody) in comparison with biological mothers in the Russian Federation (RF)

Methods: Participants included 84 mother-child dyads (the age range in mothers 21-68 years, in children 8-56 months) with 40 substitute mothers and 44 biological mothers with children. Parental sensitivity (observed during the free play interaction) was assessed and coded using the three 5-point scales: "Sensitivity/responsiveness to non-distress", "Intrusiveness", "Positive regard" adapted from the NICHD Observational Record of the Caregiving Environment (ORCE; NICHD ECCRN, 1996).

Results: The findings showed significant differences in parental sensitivity between substitute and biological mothers. The substitute mothers showed less sensitivity/responsiveness toward their children and more intrusiveness during the interaction in comparison with biological mothers.

Discussion: The study outcomes expand the notion about parental sensitivity in Russian substitute families with postinstitutionalized children. The results reveal the lack of sensitive and responsive care of substitute mothers toward their children and emphasize the necessity of implementation of evidence-based early intervention programs into the supporting system for Russian substitute families.

Why are adopted children rejected more by their peers at school? An analysis of variables associated with rejection in school-age adoptees

Thursday, 8th July - 19:30: (Bramante's cloisters) - Poster

Isabel Caceres (University of Seville), Maite Román (University of Seville), Carmen Moreno (University of Seville), Maria Gracia Peñarrubia (Universidad Loyola), Jesús Palacios (University of Seville)

Introduction & Aims. In a previous work, Caceres et al. (2018) found that school-age adoptees from Russia in Spain were more likely to be rejected by their peers at school than the normative population. The main objective of this work is to analyze several protective and risk factors that might influence the sociometric status of adoptees in their peers groups.

Method. Sociometric activities were carried out in the classrooms of 24 internationally adopted children from Russia in Spain ($M_{age} = 10.12$, $DT = 1.36$); 45.8% of them were rated as rejected by their classmates. In this study, these children ($n = 11$) were compared to the rest of adoptees ($n = 13$) for variables related to early adversity and maltreatment, cognitive development, executive function, emotional development and academic and psychosocial adjustment. This paper is part of the *Longitudinal Adoption & Institutionalization Study at the University of Seville* (LAIS.US).

Results. Adoptees who were rejected by peers obtained lower scores in emotion comprehension than the rest of adoptees in a facial recognition task. Their peers at school rated rejected children as being shyer than the rest of the adoptees but differences in other conduct such as aggression, were non-significant. Preliminary results suggested that psychological adjustment, social skills and academic competence differed very little between rejected and non-rejected adoptees.

Discussion & Implications. This is the first study to perform an in-depth study of school-aged adoptees' characteristics when rejected by their peers. This study highlights key variables for the intervention in the adoption field.

A new “Reflection” of self. Stories of adoptees and their transition to parenthood

Thursday, 8th July - 19:30: (Bramante's cloisters) - Poster

Greta Bellando (Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore di Milano)

This research focused on the experience of adoptees and their transition to parenthood. The qualitative method was used for the exploration of what it means for an adoptee to become a parent. Open-ended interviews (about ten questions) were carried out via Skype or by phone.

The sample consisted of 13 adoptees (average age: 38 years): 10 women (1 who had been fostered, 2 are now also adoptive mothers) and 3 men. The interviews include two stories of adoptive mothers who explain their feelings about becoming grandmothers through their daughters' childbearing.

The study also explores if adoption affects the relationship between partners and how the couple's feelings during pregnancy and how far such an event is shared by adoptees with their adoptive parents.

The findings show that during the transition to parenthood, recollection of life experiences from very early childhood can lead adoptees to disentangle their past and help develop new perception of identity. The phrase “*Someone who looks like me*” was recurrent and it seemed the first certainty ever experienced.

The birth of a child brings back memories of one's own birth and generates thoughts about the birth mother's experience as well as the adoptive mother's experience in relation to childbearing.

The birth of a child appears to lead adoptees to return to the past and “come back to self” with new queries as well as certainties for the future.

Bellando G., Un'altra immagine di me. Adulti adottati oggi genitori: un percorso di narrazione, Ets 2015

Social worker perspectives on the preparation to adopt course

Thursday, 8th July - 19:30: (Bramante's cloisters) - Poster

Anne Murphy (University of East Anglia)

Prospective adopters in the UK are required to have training as part of the approval process. Social workers are the key professionals involved in the preparation process and statutory guidance gives them discretion over how the course is delivered. Yet relatively little is known of their views on the practical considerations, experiences and challenges of the pre-adoption training. This study aimed to examine practitioner perspectives on these courses. Eight social workers experienced in delivering the course were interviewed and data were analysed thematically. Social workers described a balancing act at the heart of the course, between introducing the reality of adoption and disheartening prospective adopters. This means that they must operate careful emotional management of the course, balancing distressing material on children's pre-adoption experiences and positive stories of adoptive family life. They use experiential exercises to 'make it real'. Understanding of child development theory underpins the social workers' course delivery, but they were cautious about explicit presentation of theory due to concerns it may be alienating. Issues were raised around how the learning from the course was integrated into the overall assessment process and communicated with the social workers leading this part of the process. Social workers used the course to disseminate research material when it was available in accessible resources. A follow-up project is planned, looking at the prospective adopters' experience using a qualitative longitudinal research design.

Psychological adjustment and interaction patterns between caregivers and foster children

Thursday, 8th July - 19:30: (Bramante's cloisters) - Poster

Nuria Molano (Department of Developmental and Educational Psychology (University of Seville)), Esperanza León (Department of Developmental and Educational Psychology (University of Seville)), Pablo Carrera (Department of Developmental and Educational Psychology (University of Seville)), Jesús Miguel Jiménez Morago (Department of Developmental and Educational Psychology (University of Seville)), Maite Román (University of Seville)

Foster caregivers have the important task of care and nurture children who had been exposed to early adversity. They should be prepared to understand their needs and be responsive, proactive, and sensitive to them. This study is focused on examining the interaction between children in non-kin foster care and their main caregivers, paying attention to the behaviors that the latter use to promote a secure attachment. Its aim is also to study the relationship between the characteristics of the interaction and the children's psychological adjustment. The sample is made up of 51 Spanish children between 4 and 9 years old and their main caregivers: 28 permanent and 23 temporary foster care dyads. We explored their interaction during a building task by registering microanalytically their verbal, non-verbal, and global behavior variables. To assess the children's psychological adjustment, the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) was applied. Children's psychological adjustment difficulties were related to a negative interaction style between the adult and the child. These results help us understand how psychological difficulties and interactions within the foster family are related, as well as which specific aspects of the interaction seem to be associated with emotional or behavioral problems.

Pre-adoption contact in Early Permanence placements: The relationship between prospective adopters and birth parents

Thursday, 8th July - 19:30: (Bramante's cloisters) - Poster

Ruth Copson (University of East Anglia)

In the UK, Early Permanence projects which aim to reduce delay in permanency for children in care, such as 'Fostering for Adoption' (FfA) and 'Concurrency', involve placing infants with foster carers who may go on to adopt them. Carers often have 'pre-adoption contact' during care proceedings, meeting birth parents regularly at supervised contact sessions (between infant and parent) and at formal meetings. This route to adoption has some unique challenges, including significant uncertainty for carers and parents. The aim of this study was to retrospectively explore how adopters navigated relationships with their child's birth parents.

A qualitative approach was used, undertaking semi-structured interviews with five adoptive mothers and one adoptive father who had fostered their adopted child through a UK FfA programme. Data were analysed using thematic analysis. All carers described mixed emotions towards birth parents, which changed over time. Despite there being some negativity, overarching feelings were compassion and empathy towards birth parents. It was particularly helpful for adopters to get to know birth parents 'in real life', which could aid life story work and post-adoption contact. Overall, the study highlights how the benefits of prospective adopters meeting birth parents generally outweigh the challenges, but FfA is a route to adoption which is fraught with stress and emotion. In practice, professionals should ensure prospective adopters and birth parents have robust support to enable them to engage positively in pre-adoption contact.

Further research in managing supervised contact in Early Permanence placements is currently being undertaken by the researcher.

Birth parents' experiences of contact with children adopted in the last 10 years: making and living out arrangements in Northern Ireland

Thursday, 8th July - 19:30: (Bramante's cloisters) - Poster

Sarah Hansen (Queens University Belfast)

Northern Ireland is perceived as having more open contact arrangements after adoption from the public care system than the rest of the UK. There is ambiguity around where the impetus for this practice has arisen. A missing piece of research was on how birth parents understood and experienced the making of plans for post adoption contact and the contact that takes place. This PhD research project aimed to capture those experiences in order to contribute to the understanding of the making of arrangements and what contributes to making contact work. To do so, semi-structured interviews with five birth parents were conducted. As an aspect of the decision-making process takes place in Court, interviews were also carried out with twelve lawyers involved in such proceedings. An interpretive phenomenological analysis is being carried out on the data which will contribute to a rights-based analysis of the legal framework, practice and procedures around post adoption contact. Preliminary findings from birth parent interviews have raised themes of participation in decision making, understanding of the concept of adoption, roles and titles and implications for other family members. Preliminary findings from lawyers have shown themes around decision making, empathy, concerns over jurisdictional size, input from experts and children's identity needs.

Sleeping problems of internationally adopted children –results from the Finnish Adoption (FinAdo-) Study

Thursday, 8th July - 19:30: (Bramante's cloisters) - Poster

Hanni Rönnlund (Department of Pediatrics, University of Turku, Turku, Finland), Marko Elovainio (University of Helsinki and Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare, Helsinki, Finland), Hanna Raaska (Department of Child psychiatry, Helsinki University Central Hospital, Helsinki, Finland), Anna-Riitta Heikkilä (Department of Pediatrics, University of Helsinki and Helsinki University Central Hospital, Finland), Irina Virtanen (Department of Clinical Neurophysiology, University Hospital of Turku, Turku, Finland), Helena Lapinleimu (Departments of Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine, University of Turku and University Hospital of Turku, Turku, Finland)

Introduction

Previous studies have suggested that internationally adopted children have problems with their sleep. However, we do not know whether the parental perceptions of sleep quality between biological and internationally adopted children are actually different.

Aims

The aim of the present study was to explore the extent and variety of sleeping problems of internationally adopted children compared with children living with their biological parents.

Method

The study group consisted of 74 internationally adopted children (mean age 3.5 years [yrs.], standard deviation [SD] 1.7) and 94 controls (mean age 4.7 yrs, SD 1.3). Parents filled out the Sleep Disturbance Scale for Children (SDSC), a 26-item questionnaire which analyzes the total amount and six subscores of children's sleeping problems. Parents also reported on their own well-being and socioeconomical factors. The study is a part of FinAdo 2-study, an on-going project examining the health and well-being of internationally adopted children in Finland.

Results

Adopted children had a higher score for sleep breathing disorders (4.5, SD 2.1, vs. 3.8, SD 1.1, $p=0.024$), and sleep hyperhidrosis (5.9, SD 2.5 vs. 4.9, SD 1.7, $p<0.001$) compared to controls. All associations were adjusted for age and sex.

Discussion

Stress and untreated medical conditions may increase child sleeping problems after adoption. Further research is needed to understand and improve the sleep of adopted children.

Implications

Professionals working with adoptive families should be aware of these issues. Pediatrician should be consulted to recognize untreated medical conditions and psychological stress should be taken into account.

Effects of proximal stress on substance use in internationally-adopted and comparison youth

Thursday, 8th July - 19:30: (Bramante's cloisters) - Poster

Austin Blake (Arizona State University), Emilia Ninova (UCLA), Yael Waizman (UCLA), Joao Guassi Moreira (UCLA), Nim Tottenham (Columbia University), Jennifer Silvers (UCLA)

Introduction:The impact of early life stress (ELS) has been studied extensively among children adopted internationally from institutional care. Despite ample evidence associating ELS with later substance abuse, no studies to date have investigated substance use among internationally-adopted (IA) youth. Further, accounting for the moderating impact of *proximal* stress (PS) on substance use in this population is imperative.

Aims:The present study aimed to test whether ELS (institutional care prior to adoption) moderated the impact of PS on substance use.

Method:The sample consisted of 146 youth ($M_{age}=15.6$; 62 IA) in a follow-up to a longitudinal study examining IA and non-adopted youth. Youth (if 18 or above) or parents reported on youth's exposure to recent negative life events with the Life Events Questionnaire (Sarason et al., 1978). Youth also reported on use of alcohol, tobacco, and marijuana. A latent factor score for substance use was created (factor loadings: .71 - .92).

Results:Controlling for age and level of parental education, IA youth reported less substance use ($B = -.14, p = .04$), but PS was not a predictor of substance use. There was no interaction between PS and ELS.

Discussion:The present study is one of the first to examine substance use in IA and comparison youth. The effect of ELS on substance use did not depend on exposure to PS. Surprisingly, ELS predicted *lower* substance use, despite abundant literature to the contrary.

Implications:Potential effects of early deprivation, such as reductions in risk-taking, may protect against substance involvement.

Grief and satisfaction with adoptive family contact among birth mothers: a mixed-methods approach

Thursday, 8th July - 19:30: (Bramante's cloisters) - Poster

Emily Lapidus (University of Kentucky), Cassandra Vázquez (University of Kentucky), Madison Burt (University of Kentucky), Elizabeth Chapleau (University of Kentucky), Rachel Farr (University of Kentucky)

Birth mothers of children placed for adoption are underrepresented in research. However, with the surging popularity of adoption openness in the United States it is important to understand their contact experiences. We explore if satisfaction of contact predicts grief experienced by birth mothers for the child placed for adoption. Participants ($N = 63$) were recruited primarily through organizations serving adoptive and birth families. Participants completed measures assessing dimensions of social support and grief related to the child placed for adoption. They were also asked to rate their satisfaction of contact with the adoptive family. A subsample of participants also completed an interview about their contact experiences. Interview data were analyzed for themes related to contact satisfaction. We hypothesized that the relationship between satisfaction of contact and participants' grief of the adopted child would depend on their family functioning and how supported participants felt by their social network when controlling for mental health. There was a main effect of satisfaction with contact such that birth mothers who had more satisfaction reported less grief. There were no significant main effects for our moderators or covariate. The main effects were not qualified by significant interactions between any variables of interest. Our hypothesis was partially supported such that satisfaction of contact predicted participants' grief of the adopted child. Our qualitative findings provide anecdotal evidence supporting the notion that greater satisfaction with contact is related to greater positive outcomes for birth mothers. These findings hold important implications for supports related to adoption openness and policy.

Follow-up of motor skills in internationally adopted children. Results from the Finnish Adoption (FinAdo) study

Thursday, 8th July - 19:30: (Bramante's cloisters) - Poster

Anna-Riitta Heikkilä (Department of Pediatrics, University of Helsinki and Helsinki University Central Hospital), Marko Elovainio (University of Helsinki and Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare), Hanna Raaska (Department of Child psychiatry, Helsinki University Central Hospital), Helena Lapinleimu (Department of Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine, University and University Hospital of Turku, Turku, Finland)

Introduction: At arrival in a new home country internationally adopted children often have developmental delays. Motor problems are common.

Aims: To evaluate motor development of internationally adopted children between 3 months post-adoption (Time 1) and a year later (Time 2).

Methods: The Finnish Adoption study (FinAdo 2) is a follow-up study of the health and wellbeing of internationally adopted children in Finland. At arrival motor development was tested in fifty children aged 3 to 7 years (Mean 3.4 years) by using Movement Assessment Battery for Children (Movement ABC-2), a tool to identify children with motor function difficulties. The test contains 8 tasks covering 3 categories: Manual Dexterity, Aiming and Catching, and Balance.

Results: Manual dexterity skills were delayed among sixty-two percent of the children at Time 1 but within normal range at Time 2. Eighty-four percent had normal skills in Aiming and Catching and sixty-two percent in Balance, and the mean percentile of total test results was in normal range at Time 1. Improvement of motor skills was seen in all categories. The differences were robust to adjustment for gender, health status, and mothers' education.

Discussion: Difficulties in manual dexterity at the time of adoption among internationally adopted children may be due to stressful conditions prior adoption and lack of opportunities to practice manual dexterity skills.

Implications: Two thirds of the internationally adopted children have some difficulties in motor development at arrival but the majority of them show a marked catch-up development during their first year in new surroundings.

Exploratory study on parent's experiences in the case of international adoptions following the 2010 earthquake in Haiti

Thursday, 8th July - 19:30: (Bramante's cloisters) - Poster

Angela Esquivel (Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières), Patricia Germain (Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières)

After the 2010 earthquake in Port-au-Prince, the adoption process for several Quebec families was accelerated. Some parents who were not ready found themselves with their child in their arms. It should be noted that 127 children arrived in emergency situations in Quebec. Parents ended up with their children, whom they were waiting for months, if not years.

Aims:

- Describe the affective characteristics that emerge from parenting discourse.
- Identify the challenges and strengths of parenting following a significant event.
- Identify what can support the parenting experience in international adoptions following a significant event.

Method: Phenomenological research among 11 families who adopted in Haiti following the earthquake in January 2010. Semi-structured interviews with 10 mothers and 2 fathers.

Results: The results obtained during the analysis made it possible to identify the emotional experience of becoming parents in the midst of a crisis: Parents experienced emotional shock; They felt as if they were living between two worlds as they were exposed to images of the catastrophe for days; Most of the children have arrived with significant health issues that have had an impact until now.

Discussion: The results of this study demonstrate the relevance and urgency of providing adequate clinical support for adoptive parents who are in crisis during their adoption process. As seen during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The adoption practitioners need to be informed about the reality of adopted children for optimal support of adoptive families and realize how health issues can have an impact on the parenting experience.

Illuminating adoptive family practices in India – A narrative analysis of policy and lived experience - A pioneer research!

Thursday, 8th July - 19:30: (Bramante's cloisters) - Poster

Sushri Sangita Puhan (University of Sussex)

This research concerns how adoptive family lives are practised in contemporary India from a social work perspective. It was conducted in a time of urgent and contentious policy changes that emphasise radical new ways of thinking about the practice of adoptive family life as a legitimate version of kinship. Drawing on theories of family and kinship, it illuminates everyday practices of the adoptive family in an environment where changing legal narrative contradicts the practice narrative. It reports in-depth accounts of adopted people, adoptive parents, and social work practitioners of adoptive family lives as practised in contemporary India.

It makes four analytical claims: Firstly, diversity is analysed and documented within adoptive family practices and displays in India. This diversity arises in response to the challenges adoptive families face in their everyday lives while creating a legitimate version of kinship. Secondly, 'doing' the adoptive family in India is 'hard work' – mentally and emotionally taxing and procedurally exhausting - and cannot be done through following a structured template. Thirdly, the processes involved in doing the adoptive family involve negotiating and renegotiating the hard work to sufficiently demonstrate familial relationships. Ultimately, this research suggests that in the context of changing socio-cultural and political times and competing and contrasting narratives, policy plays a strategic function to author adoptive family lives. Adopted people, adoptive parents and practitioners are expected to 'doing' adoptive family following a blended approach, directed by the policy narrative as well as dialogic engagement and not in the ways they necessarily want.

Developing a pilot measure to assess satisfaction with ethnic/racial identity (ERI) and cultural socialization among transracially adopted individuals

Thursday, 8th July - 19:30: (Bramante's cloisters) - Poster

Kate Golden (Rutgers University), Brett Greenfield (Rutgers University)

Introduction: While most scales that measure ethnic/racial identity (ERI) and cultural socialization privilege parent perspectives, this measure was constructed to reflect the adopted person's point of view. This encourages a holistic representation of the personal, social, community, and caregiving contexts in which identity develops.

Aims: To present a pilot measure of satisfaction with ERI and socialization for adopted individuals, and share lessons learned during the development of this tool.

Method: Using the DeVellis method for scale development (2016), constructs central to ERI and socialization were operationalized as a formative measurement model. The measure was piloted with 13 key informants including social workers and adopted individuals. Cognitive interviewing was used to elicit potential sources of error.

Results: The final pilot measure includes four subscales: 1) Perceptions of caregivers' attitudes and socialization practices relative to ERI; 2) Formative experiences with ERI; 3). Respondent attitudes and beliefs towards ERI; and 4) Appraisal of ERI. Administration highlighted the value of maximally inclusive response options and exercising sensitivity with "triggering" topics.

Discussion: Developing a measure of identity satisfaction that reflects adopted individuals' unique conceptualizations of self fills an important gap in research. Examining identity should encompass individuals' own interest in their unique background. Continued testing and validation of the tool will better capture adopted individuals' varied experiences with socialization and its effects on ERI.

Implications: This measure can inform best practices for child welfare policy makers and practitioners by improving empirical research on the association between ERI satisfaction and well-being.

Different constellation and shining stars: lesbian parents' voices on accessing healthcare for their adopted children

Thursday, 8th July - 19:30: (Bramante's cloisters) - Poster

Lucille Kelsall-Knight (University of Birmingham)

Introduction:

The past few decades have seen significant changes in family demographics. It is now more common for parents to be lesbians, which may be due to increased social acceptance and the dissolution of legal barriers to parental responsibility.

Adoption transforms the lives of some of the most vulnerable children. In 2018, 1 in 8 children in England were adopted by same-sex parents. Adopted children have an increased incidence of additional health care needs and therefore dental and medical appointments in comparison to children who remain with their biological parents.

Aim:

This study sought to hear the experiences of lesbian mothers accessing healthcare for their adopted children in England and the rhetoric and language they encountered.

Method:

A small scale qualitative study, using a narrative inquiry approach. The study population gained by purposive sampling was of six lesbian adoptive parents.

Results:

Fives themes emerged: attitudes and managing healthcare experiences, navigating heteronormativity, nuances associated with adoption and 'hidden history', professional expectations and reflective imagery

Discussion:

The needs and challenges of lesbian adoptive families may be different to those of heterosexual and biological families and the participants experienced positive and negative interactions with healthcare professionals.

Implications:

The healthcare provider should be aware of the adoption process in England, diversity of the population in which they practice and should deliver inclusive services through the use of appropriate terminology, positive representation of adoption and same-sex parents and also offer sensitivity to their patients and families as children will attend healthcare settings with their parent/s.

Couple relationship flourishing and procreative options to overcome infertility

Thursday, 8th July - 19:30: (Bramante's cloisters) - Poster

Ioana Zagrean (Department of Human Sciences, LUMSA University, Rome), Claudia Russo (Department of Human Sciences, LUMSA University, Rome), Giulia Davì (Department of Human Sciences, LUMSA University, Rome), Francesca Danioni (Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore di Milano), Daniela Barni (Università degli Studi di Bergamo)

Only few studies consider attitudes toward procreative options in the case of infertility and the individual and couple factors potentially predicting these attitudes. This study focused on couple relationship flourishing and analyzed its association with attitudes toward several procreative options: adoption, foster care, assisted reproductive technologies (i.e., homologous fertilization, heterologous fertilization, surrogacy), and living without children. According to the eudaimonic view, flourishing does not merely refer to relationship happiness or satisfaction, but it is characterized by intimacy, commitment, personal growth, and resilience (Fincham & Beach, 2010). Flourishing relationships are source of meaning and purpose in life and provide an “identity of us with a future” (Fincham, Stanley, & Beach, 2007, p. 280). In the present explorative study we involved 218 Italian women of childbearing age ($M=31.7$; $SD=6.3$) with a heterosexual stable couple relationship. They were asked to complete a self-report questionnaire including the Relationship Flourishing Scale (Fowers et al., 2016) and a series of ad hoc items to measure their attitudes toward procreative options. Results of correlation analysis showed that couple relationship flourishing was positively related to adoption, foster care, and homologous fertilization. In other words, in case of infertility, the more women perceive to be in a flourishing couple relationship, the more they are willing to adopt or foster a child, or to opt for homologous fertilization. On the contrary, there were no significant associations of flourishing with heterologous fertilization, surrogacy, and the choice to live without children. Implications of results and future research developments will be discussed.

Post-adoption mindful parenting interventions: Acceptability and preferences of Portuguese adoptive parents

Thursday, 8th July - 19:30: (Bramante's cloisters) - Poster

Raquel Pires (Center for Research in Neuropsychology and Cognitive Behavioral Intervention, Faculty of Psychology and Education Sciences, University of Coimbra), Stephanie Alves (ProChild CoLAB Against Child Poverty and Social Exclusion), Maria Cristina Canavarro (Center for Research in Neuropsychology and Cognitive Behavioral Intervention, Faculty of Psychology and Education Sciences, University of Coimbra)

Introduction: Parents' psychological and parenting functioning are recommended targets for post-adoption interventions. However, few studies have assessed adoptive parents' acceptability and preferences regarding those interventions; none of them has considered Mindful Parenting Interventions (MPI), a recent and promising approach in the adoption field.

Aim: To examine Portuguese adoptive parents' acceptability and preferences regarding MPI, and to explore child, parent, and adoption correlates.

Method: Cross-sectional data from 368 adoptive parents (65% females; children's age $M=10$ years) was collected through an online survey disseminated by national adoption agencies. Parents completed self-report measures of depressive and anxious symptoms and parenting stress. Children's emotional/behavioral difficulties were accessed through parents' report.

Results: Approximately 93% of parents considered that MPI would be useful, and 76% would be available to participate. Worse mental health indicators from both parents and children were associated with greater perceived utility and availability to participate. Parents available to participate were predominantly females (68.5%), younger ($M=46.8$ years; $SD=5.18$), and with no biological children (79.4%); their adopted children were also younger ($M=9.96$ years; $SD=3.67$), adopted more recently ($M=5.64$ years; $SD=3.36$) and at an older age ($M=4.27$ years; $SD=3.36$). No associations were found for pre-adoption adversities and adoption characteristics. Parents' preferences regarding specific features of dissemination, format, content, and significant correlates, will be described.

Discussion: Findings support adoptive parents' acceptability of MPI and inform about specific target groups and intervention features to be considered.

Implications: By ensuring acceptability of post-adoption MPI and directly informing its development according to parents' preferences, this study may contribute to a more effective implementation of evidence-based interventions among adoptive parents.

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