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Symposia appear in alphabetical order based on the last name of the first convenor. The
papers included in each symposium follow their order of presentation within each
symposium rather than alphabetical order.

Workshops, oral communications, adoption organizations and posters appear in
alphabetical order based on the last name of the first author.

The Index of Authors can be found at the end; it will help you find each of the
authors that have presented work at ICAR4.
Keynote lectures

A. Berástegui (Pontificia University of Comillas, Madrid): Adoption in Spain
H. Boechat (International Social Service): The grey zones of intercountry adoption: where adoptability rules are circumvented
P. Fisher (University of Oregon): Neurobiology of adoption
S. Golombok & M. Lamb (University of Cambridge): Gay and lesbian adoptive families: parenting, child development and day-to-day experiences
R. Högbacka (University of Helsinki): Intercountry adoption from a sociological perspective: experiences of birth and adoptive mothers
L.C. Miller (Tufts University): Pediatric perspectives on adoption
E. Pinderhughes (Tufts University): The complexities of ethnic-racial socialization facing transracial adoptive families
A. Rushton (King’s College, London): Early orphanage care and adoption: a lifetime of experience and outcomes for 100 women adopted from Hong Kong in the 1960’s
J. Selwyn (University of Bristol): Risk and protective factors in special needs
W. Tieman (Erasmus University of Rotterdam): Adoptees’ search for origins from childhood into adulthood.
C.H. Zeanah (Tulane University, New Orleans): Reactive attachment disorder in young children following early adversity
Symposia

Fetal alcohol syndrome disorders: research, diagnosis and treatment

Co-convenors: N. Barcons (AFIN Research Group, Autonomous University of Barcelone) & V. Fumadó (Sant Joan de Déu Hospital, Barcelone)

Research results from the AFIN Research Group (Adoptions, Families and Childhoods) at the Autonomous University of Barcelone, in collaboration with the Department of Pediatrics, University Hospital Sant Joan de Deu, in which participated 240 families and children from adoption, indicate that children who come from Eastern European countries, in general, tend to have more adjustment difficulties compared to those from other countries or non-adopted children.

The investigations were carried out in the context of R & D projects funded by the Spanish government "International adoption: family and social integration of internationally adopted children. Interdisciplinary and comparative perspectives (2007-2009)" and "Domestic and International Adoption: Family, Education and Belonging from Multidisciplinary and Comparative Perspectives "(2010-2012) - and the results have been disseminated in several scientific articles. These results, which confirm results obtained in prestigious international research, support the actual research objective, the presence of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders in children from Eastern Europe which is taking place from January 2013 by the AFIN research group in collaboration with the Department of Pediatrics of the Hospital Sant Joan de Deu de Barcelona.Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD, the acronym of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder) is the term used to group various physical, mental, behavioral and cognitive abnormalities in who may have been exposed to alcohol during prenatal development, as a consequence of the consumption during pregnancy. The symposium will present the methodology of this research, diagnosis, pediatric examination and neuropsychological variables describing the family dimension, social and the process of adoption. In addition, the symposium will present the work done in FASD diagnosis and intervention that takes place in the Netherlands.

N. Barcons (AFIN Research Group, Autonomous University of Barcelone):

Neuropsychological assessment in fetal alcohol syndrome disorders

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD, the acronym of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder) is the term used to group various physical, mental, behavioral and cognitive abnormalities in who may have been exposed to alcohol during prenatal development, from the consumption during pregnancy.

Children with FASD may have different severity of neuropsychological deficits due to the teratogenic effects of alcohol on the developing central nervous system (CNS), in people who have been exposed to alcohol in different stages of their fetal development, can generate a set of symptoms that occur and persist throughout life and require various forms of therapeutic intervention. The most severe form of the disorder known as Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS, for its acronym in English) and is characterized by various anomalies in the CNS, alterations in neurodevelopment, growth retardation and a characteristic craniofacial pattern (phenotype).

Regarding the results of previous research and also the demand for psychological services, medical and therapeutic treatments by families who have adopted in these countries is
higher and increasing, the research has begun exploring neuropsychological assessment of children adopted from countries in Eastern Europe, according to the research hypothesis supported by international research, to obtain the syndrome profile. It will presented the assessment carried out along with preliminary data obtained to date.

V. Fumadó (Sant Joan de Déu Hospital, Barcelone): *Pediatric assessment in fetal alcohol syndrome disorders*

In recent years we have seen an increased impairment by prenatal alcohol exposure in children adopted from Eastern Europe. Early diagnosis and proper advice to parents will help to find the tools and therapies that can improve or at least mitigate some of the consequences of prenatal exposure to alcohol. The diagnosis on risk of FASD, even in the absence of obvious physical features, allow early action and improved prognosis and quality of life of these children. Although the effects of alcohol on the development are irreversible early intervention has shown encouraging results.

Objectives: 1) Determine whether children adopted into Spain from Eastern Europe have physical impairments, functional and neurocognitive compatible with a diagnosis of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD). 2) Provide detailed information and advice to parents and families of children adopted from Eastern Europe with FASD, as well as those affected by FASD and healthcare and education professionals.

Methodology: Multidisciplinary definition of FAS phenotypes in children adopted from countries with high consumption of alcohol, which come after the adoption, to the International Medical Service at the Pediatric Servide of the Hospital Sant Joan de Deu. In the query after acceptance and signing an informed consent, were included in the study. On physical examination is assessed: facial dysmorphic Growth Deficit CNS abnormalities Prenatal exposure to alcohol known.

Children will physically evaluated neuropsychological examination. The results are compared with other series studied in Sweden. We present the methodology and the data obtained so far.

B. San Román & D. Marre (AFIN Research Group, Autonomous University of Barcelone): *Family and social consequences of the FASD diagnosis*

Medical, biochemical and psychological studies linked prenatal alcohol exposure with attention difficulties and slowness in processing information, with certain skills deficits in everyday functioning, in adaptive behavior and social relationships, which are usually made particularly pronounced during adolescence.

In general, as the diagnosis of FASD tends to focus on defects caused by alcohol in the brain, there is a risk of neglecting family and social issues emerging from the syndrome and from the diagnosis itself.

However, consideration of the social and emotional aspects improves and facilitates the design and implementation of interventions to increase the autonomy and welfare of those affected.

I. Van Balkom (Lentis Psychiatric Institute. The Netherlands): *Mental health perspective on FASD: developmental and behavioral challenges*

Prenatal alcohol exposure and the disruptions in central nervous system related to it can lead to behavioral, cognitive, and psychological consequences with lifelong
implications in affected children. The umbrella term for the range of effects that can occur after prenatal alcohol exposure is Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD). The upbringing of children with FASD-associated difficulties in daily functioning places a large burden on (adoptive or foster) parents with regard to their parenting skills in dealing with hyperactivity, impulsivity, attention deficits, impairments in language and social skills, and learning deficits. The behavioral phenotype in FASD is often similar to difficult behaviors seen in various psychiatric disorders with an onset in childhood, such as e.g. attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), anxiety disorder, and autism spectrum disorder (ASD). When FASD co-occurs or presents with these symptoms a primary diagnosis of the child psychiatric disorder may facilitate access to necessary mental health services. It is equally important to consider whether prenatal alcohol exposure might be a factor when evaluating children who present with mental health issues. Recognizing FASD and understanding the child’s problems, weaknesses and strengths, is important when devising appropriate treatment approaches to improve outcome. This presentation focuses on behavioral and psychiatric consequences associated with prenatal exposure to alcohol and on intervention strategies that may mitigate these consequences.

Enhancing adoption competence for mental health professionals: multi-national perspectives
Co-convenors: D. Brodzinsky (Donaldson Adoption Institute) & D. Riley (Center for Adoption Support and Education)
Discussant: D. Brodzinsky (Donaldson Adoption Institute)
Adoptive family life has become increasingly complex and challenging over the past few decades, with more and more children entering their families at older ages following early life adversity. To understand and manage the difficulties presented by their children, adoptive families frequently seek the help of mental health professionals. In fact, adoptive families are two to five times more likely to utilize outpatient mental health services than non-adoptive families and four to seven times more likely to place their children in residential treatment centers. Too often, however, adoptive parents report that these professionals do not understand the complexities associated with their life experiences, especially related to adoption and the adversities in their children's early lives. Adoption-competent therapists are high on the list of post-adoption services that families most frequently want and need. They are also viewed as important sources of post-placement support by birthmothers, who often continue to struggle with the loss of their children years after adoption. For a variety of reasons, however, mental health professionals typically do not receive the training required to meet the counseling needs of adoption kinship members, and, too often either do not fully understand why such training is necessary or mistakenly believe that the adoption knowledge they do have is sufficient.

This symposium focuses the need for enhancing adoption competence among mental health professionals. Speakers from the United States, Spain, and Italy will: (a) discuss the type of challenges facing many adopted youth, adoptive parents, and birthparents today; (b) define adoption competency and identify the knowledge, skills,
and training that professionals need to effectively help adoption kinship members; (c) identify barriers to achieving adoption competence among mental health professionals; and (d) describe various means of enhancing adoption competence among professionals in different countries. The discussant will integrate the points raised by the speakers, as well as discuss issues related to empirical validation of adoption competency programs.

D. Riley (Center for Adoption Support and Education): *Answering the call to action: training mental health professionals in adoption competency*

This presentation will provide a brief overview of the growing need for adoption competent mental health services in the United States, followed by an in-depth description of the efforts of the Center for Adoption Support and Education (C.A.S.E.) to develop, implement, and evaluate a training program to meet this critical need. Utilizing a national advisory board, C.A.S.E first identified and defined the key components of an "adoption competent mental health professional;" it then developed a manualized Training for Adoption Competence (TAC) curriculum and a standardized implementation procedure, both of which were refined through pilot testing. Successful outcomes in implementing TAC in universities, public child welfare agencies, and private adoption centers across the country will be described. The presentation will also highlight key differences between the C.A.S.E. TAC program and other adoption competency training programs, including but not limited to: (a) use of a national advisory board of professionals, as well as feedback from adoptive families and adopted persons, in identifying and developing standards for "adoption competency;" (b) in-depth clinical focus of program; (c) intensiveness of training -- 78 hours of classroom and at-home instruction; (d) inclusion of 6 month post-training clinical case supervision; (e) clinical case consultation process to support transfer of learning to practice; (f) manualized training curriculum; (g) rigorous pre-testing of curriculum; (h) replication of training across sites; and (i) evaluation of training effectiveness.

The presentation will end with a discussion of the demands and challenges in replication, portability, clinical supervision, and evaluation of TAC across the U.S, as well as in developing a national certification in adoption competence for mental health professionals. Implications for adoption competent training programs in other countries will also be explored.

M. Pacheco, B. Boadas (Ramon Llull University of Barcelona), M. Freixa, C. Negre & A. Rodríguez (University of Barcelona): *Fostering competence in working with adoptive families: interface between professional intervention, research and social reality in Spain*

Between 1997 and 2004 there was a huge increase in international adoption in Spain, with little preparation or training of professionals who were responsible for the assessment of suitability of adoption candidates or for those who were involved in post-adoption services. This posed a challenge for both adoptive parents and for the professionals working with them (e.g., teachers, pediatricians, mental health practitioners). Also the number of international placements has decreased since 2005, children from other countries who are older, part of a sibling group, and/or with special
needs continue to be placed with Spanish families. Although adoption professionals are more prepared to manage these placements than previously, challenges continue.

This presentation discusses a specialized post-graduate training program in foster and adoption studies begun in 2008 by the University of Barcelona and the Ramón Llull University. The evolution of the training, from a 15 ECTS program to a 30ECTS Master degree program, including experiential practice, is highlighted. The post-graduate training program is based on theory, interdisciplinary studies, research, and the social realities facing foster and adoptive families. Training emphases: (a) legal issues in child protection, fostering, and adoption; (b) placement practice and assessment issues in fostering and adoption; (c) variables affecting foster and adopted children, adoptive filiation, and adoptive parenting; (d) diagnosis and intervention with families after adoption. The goal of the training program is to enhance the knowledge and skills of specialized professionals who can help adoptive and foster care families overcome their difficulties and move forward as a health family. The presentation will also discuss the conceptual axes that make up the Master degree in Fostering, Adoption, and Post-Adoption, as well as discuss the benefits of working in an interdisciplinary manner and collaboratively between universities.

M. Chistolini (Italian Association for Aid to Children): *Training of professionals in Italy: considerations and critical issues*

There has been a progressive growth of adoption in Italy over the past decade, especially intercountry adoption. In 2011, Italy was second only to the U.S. in the number of intercountry adoptions. Many of these adoptions include children who are older at the time of placement, who have "special needs" related to difficult and traumatic childhood experiences, and who are of a different ethnicity from their adoptive parents. The history and characteristics of these children pose significant challenges for adoptive families and for the children themselves, especially as they approach adolescence and young adulthood and seek help and support in understanding their life circumstances, identity, and birth heritage. To meet their evolving needs, institutions and professionals involved in the adoption process require updated information and training in this area.

This presentation will focus on the training needs of Italian professionals who work in the area of adoption with an emphasis on: (a) the experience of adoption from the perspective of adoptees and adopters; (b) the experience and management of ethnocultural issues in the family; (c) understanding the realities of children's histories and the ability of adoptive parents to cope with their impact on family life; and (d) management of contact between the adoptive and biological families, especially in the age of emerging technology and the internet.

These issues will be discussed in the context of the reality of contemporary adoption in Italy and in terms of the results of a survey on these issues carried out among Italian psychologists and social workers involved in adoption. Examples and proposals for training professionals in the adoption field will be included in the discussion.
Identities in the process of adoption: Narratives of young people and adults

Co-convenors: M. Henriques (University of Porto) & M. Pacheco (Ramon Llull University of Barcelone)

Discussant: G. Pagé (University of Quebec in Outaouais)

Based on Bruner’s perspective, the human process of constructing meaning for autobiographical events relies on the narrative. Reminiscing and the description of what happened, the sequence of facts, feelings, thoughts experienced, reflections and the making sense of the events, are integrated in a life narrative. Therefore, autobiographies bring out important elements about one’s identity and hence they are used in scientific research as a worthy psychological document. The earliest records of this practice date back to Pierre Janet (1886), are found later in the contributions of Henry Murray and more recently in Dan McAdams’ and Tilmann Habermas’ works. For the adoptee, the building of an integrated sense of identity is only possible through access to the adoption story promoted by an open communication process. The integration into a new family implies the reinvention of each of the family members, and for the adoptee this is a particularly complex process because they have to switch from a rejection situation and adapt to a different family, which will have a strong impact in their reinvention process throughout their whole life.

This symposium aims to discuss the narrative construction of identity by people who have been adopted and also by adopting parents. We want to understand how experiences of loss and adoption affected these people’s identity construction. Narratives are used both as an object, focusing on coherence, and a method, to access the meaning of experiences and the identity derived from them. This symposium will share studies focused on narrative construction of identity across different periods of life, from youth into adulthood and utilizing different methods for life narrative analysis.

The first communication, by Berástegui offers a perspective of the process that underlies the construction of identity in adopted people, emerging from their network of stories.

It follows a study by Vieira with young adoptees, integrating different systems of analysis for each life narrative.

The presentation by Garcia and Pacheco will show the construction of the adopted adult identity by a comparison between adopted with non-adopted women and they will add two dimensions to this process: the roles of spouse and mother, focusing on the construction of motherhood and on one’s identity as a spouse.

In the last presentation, the study by Henriques and collaborators brings us other actors in this process, focusing on the construction of motherhood and fatherhood of the adoptive parents, which will in turn impact on the child’s own development and identity.
A. Berástegui & B. Gómez (Pontificia Comillas University of Madrid): *Different sources of identity*

For adopted people, knowing and communicating about adoption has proven to be a necessary condition for building an adequate sense of identity. Searching seems to be necessarily linked to this process. Adoption history is set in the processing and reprocessing of different stories that the adoptee receives and act throughout his life: the story they have been told, the story that they represent in their family life, the story with which to compare, the missing story and the one they are looking for or fearing... from all these stories, children and especially adolescents and young adults build their own history, with their meanings, and this is the story in which they project and build their future. In this contribution we will review the role of these stories received from the family and social context in the final construction of the adopted adult identity.

A. Vieira & M. Henriques (University of Porto): *Life narratives and the construction of identity in young adoptees*

The adolescence is the moment when arises the need to construct an identity that allows the person a productive relationship with the world (Erikson, 1968; McAdams, 2001; Habermas & Bluck, 2000). McAdams refers to the process of identity construction as the development of a sense of unity and purpose given the demands of world and society. It is a process in which young people reorganize and reconstruct their life story to produce a coherent autobiographical narrative. The formation of a narrative identity involves the construction of stories consistent with the purpose to create and communicate a sense of identity and meaning (Reese, Yan, Jack and Hayne, 2010). This work investigates the construction of life stories in young adults that have been adopted in childhood. The aim of the study is searching for the narrative construction of the identity in adopted people. We want to know how the motive of the adoption appears in the narrative of a life story and its function on the construction of the narrative self. We have been interviewing six young adults with the Life Story Elicitation Interview protocol. The interviews have been recorded and transcript. Case studies are being elaborated from the interviews. All interviews are submitted to a structure process and content descriptive analysis, based on the systems of Gonçalves, Henriques and col. (2002; 2006a; 2006b; 2006c) and to tridimensional system of global coherence of life narratives (Habermas and col. 2005; 2008; 2009). The analysis of the narrative identity is based on the structural coherence of the autobiographic narratives (McAdams, 2001) and on the dialogic relation between the position of the narrator and of the others (Fivush, 2008). The relations between the narrator and the cultural models will be considered too (Fivush, 2008; Adler & McAdams, 2007; Habermas, 2007). The multiplicity of imago, characters and voices of the narrative speech were analyzed according to the constructs of McAdams (1993), Hermans & Kampen (1993), Hermans (2008). We do not found a defining feature of the narrative identity of young adopted people. Rather, each case showed the uniqueness of each life narrative and identity of each individual. What all of them have in common is having their life story traversed by the experience of being adopted. However, this same experience also proved to be
different in each case, because of the peculiarity of the situation in which it occurred or of the subject who experienced it. In this presentation we’ll develop three types of situations that emerge of data analysis.

L. García Sala & M. Pacheco (Ramon Llull University of Barcelone): The construction of identity in the adopted adult woman

From a constructivist perspective we studied the construction of identity in a comparative study with 15 adopted women and 15 non-adopted ones, all of them being biological mothers as well. This is a methodologically plural research designed to explore the general construction of identity in the adopted adult woman, as well as to focus in the construction of motherhood and of being part of a couple. We used the social self grid and it was analyzed through the program RECORD 5.0. Furthermore we worked with narratives about identity as a mother, about identity as a couple, and about the general sense of oneself. The narratives were analyzed through the Grounded Theory Method. Results show similarities and differences between the two groups in the construction of identity and a higher presence of cognitive conflicts and lower self-esteem in adopted daughters.

M. Henriques, M. Sousa & E. Mendes (University of Porto): The construction of motherhood and fatherhood in adopting parents

The work with adoptive families implies taking into account new ways of addressing motherhood and fatherhood, being that specific tasks arise from these different family arrangements, that in themselves comprise challenges of their own.

Questions that emerge are such as how much time does it take for the adult to construct this dimension of being a mother or being a father and to integrate it in his global sense of identity; and to explore associations between the degree or depth of this integration with the adopted child’s development, in the sense that parental integration of one’s self can be eligible as a marker for responsiveness concerning other forms of interactions and then be generative towards the child’s development.

So, this study aims to understand the identity of adoptive parenthood and unveil the motivations, expectations and implications of adoptive parenthood. Participants were a group of 14 adoptive fathers, who had recently adopted their child into the family (a period between 6 months and 2 years) and a group of 15 mothers with the same time of adoption.

We performed a semi-structured individual interview regarding how mothers and fathers described themselves in terms of their experience of parenthood, and this was done by means of eliciting their life narrative. The self-narratives were then analyzed in terms of the degree in which they reflect the integration or lack of integration of the parenthood dimension and also in terms of structure coherence and complexity of process (emotions and thoughts).

The results revealed that mothers and fathers describe themselves with very positive adjectives and they asserted that there must be a balance between affection and discipline, a profile that shows a convergence with their image of motherhood/fatherhood. The coherence and process richness of life narratives vary
across participants and the integration of the motherhood/fatherhood dimension in identity are not present in all the participants. Some of them did not refer parenting experiences at all and this tended to occur mostly in those whose child had only been in the family for six months.

**Social competence, social integration and social functioning of adopted persons**

Co-convenors: A. Hjern (Karolinska Institut, Stockholm University) & C. Moreno (University of Seville)

Discussant: E. Pinderhughes (Tufts University)

The social integration of adopted people is an area that has lacked sufficient study by adoption research, having been identified in the review by Palacios and Brodzinsky (2010) as one of the areas requiring greater attention from researchers. Studies are scarce and often based upon the use of limited instruments (sub-scales with few items from larger scales); sometimes such studies are not very specific and designed rather more for the identification of behavioral problems. Moreover, research into the social integration of adopted people is not only scarce, but rather is also remarkably inconsistent. Finally, to mention only one additional limitation, the existing research into the subject has focused exclusively on children and adolescents with mature adopted people not having been explored.

The four papers making up this proposal confront the social integration of adopted people in a more systematic manner, as it is based on the use of specific measurement instruments that include pro-social contents, but also go beyond prosociality. Three of the papers (Barbosa et al; Julian & McCall; Moreno et al.) explore the social competence and behavior in samples of domestic (Barbosa et al.) and international (Julian & McCall; Moreno et al.) adopted children and adolescents. Moreover, these three studies share the use, among others, of a specific measurement instrument (Social Skills Rating System or its more recent version, Social Skills Improvement System), which adds interest to the comparison between the data obtained in these different projects. The fourth paper (Hjern) researches the social integration of young adults, between 28 and 35 years of age, and does this by using a series of indicators of social integration with unquestionable ecological validity (formation of a family, career history, income, criminality, substance abuse).

As a whole, the data regarding social competence presented at the symposium show what is known in other areas: after early adverse experiences, adoption creates a favorable context for recovery and normalized personal and social functioning. At the same time, adoption implies a past with adversity that is not simply replaced by new and more positive experiences. The rich empirical data offered in the papers of this symposium illustrate this fact for the specific area of social competence and integration.

Ellen Pinderhughes has agreed to be a discussant at this symposium, which adds an additional element of interest to the proposal, given her experience in studying various social aspects related to adoption.
M. Julian & R. McCall (University of Pittsburgh): *Social skills in children adopted from socially-emotionally depriving institutions*

While the majority of children adopted from institutions fall within the normal range of adjustment, post-institutionalized (PI) children may have higher rates of peer difficulties, indiscriminate friendliness, difficulty understanding social cues and social boundaries, and difficulty with self-regulation (Gunnar, 2001; MacLean, 2003). This study assessed PI children’s social skills with respect to their age at adoption, age at assessment, and gender. Parent ratings of social skills (Social Skills Rating System) and behavior problems (Child Behavior Checklist) were obtained for 214 Elementary-age (5-13 years old) and 127 Secondary-age (12-19 years old) children who had been adopted primarily from socially-emotionally depriving Russian institutions. This particular set of institutions is typically adequate in terms of medical care, nutrition, safety, and equipment, but caregiver-child relationships are lacking.

In a one-way Age at Adoption (0-12, 12-18, 18-24, 24+ months) ANOVA, the effect of Age at Adoption was statistically significant, F(3, 339) = 3.429, p < .05, and specific contrast tests showed that children adopted before 18 months of age have better social skills than those adopted after this age, and there does not appear to be a significant decrease in social skills with later ages (e.g., 24+ months) at adoption. Further, an Age at Adoption (<18 months, >18 months) x Sample (Elementary, Secondary) x Gender ANOVA on SSRS Total Social Skills (z-scores) revealed that social skills scores were significantly higher/better for earlier-adopted than later-adopted children, F(1, 335) = 4.443, p < .05, Elementary than Secondary PI children, F(1, 335) = 12.835, p < .01, and males than females, F(1, 335) = 9.099, p < .01. PI females, especially adolescents who were adopted after 18 months, have particularly poor social skills. Children who scored in the lowest/poorest 15% of the SSRS also tended to score in the highest/poorest 15% of the CBCL for Total (X2 (1) = 109.719, p < .001, N = 321), Internalizing (X2 (1) = 61.406, p < .001, N = 320), and Externalizing (X2 (1) = 117.254, p < .001, N = 320) behavior problems.

The finding that children adopted after 18 months and assessed in adolescence demonstrate poorer outcomes is consistent with prior research in this sample on behavior problems and executive function. Thus, this study utilizes a large sample of children adopted from socially-emotionally depriving institutions to show that children adopted after 18 months of age have lower levels of socially skilled behavior, particularly during adolescence.

M. Barbosa-Ducharne, J. Soares, R. Barroso, J. Ferreira & J. Costa (University of Porto): *Pre- and pos-adoption predictors of social competence of Portuguese adoptees*

Children and adolescents who were adopted following a period of institutionalization are appointed as a risk group in relation to the development of the social skills needed to healthy peer relationships. The adverse, abusive and neglectful experiences that these children lived within the biological family and afterwards in residential care, do not promote the opportunity for them to acquire basic requisites for social interaction. Consequently adopted children and adolescents are often described as over-
friendly, quarrelsome and unpopular, as well as, showing internalized (anxious, depressed) and externalized (hyperactive and oppositional) behaviors which make social interactions more difficult. Nevertheless, some studies also report adoptees as more pro social and popular than their non-adopted peers. Besides these contradictory descriptions, relatively little research has been conducted on the processes that underlie the development of social competence among post institutionalized adopted children.

This study aims to characterize the social competence of adopted children and adolescents according to different informants in the family and at school, and to identify the predictors of social competence among some risk and protective factors acting previously and after adoption, namely, the type and intensity of adversity experiences lived in the birth family, the child’s age when entering institutional care, the time spent in residential care, the number of placements prior to adoption, the child’s age at adoption placement, the time spent within the adoptive family and the way the adoptive family copes with the specific features of adoptive family life.

One hundred Portuguese children and adolescents adopted domestically and their parents took part in the study. Data was collected during home visits by interviewing parents and children separately. Children’s social skills were evaluated through the SSIS-RS using three different informants, the child, the parents and the teacher. The child’s pre adoption history was assessed through the analysis of the adoption file. Findings are consistent with previous adoption research suggesting that adopted children and adolescents show different patterns of social competence according to the social skills and problems behaviors demonstrated. Findings also suggest that adoptees’ social competence can be predicted by pre and post adoption variables that are related to the child, to the parents and to the child-parents interaction. The current study provides new and valuable information on the catch-up role played by the experiences lived by the child within the adoptive family. Implications for future research and adoption services provision are also discussed.

C. Moreno, J. Palacios, M. Román & M.G. Peñarrubia (University of Seville): Social competence in adopted children assessed by their teachers, mothers and classmates: A longitudinal analysis

There is abundant empirical evidence that social competence is an essential predictor of ability to establish and maintain quality friendships (reciprocal, stable, satisfactory and established with others who are loved and recognized by a group of peers), as well as the degree of acceptance or rejection that the child may have within a group of peers (in other words, his or her sociometric status). On the other hand, both aspects (quality of friendship and sociometric status) are good indicators of personal and social adjustment in children at the current moment and in later years. This paper analyses both matters by combining the viewpoint of three fundamental socializing agents at this age: mothers, teachers and classmates.

The sample was studied at two different moments: when the children were between 4 and 8 years of age (Time 1, T1) and four years later (Time 2, T2). In both cases, the group included a hundred children subdivided into three groups: children adopted internationally during their first three years of life, those who had experienced
adversity within their birth Spanish families and had spent time in an institution and finally, a third (control) group made up of boys and girls who had always lived with their birth Spanish families.

All of these children were studied in their homes and at their schools. During the visits of researchers to the homes, the mothers (or caretakers, in the case of institutionalized children) were interviewed. The Social Skills Rating System (SSRS; Gresham & Elliott, 1990) was used for T1 and its equivalent Social Skills Improvement System-Rating Scales (SSIS-RS; Gresham & Elliott, 2008) for T2, as well as the Strength and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ, Goodman, 1997), used both for T1 and for T2. During the school visits, teachers were asked to complete the teacher versions of these same instruments for T1 and T2 and respond to a series of questions about the quality of the relationships of the children being studied. For T2, direct information was collected from classmates using two sociometric methods (nominations and sociometric testing).

The results show that there is an important distance between adopted children and the control group in many of the contents studied and this distance increased from T1 to T2. In longitudinal terms, adopted children experience the poorest development. The control group improved in certain aspects while the institutionalized grouped stabilized; in adopted children, an increase in difficulties for most of the contents explored was evident.

A. Hjern (Karolinska Institute, University of Stockholm): The social adjustment of adoptees at 28-35 years of age

Background: In this study we investigated the social adjustment of national and international adoptees at the age of 28-35 years of age in comparison with former child welfare clients as well as the general population.

Methods: This register-based cohort study comprises the Swedish birth cohorts between 1973 and 1980, who were residents in Sweden in 2008, 680 375 individuals, including 10 207 international adoptees, (with an origin in India, Korea, Latin America and Africa), 808 national adoptees, and 2 662 who had spent most of their childhood in societal care, 6 662 who had been subjected to child welfare interventions in their biological home. Indicators of family formation, activity on the labor market, incomes, criminality and substance abuse were created with register data and analyzed with multivariate analysis with adjustment for age, sex and urban/rural residency. Age at adoption, country of birth and school marks in ninth grade were used as proxy indicators of pre-adoption factors in the analysis.

Results: The international adoptees 20 % less often had become parents compared with the general population. A similar tendency on a lower level was noted for national adoptees (~10%) but not for former children in the child welfare system. There was no clear indication that this lower rate of parenthood was associated with pre-adoption factors. For parents, it was particularly common to have separated from their partner among the former child welfare clients, but international and national adoptees also had such a tendency on a lower level. This tendency was associated with pre-adoption factors. Unemployment was 14% more common in national adoptees, 9% more
common in international adoptees and 24-32% more common in former child welfare clients. There were some indications that this was associated with pre-adoption factors. Disability pension, an indication of being permanently excluded from the labor market, substance abuse and significant criminality was four to eight times as common among former child welfare clients and two to three times as common in national and international adoptees compared with the general population. These outcomes were strongly associated with pre-adoption factors.

Conclusions: International adoptees generally have slightly better social outcomes compared with national adoptees, and much better compared with former child welfare clients. The main exception from this pattern was having problems finding a partner, which stands out as the main particular social problem for international adoptees.

**Growth and development in internationally adopted children**

Co-convenors: D. Johnson (University of Minnesota) & J. Palacios (University of Seville)
Discussant: A. Hjern (Karolinska Institut, Stockholm University)

Adopted children have had a series of negative experiences before joining their new family. Prenatal adversity, malnutrition, inadequate stimulation and institutionalization are some of the circumstances shared by many adoptees, who have also experienced these negative circumstances during particularly sensitive developmental periods. Johnson and Gunnar (2011) have reviewed some of the most important evidence accumulated in the research into growth failure among institutionalized children.

Early adversity puts at risk not only normal growth, but also the corresponding psychological development for their age. After all, this psychological development is built upon growth and stimulation that have been at serious risk due to early adversity and inadequate stimulation prior to the adoption.

Such research into this subject barely has a 15-year history. The first studies assessed both growth and development upon arrival, as well as during the first months or years after joining a new family (for example, Johnson, 2000). More recent research, which is reflected in the papers presented at this symposium, covers a longer time-frame to include adolescence. In most cases, the research makes use of a longitudinal methodology to supply data that is both of interest and relevant.

The latest in research, to be discussed the papers presented at this symposium, cover a greater temporal scope—including pre-adolescence and adolescence—and that frequently use longitudinal methodology which provides interesting as well as important data. Moreover, one of the papers is dedicated to the topic of special needs adoptions, which has seen limited representation in adoption-related research.

The four papers in this symposium use a variety of methodologies and measures, but present convergent data of theoretical and practical significance. Papers are coming from groups in the United States, Holland and Spain. Anders Hjern, from Sweden, with experience in pediatrics and epidemiology, will be the discussant for the session.
Developmental research has consistently found growth impairment to be one of the consequences of early adversity. Young children exposed to negative circumstances tend to show deficits in the main anthropometric indicators (weight, height and head circumference). Research has also shown that once the negative circumstances end and a more protective and stimulating context is available, growth indicators tend to improve. The goal of this study was to analyze growth recovery in a sample of children adopted internationally. The sample consisted of 40 children from the Russian Federation adopted by families in Spain. They were compared to a control group of 58 normative non-maltreated children and to a group of 50 institutionalized Spanish children, all within the same age range. The average age at time of arrival to the adoptive family was 3 years. The average age of admission of the Spanish institutionalized children was 5 years. At time of study the age range for these two groups was 4-8 years and the control group was matched for this variable. All children in the study (adopted, institutionalized, control) were then studied when, on average, they were 6 years old and again at age 11, so that longitudinal information is available.

In the adoptees, significant delays at arrival were found in weight, height and head circumference, with statistically significant differences with the Spanish institutionalized children at time of admission, with lower scores for the adopted children.

Three years later (age 6 years), adopted children showed a significant improvement in all anthropometric measures, but all of their anthropometric values were lower than those of the control group, with statistically significant differences. At this assessment, Spanish institutionalized children also scored significantly lower than the control group, but differences between adopted and institutionalized children did not reach statistical significance.

Preliminary data analysis showed that seven years after adoption (age 11 years on average) there were no significant differences between normative and both adopted and institutionalized children in weight and height. However, differences between normative and both adopted and institutionalized children in head circumference still remained significant, with this anthropometric indicator showing a less complete recovery.

Globally, in the group of adopted children, these results showed the impressive growth improvement after adoption, as well as a more limited recovery for head circumference. It is then of interest to analyses the connection between growth indicators (particularly, but not only, head circumference) and developmental scores. Preliminary data show, in fact, that for the total sample of children under study, the connection does exist, particularly when considered in a longitudinal perspective.

G. Ter Meulen, A. Vinke & F. Juffer (University of Leiden): Special needs adoptions from Taiwan: development of children with and without medical special need

Although some studies on special needs adoptions can be found in the adoption literature, there is not much information on the development and wellbeing of adopted children with medical special needs. Considering that nowadays intercountry adoptions
are mostly special needs adoptions, and many are medical special needs adoptions, the lack of research studies on this subject is striking. Furthermore, practitioners, policy makers, and researchers share the view that it is important to examine the influence of both the special needs and the pre-adoption experiences on the adoption outcomes and the need for after adoption support.

Since 1989, through the agency of Meiling Foundation, an adoption organization in the Netherlands, children from two children homes with relatively good care in Taipei, Taiwan, have been adopted by Dutch adoptive parents. Most children were relinquished for adoption soon after birth and a substantial part of the children had a medical condition that qualifies as special needs (e.g., prematurity, cleft palate, heart problems, skin problems). As Taiwan has high standard medical care, the medical reports were of good quality. Most children were adopted to the Netherlands before their first birthday.

Two hundred seventeen adoptive parents completed questionnaires about the development and wellbeing of their 310 children from Taiwan, 51% boy and 49% girls, aged 4 years and older (mean age at assessment: 12 years).

Over 50% of the adopted children in this research study were identified as having special needs. We assessed both the developmental outcomes of the children as well as parenting and support issues that adoptive families with and without special needs children face. Results show that not all special needs children show delays and problems, but in general and as a group they do face - as expected - more developmental issues than the children without special needs. These children and families also report needing more (specialized) support services, like physiotherapy, speech therapy, remedial teaching, and special education. Adoptive parents reported a lack of specified knowledge both in clinics, nurseries, and schools. The results of the study will be presented in more depth and we draw conclusions that might help improve practice in placing and supporting families that adopt a special needs child.

M.G. Kroupina, J.K. Eckerle, A.J. Fuglestad (University of Minnesota), S. Alleleijn (University of Maastricht), J.H. Himes, B.S. Miller, A. Petryk & D. Johnson (University of Minnesota): Predictors of neurocognitive outcomes post early childhood adversity

Institutional care is considered an extreme example of deprivation and is associated with multiple risk factors. The fact that enormous improvement in developmental and physical growth is often observed after adoption into a better environment provides us with a model to study the impact of early adversity on neurodevelopment. Deprivation caused by orphanage care negatively affects cognitive development and physical growth including suppression of the Growth Hormone (GH) axis. The significance of the relationship between the GH axis and neurocognitive development has been supported by substantial research data but this question has not been addressed in the post-institutionalized population.

The study presented assessed physical growth and the GH axis status (defined as Insulin-like Growth Factor Binding Protein-3 and Insulin-like Growth Factor) in relation to neurocognitive functioning at baseline, 6-months and 30-months follow-up.
Participants were 46 children adopted from Eastern European countries between the ages of 8.8 and 45.6 months (mean 18.9 months). Within this group, 94% of children had not lived with their birth parents. Children who were at high risk for neurological problems were excluded from the sample. Child’s growth status and GH axis were assessed at the time of child’s initial and six month post-arrival medical evaluation. Mullen Early Learning Scales at the initial and 6 months points and Stanford Binet Intelligence scales (IQ) at 30 months post-adoption were used to assess neurodevelopmental status. Growth failure and suppression of the GH axis at arrival and recovery therein 6 months post adoption were described by our team in previous publications (Miller et al, 2008 Miller et al 2010). On the Mullen visual reception scale the mean t-score was 36.72 (SD =11.02). Moreover, 32.6% (N=14) of the children had t-scores more than 2 SD below the mean and 20.9% (N=9) of the children had t-scores more than 2.5 SD below the mean. Consistent with the previous studies, we found significant recovery over the 30 month period. The mean standard score for non-verbal IQ was 107.48 (SD =13.38), and the mean standard score for verbal IQ was 105.22 (SD =14.92) with only one child scoring greater than 2 SD below the mean on both scales.

Developmental status at 6 months post-arrival was found to be a significant predictor of non-verbal IQ in regression analysis (b = 0.41, p = 0.004). The initial GH status was found to be a significant predictor of verbal IQ (b = -0.33 p = 0.04) in regression analysis. This is the first study to show the association between recovery in the neurocognitive domain and GH axis in post-institutionalized children. Possible explanations for the association between these two systems will be discussed in the presented paper.

L.C. Miller, L.G. Tirella & E. Jacobs (Tufts University): International adoptees as teens and young adults: functional outcomes and family characteristics

Many of the >310,000 international adoptees arriving in the United States over the last 25 years are now teenagers and young adults (collectively “YA”). Because relatively little is known about their long-term outcomes, we examined current social integration, school performance, and self-esteem of YA previously evaluated in our clinic, as well as the current status of their parents (family stress and functioning, adoption satisfaction). We hypothesized that arrival information (growth, development, health) predicted current YA status (social and academic success), and that family flexibility correlated with more favorable outcomes (adoption satisfaction and YA self-esteem).

All 259 adoptees now >15 yrs old in our clinic database were invited to participate. Of the 161 located, 88 (41M:47F) enrolled (55%). Birth countries of these children were mostly in Eastern Europe (57%) or South America (24%). A series of demographic and informational questionnaires were completed by the YA and their parents, and arrival clinic records were reviewed, including standardized developmental testing, growth measurements, and medical diagnoses. Family functioning was assessed with several standardized questionnaires, including the Family Adaptability and Cohesion Scales (FACES II), the Family Life Events Inventory (FILE), and the Family Crisis Oriented Personal Evaluation Scales (FCOPES). Teens completed The Piers-Harris 2 to assess self-esteem.
Mean arrival age was 56 m (range 0-15 y), current age was 17 y (range 15-25 y). Many (50%) received special education services. Self-esteem was good, although ~15% were anxious or unhappy (F>M, p<.002). Arrival fine motor and language skills correlated with current academic success (r=.32, p=.008); adoptees with anemia at arrival had lower academic success (p=.04). Family stress varied widely (low 17%, medium 75%, high 8%) and was higher in families with internationally adopted sons than daughters (p=.04). Parental adoption satisfaction also varied widely (low 12%, medium 18%, high 70%); this correlated to family coping skills (r=-0.26, p=.03) and inversely to family stress (r=-0.31, p=.01), but not to YA arrival age, development, behavior, growth, gender, or to parental experience. Notably, many parents expected their child would need partial (22%) or full-time (3%) supervision as an adult.

Internationally adopted YA are a heterogeneous group with many educational and social challenges; most have good self-esteem. Most parents express “adoption satisfaction” but stress levels are high in some families. Overall, family flexibility corresponded to more favorable outcomes.

Lesbian or gay adoptive parents and their children
Co-convenors: M. Lamb (University of Cambridge) & M-M. González (University of Seville)
Discussant: M. Lamb (University of Cambridge)
Although in recent decades the number of lesbian women or gay men who adopt has increased, we know little about the families they form, their adoptive processes or the development and psychological adjustment of their children.

This symposium aims to analyze in detail several aspects of adoption by lesbian or gay parents in different societies. It will address the similarities and differences between adoptive processes developed in various circumstances: private domestic adoptions, international adoptions, and child welfare adoptions. We aim also comparing adoptions carried out in a society when the same-sex marriage is not legalized and after its legalization.

It will also address the similarities and differences between heterosexual adoptive parents and adoptive gay and lesbian parents in several aspects like coparenting and division of childcare labor. In this symposium we'll also compare the development and psychological adjustment of children who grow up in households conformed by same-sex and opposite sex couples.

The results will be discussed in their implications for public policies in children welfare and rights equality between heterosexual and homosexual people who want to adopt.

S. Ryan & E. Madden (University of Texas at Arlington): Becoming adoptive parents: experiences of gay fathers
While gay men are increasingly adopting children, little is known about their experiences of adoption (Ryan & Whitlock, 2007). The purpose of the present study was to examine the adoption experiences of LGBT adoptive parents. Eighty-seven gay adoptive fathers were part of a larger cross-sectional survey study of 183 adoptive
LGBT parents. This study examined their adoption experiences, including their sources of adoption related information and consultation, experiences of bias in obtaining information regarding adoption, adoption costs and timeframes, and their level of satisfaction with the adoption process. Sample recruitment occurred through advertisements in area newspapers and metropolitan gay newspapers, adoption and parenting magazines, and a designated website. A 28-page survey was then sent to participants responding to the advertisements and yielded a 65.1% response rate. Data were analyzed using Chi-Square and ANOVA where appropriate. Participants in three adoption categories, private domestic adoptions, international adoptions, and child welfare adoptions, were compared for statistical differences in their sources of consultation, costs and timeframes, experience of bias, and level of satisfaction. While the timeframes associated with adoption across the three adoption venues did not differ significantly, the associated costs differed significantly across venues. Additionally, while gay adoptive fathers were mostly satisfied with their adoption experiences significant differences between groups was noted on two of the eight satisfaction items.

Results of this study support previous literature (Brodzinsky, Patterson, & Vaziri, 2002) suggesting that agencies are generally open to working with gay and lesbian potential adoptive parents; participants mostly experienced their adoption agencies as helpful. However, the majority of participants did report perceived bias during the adoption process. Practice guidelines should be established for adoption professionals working with LGBT adoptive parents and opportunities provided for practitioners to enhance their practice skills in working with this population.

R. Farr (University of Massachusetts): The contemporary adoptive families’ project
In the United States and around the world, controversy surrounds the adoption of children by lesbian and gay (LG) adults. Several states in the U.S. ban adoption by LG parents. Meanwhile, the numbers of LG adoptive parents are growing in the U.S. (Gates, 2011). Little research, however, has addressed the impact on children adopted by LG parents (e.g., Erich et al., 2005).

To fill this gap in the literature, Dr. Charlotte J. Patterson and I have conducted research with a sample of 106 adoptive families across the U.S. for seven years. Via collaborations with 5 private domestic infant adoption agencies, we systematically recruited two-parent families, including 27 lesbian, 29 gay, and 50 heterosexual couples, with children 1 to 5 years old. Using a multi-method approach, we collected data from parents, children’s teachers or caregivers, and videotaped observations of family interactions.

Parents and teachers agreed that children adopted by lesbian, gay, and heterosexual parents were developing in positive ways, with no differences in behavioral adjustment or gender development by parental sexual orientation (Farr et al., 2010). Our study is one of few about LG parenting to include observational data (e.g., Tasker & Patterson, 2007), and it represents the first to demonstrate that children adopted at birth fare as well with LG adoptive parents as they do with heterosexual adoptive parents.
Transracial adoptions were completed by over half the sample. Consistent with previous research (e.g., Weinberg et al., 2004), there were no significant differences in behavior problems between transracial and inracial adoptees (Farr & Patterson, 2009). LG couples were, however, far more likely than heterosexual couples to adopt across race (Farr & Patterson, 2009). This finding has noteworthy implications for adoption agencies in their efforts to place children of color with permanent adoptive families. Coparenting and division of childcare labor among adoptive couples and their associations with child adjustment were also explored in this sample. Same-sex couples were more likely to share childcare equally, while heterosexual couples were more likely to specialize, with mothers doing more childcare with fathers. Observations of coparenting revealed that lesbian couples were the most supportive, and heterosexual couples were the most undermining. Regardless, better child behavioral adjustment was reported among couples who were supportive in their interactions and satisfied with their division of labor arrangements.

Our results provide no justification for banning prospective adoptive parents on the basis of sexual orientation. Our findings suggest that LG adults make capable adoptive parents whose children are thriving. This research contributes important findings to the fields of adoption and LG-parent families, and also to informing public policy and law.

M-M. González & F. López (University of Seville): *Gay or lesbian adoptive families in Spain: experiences before and after the approval of the same-sex marriage*

The law that allows the marriage between same sex people was passed in 2005 in Spain. Since that moment, same-sex couples can jointly adopt their children in our country. Before that time, they have adopted them as individuals, while only one parent figured as the legal father or mother of their children. Although the gay and lesbian adoptions have increased in our country, their experiences aren’t well known yet. Inside the framework of a broader project about gay-lesbian families in Spain, we interviewed 20 adoptive families formed by same-sex couples whose relationship had begun at least in 2004. Twelve of them were composed by gay fathers and eight by lesbian mothers. These parents have adopted 25 children, who were 0-17 years-old when the families were studied. Fifteen of the children were internationally adopted and ten of them were adopted in our country, from welfare system. Twelve children were adopted before the approval of the same-sex people marriage and thirteen of them after that time.

Our main aim was to know how have been the experiences of those gay fathers or lesbian mothers in their whole process of adoption and if the approval of the same-sex couples marriage have had any influence in them.

We found that the change in the marriage law has had several consequences for the lesbian or gay couples’ decisions of adopt. Some of the families told us that the legislative change gave them strong support to their previous decision of adopt children. Other gay or lesbian parents started to think in adopt just after the change in the marriage law, because it allowed them to adopt as a couple.
Who adopted before the change in the marriage law recognized more difficulties in the adoptive processes, because they did that officially alone, with a “heterosexual identity”. Who adopted before where also significantly less satisfied with the professionals, because they perceived in them negative attitudes toward homosexuality. In fact, three of the families had failed attempts of adoption before the change in the law, for homophobic reasons, but they achieved to adopt after it.

To facilitate their adoptive processes, families demanded that the technical staff of the institutions involved in adoption processes should have specialized formation about the specific characteristics of gay or lesbian families, free of homophobic or heterosexist bias

The physical and psychological presence of birth families
Co-convenors: R. Lee (University of Minnesota) & H. Grotevant (University of Massachusetts, Amherst)
Discussant: R. McRoy (Boston College)
Adoption has long been a closed process of family formation in which there is no contact between adoptive families and birth families following the legal adoption. However, birth families often remain psychologically present in the lives of adopted individuals. Likewise, the adopted child remains psychologically present in the lives of birth families. In recent years, the role of birth families in the adoption process has shifted with birth families having more contact with the adopted child and adoptive families. Levels of physical contact may vary depending on the preferences and arrangements agreed upon by all parties and the degree of psychological presence also may vary by individuals in the adoption triad. Additionally, in the case of closed adoptions, adopted persons across the lifespan may express interest in learning more about birth families and in some instances search for birth families. Similarly, birth family reunions are increasingly commonplace, sometimes initiated by the adopted person and other times initiated by the birth family. Despite the physical and psychological presence of birth families in the adoption triad, there remains limited empirical research on the role of birth families in the adoption experience.

This symposium will examine the role of the physical and psychological presence of birth families on family functioning and its association with child and youth outcomes in four longitudinal and cross-sectional studies of domestic and international adoptive families in the United States and England. The first presentation by Harold Grotevant and colleagues discuss how technology is changing the ways in which birth parents and domestically adopted young adults maintain contact and psychological presence with each other. The presentation by Leslie Leve and colleagues examine changes in levels of openness and parent satisfaction with contact and its impact on child adjustment. The presentation by Beth Neil and colleagues examine the congruence between physical and psychological presence among domestic adoption triad members. The fourth presentation by Richard Lee and colleagues describe a new measure of birth family thoughts for internationally adopted youth and its association with psychological adjustment. Ruth McRoy will serve as discussant for this symposium.
When we began our longitudinal research on contact in adoptions in the mid 1980s, the idea of contact was considered radical; some feared that contact would be harmful to adopted children, their adoptive parents, and their birth parents. Levels of contact (confidential, mediated, fully disclosed) were clearly differentiated in terms of the physical presence of adoptive kinship network members to one another; however, members were psychologically present to each other in varying degrees across all forms of openness. With the rapid proliferation of social networking sites and Voice over IP applications, the boundary between physical presence and psychological presence has become blurred. Data from the Minnesota Texas Adoption Research Project, a longitudinal study of 190 adoptive families and 169 birth mothers, were used to examine changing modes of contact. During Wave 1 (1987-1992), modes of contact between adoptive and birth relatives included the sharing of letters, pictures, gifts, phone calls, and personal visits (“traditional modes”). At Wave 4 (currently underway), young adult (YA) adoptees (now in their late 20s to mid 30s) having contact with birth relatives are using multiple forms of communication simultaneously and are combining traditional modes with texting, online chat, e-mail, Facebook, Skype, Twitter, and blogs (“tech-mediated modes.”)

YA responses defined 4 contact groups: never had contact, contact had stopped, ongoing contact without in-person visits, ongoing contact with in-person visits. Psychological presence of birth parents was assessed by YA responses to how frequently they thought about adoption in general, their birth mother, and their birth father (7 point scales; never to daily). Frequency of thinking about adoption in general did not differ as a function of birth mother or birth father contact group. However, psychological presence of birth mother and birth father did vary as a function of contact group. Adoptees having ongoing in-person contact thought about their birth parents significantly more frequently (weekly, on average) than did those who never had contact, had contact that stopped, or had ongoing contact that was not in person (less than once a month, on average). Adoptees having ongoing contact were doing so in multiple ways: with birth mothers, using an average of 4.6 traditional modes and 3.0 tech-mediated modes; with birth fathers, 4.3 and 1.3, respectively; and with birth siblings, 3.3 and 2.3, respectively. As in earlier waves, satisfaction with contact was positively associated with frequency of contact. However, at Wave 4, satisfaction was also positively associated with the number of traditional and tech-mediated forms of contact used. Findings will be discussed in terms of how the use of technology is changing our understanding of psychological and physical presence in adoption.
L. Leve (Oregon Social Learning Center), G. Harold (University of Leicester), J. Ganiban (George Washington University), M. Natsuaki (University of California, Riverside), D. Shaw (University of Pittsburgh), D. Reiss (Yale University), A. Whitesel (George Washington University) & J. Neiderhiser (University of Pennsylvania State): Adoptive parent ratings of change in openness in the first 6 years post-placement: associations with child adjustment

The impact of openness and contact in adoption on members of the adoption constellation has been a topic of much research. Research has shown positive outcomes for adoption constellation members when greater openness is present, although recent evidence suggests that satisfaction with the level of contact may be more strongly related to outcomes than the actual level of contact (Grotevant et al., 2011). However, much of this research has examined adoptive and birth families separately. The current study examines the joint effects of birth and adoptive parents’ perceptions of contact and satisfaction with contact on the child’s adjustment at age 6.

The sample included 361 adopted children, their adoptive mother and father, and their birth mother who participated in Cohort I of The Early Growth and Development Study (EGDS). The EGDS is a longitudinal study of birth and adoptive families who completed domestic infant adoptions in the US between 2003-2009. We focus on adoptive mother and father ratings of contact with birth parents and satisfaction with contact from child age 9-months to child age 6, and birth mother ratings of contact with the adoptive family and satisfaction with the adoption process at 4- and 18-months and 4.5 years postpartum.

Examination of the mean levels of openness over time indicated that birth and adoptive parents each tended to perceive the level of openness as declining slightly over the first 4-6 years post-placement, although there was high stability in openness over time. Higher levels of openness were associated with increased satisfaction with contact for both birth mothers and adoptive parents.

A series of regression analyses examined associations between openness and satisfaction with child externalizing problems, internalizing problems, and the parent-child relationship at age 6. Openness was only associated with adoptive mother-child closeness (p < .05), whereas adoptive parents’ satisfaction with contact was associated with externalizing problems, internalizing problems, mother-child closeness, and father-child closeness (p’s all < .05). Results were present regardless of whether mother or father ratings were used. Associations between adoptive parent satisfaction and child adjustment were significantly stronger when birth mother ratings of satisfaction were high (ie., fell above the median birth mother satisfaction score). For example, in the high birth mother satisfaction group, the more satisfied the adoptive father, the fewer child behavior problems and the closer the adoptive parent-child relationship. Conversely, in the low birth mother satisfaction group, adoptive fathers’ satisfaction was not associated with child behavior problems or adoptive parent-child closeness. This suggests an intricate interplay between child behavior problems and adoptive and birth parents satisfaction with the level of contact.
E. Neil, M. Beek & E. Ward (University of East Anglia): *Holding each other in the heart and mind: the dynamics of boundary ambiguity in the adoption triad*

This paper will draw on a longitudinal study of adoption, using data from adopted young people, their adoptive parents and their birth relatives. The extent to which there is congruence between the physical and psychological presence of the ‘significant other’ for each of the parties will be described. The patterns formed by these congruities and incongruities will be explored and some implications for practice suggested.

This analysis draws on the work of Fravel (1995). Psychological presence is defined by Fravel as “the symbolic existence of an individual in the perceptions of family members”, that is, the extent to which a person is held close in the ‘heart and mind’ of another. Physical presence refers to the extent to which a person is physically present, available and interactive in a relationship. In adoption, physical presence is represented by contact. Boundary ambiguity is said to exist when physical and psychological presence are incongruent; where a person is psychologically present but physically absent in a relationship, or vice versa. In adoption, boundary ambiguity may occur for any of the parties when the significant other is psychologically important but there is no physical connection between them.

The "Contact after Adoption" project began in 1996 and it has followed a cohort of children adopted in England when under the age of 4. In the current study (Stage 3), the young people are now aged between 16 and 20 years. There have been a range of contact arrangements within the adoptions and these have evolved in different directions over the years. In-depth interviews have been conducted with adopted young people, birth relatives and adoptive parents. This paper will be drawn from this data and it will focus on a sub group of 10 cases in which all three parties were interviewed.

How each of the parties has experienced the physical presence of each other through their various contact arrangements will be described. This has been at a high level for some (through face to face or positive and creative indirect contact) and more limited for others. Psychological presence, that is the extent to which the significant other is held close in the ‘heart and mind’ of each of the parties, will be discussed. Within this sub-group of ten triads, tensions can arise within individuals and between the parties when physical and psychological presences are incongruent. The concept of valence, that is whether the psychological presence is positive or negative (or mixed), is also significant when considering incongruity. Using this framework, different patterns within the triads will be traced to make sense of different outcomes for each party. This analysis yields a range of indicators for practice in planning and facilitating contact and for supporting all parties before and after adoption and these will be highlighted.


The closed adoption process and the overall lack of reliable information on birth families in international adoption does not mean members of the adoption triad do not think about the birth family and it does not stop members from search and reunion efforts. The transnational aspect of international adoption further complicates thoughts...
of birth family because these experiences conflate with loss of birth culture (Lee & Miller, 2009). For internationally adopted youth, it is quite natural to have thoughts about birth family and birth culture and, increasingly, to search for birth family overseas.

This study examines a new self-report measure of birth family thoughts for internationally adopted persons. We surveyed 234 adolescents (53% female), ages 13-19, who were adopted from South Korea, most as infants. We also surveyed one adoptive parent of each child, usually the mother (69%). A six-item measure of birth family thoughts (BFT) was developed in consultation with adopted Korean American adults who reviewed the items and made suggested changes and additions. Items, rated on a 1-4 frequency scale, include thoughts about birth parents, whether birth parents think about you, what birth parents look like, whether there are siblings in Korea, origin of Korean name, and imagining growing up in Korea. Exploratory factor analysis and reliability estimates suggest a single-factor construct (65% of variance accounted) with good internal item consistency (alpha = .89). The mean item score was 2.48 (ranges 1.88-2.77), suggesting a frequency average between “a little” and “some.”

We also surveyed whether Korean adoptees (KAD) traveled to Korea (N=61), visited orphanages (N=39), met foster family (N=37), and reunited with birth family (N=13). Additionally, 38 KAD had searched for birth family and 17 had found birth family members. KAD who traveled to Korea, visited orphanages and searched for birth family had statistically significant higher BFT scores. Interestingly, finding and reuniting with birth family did not result in higher BFT scores, suggesting reconciliation between physical and psychological presence.

We then examined correlations between BFT and psychological adjustment. Using the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (Goodman, 1997) for adolescents and parents, BFT was correlated only with adolescent reports of emotional distress/withdrawal (r = .26) and total behavioral problems (r = .14). BFT also was correlated with greater school interest (r = .15). Last, BFT was correlated with a stronger ethnic identity (r’s = .34-.49), adoptive identity (r = .36), satisfaction with Asian looks (r = -.22), and cultural socialization practices by parents (r = .18-.29).

Outcomes and interventions for children adopted from foster care
Co-convenors: J. Miranda (University of California, Los Angeles) & J. Waterman (University of California, Los Angeles)
Discussant: D. Brodzinsky (Rutgers University)
Findings from adoption-focused research examining the unique needs of diverse families adopting children from the U.S. foster care system are presented. The first study examines parents' and former foster children's long-term adjustment through the first five years of adoptive placement. Children's cognitive scores increased significantly over the five-year period, with the most rapid improvement occurring in the first year post-placement. Children scoring one standard deviation below the mean (indicative of learning difficulties) decreased from 41% to 18%. Similarly, behavioral problems decline after the transition to an adoptive home. Most children experience a decrease in internalizing symptoms during the first year. About one-third of the children
continued to have externalizing problems in the clinical or borderline range over time. Parents experienced a reduction of stress in the first 12 months, followed by a plateau in stress for parents who adopted older children and an increase in stress for parents who adopted younger children. In the second study, we examine infants in concurrent planning, where family reunification is continued as children are in pre-adoptive homes. We review two waves of data collected at 2 and 12 months post-placement that examine infant's development, and parents stress about the adoption. Parents generally feel more positively about the placement over time, but concerns about the concurrent planning are related to parental stress and parental attachment. In the third paper, we describe a manualized treatment (ADAPT) we developed as a preventive intervention for families adopting older children (aged 5-14 at adoption) from foster care. To date, evidence-based treatments are not available to help such families. The approximately 24 week long program includes seven modules: 1) Trust, Coping Strategies, and Behavioral Management, 2) Developmental Understanding of Adoption Experience, 3) Loss and Grief Issues about Birth and Foster Families, 4) Attachment/Joining with Adoptive Families, 5) Search for Identity/Self Esteem/ Transracial/ Nontraditional Families, 6) Substance Abuse Prevention, and 7) Adoption and the Outside World. Most modules include parallel parent and child sessions, followed by a family session. The fourth paper will cover preliminary findings of ADAPT, including qualitative data from families completing the treatment. Pilot clinical cases and preliminary results from a randomized-controlled trial will be discussed.

J. Miranda (University of California, Los Angeles): Longitudinal cognitive development and behavior problems of children adopted from foster care

The number of children adopted from the foster care system in the U.S. has increased dramatically in recent years. In 2009, over 55,000 children were adopted from the foster care system. Despite these trends, we know relatively little about the long-term behavioral trajectories of children adopted from foster care and the adjustment of their families.

The current study sought to examine parents' and former foster children's long-term adjustment to a more enriched environment through the first five years of adoptive placement. The goal was to examine the cognitive and behavioral functioning of older children with high rates of prenatal substance exposure adopted from foster care. Participants (N=82 children) involved in the UCLA TIES for Adoption program to facilitate successful adoption of high-risk children transitioning from foster care to adoptive placement between 1996 and 2001 were asked to participate in this longitudinal study. Participants were tracked over five years. Most were children of color. Transracial adoptions where the child matched ethnicity with neither parent occurred for 40% of children. The majority of parents were married or living with a domestic partner. Children were an average of about four years at age of placement. Parents completed the Parenting Stress Index and the Child Behavior Check List at 2 and 12 months every year up to 5 years post-placement. Children received a cognitive or achievement test at each time point.
Children experienced significant increases in cognitive development over the first year in adoptive placement, and academic achievement measured at 3 and 5 years post-placement was in the average range. Overall, most children experienced a decrease in internalizing symptoms in the first year after placement. However, about one-third of the children continued to have externalizing problems in the clinical or borderline clinical range over the five year follow-up period. A risk-factor-by-time interaction effect suggested that older children start with higher levels of externalizing problems, but improve similarly to younger children. Interestingly, younger children have an increase in behavior problems after the first year post-adoption, and end up at a similar level as the older group. There was also an interaction between time and placement at age greater than four for parental stress. Parents experienced a reduction of stress in the first 12 months, followed by a plateau in stress for parents who adopted older children and an increase in stress for parents who adopted younger children. Children adopted from foster care make significant gains in cognitive development and internalizing problems, but continue to have high levels of externalizing problems that could benefit from adoption-specific interventions.

J. Waterman (University of California, Los Angeles): *Promoting infant-parent mental health in the context of concurrent planning*

Although children were previously considered for adoption only after family reunification efforts had been terminated, the past decade has seen a rise in concurrent planning, in which family reunification and an alternative permanency plan (adoption) are pursued simultaneously. This approach can promote positive outcomes in young children by leading to quicker permanency placements, thus reducing the number of foster care placements and allowing for more continuity of care. At the same time, it can present difficulties for the prospective adoptive parents who now must carry out the duties of foster parents while hoping to become the permanent parents. How do these families fare over time, and how can clinical services be designed to promote infant and parent mental health?

This study will describe the multidisciplinary Infant Mental Health Program at UCLA TIES for Families, which was developed to address the challenges and opportunities arising from concurrent planning. We provide an overview of the clinical services in this program, including intake home visits, ongoing home visiting, developmental assessments, and a monthly parent-infant support group. Each service addresses developmental concerns while simultaneously helping to support parents with stressors stemming from birth parent visits, concurrent planning, and legal uncertainty.

We also review two waves of data collected two and twelve months post-placement that examine children's development, parental stress and feelings about the adoption, and the impact of concurrent planning on parental stress, attachment, and development. Results indicate that children show significant gains in expressive language over time, and that parents generally feel more positively about the adoption over time. Nonetheless, concerns relating to concurrent planning were positively associated with parenting stress, attachment concerns, and concerns about the adoption.
Specific intervention strategies for supporting resource parents in the context of concurrent planning will be discussed.

D. Riley (Center for Adoption Support and Education): *Adoption specific therapy for families adopting from foster care (ADAPT)*

Since President Clinton's 1996 adoption initiatives, rates of adoption from foster care in the United States have dramatically increased. The mean age at adoption from foster care is now six years old. Older children often have histories of prenatal substance exposure, abuse, neglect, and multiple placements, all factors that predict behavior problems over time. Nonetheless, evidence-based psychosocial interventions are not tailored to the unique clinical needs of families with adopted children. Adoption-specific clinical services are also needed to address the emotional underpinnings of the child's adoption experience.

In this presentation, we will describe the development of a manualized Adoption-Specific Intervention (ADAPT) for families adopting older children from foster care. This intervention combines evidence-based treatments for child mental health and behavioral problems with the adoption-specific lens that takes into account the child's past history. Adoption-specific therapy addresses parental stress by helping parents to understand their child and their child's background. They also learn how to better handle their child's behavior. Children learn coping strategies and how to deal with the myriad of issues presented by divided loyalties, multiple placements and attachment issues. The treatment draws on the clinical expertise of the Center for Adoption Support and Education (C.A.S.E.) and UCLA TIES for Families and has received input from a nationally-renowned group of investigators who provided valuable feedback.

The program is approximately 24 weeks long and includes seven modules. Each module involves parent and child sessions, followed by a family session. Module 1 covers trust, positive coping strategies, and behavior management. A strong therapeutic relationship is attained, and parents are encouraged to focus on their child's strengths and develop adoption-specific interventions for problem behaviors. The child also works to develop adaptive coping strategies. Module 2 covers developmental understanding of the adoption experience. The parents increase their comfort with, awareness of, and understanding of the adoption experience for their child. The child learns developmentally appropriate information about their past and the parents are aided in telling this information to the child. Module 3 covers loss and grief issues about the birth family and foster care. The parents are helped to understand their child's past losses and children are helped to grieve their losses. Module 4 covers attachment and joining with the adoptive family, helping the parents with "claiming behaviors" and the child with feelings of safety. Module 5 covers search for identity and transracial/nontraditional families. Module 6 covers substance abuse prevention. Module 7 covers dealing with adoption and the outside world.
A. Langley (University of California, Los Angeles): *Preliminary findings from a randomized trial of adoption-focused therapy*

In this paper, we present preliminary qualitative data from a randomized trial of an adoption-specific therapy developed specifically for families adopting older children from foster care. The therapy consists of seven modules, including: 1) adoption-specific behavioral strategies for managing older children adopted from foster care, 2) providing age-appropriate information about the child's adoption, 3) dealing with the grief and loss the child feels from loss of previous birth and foster families, 4) building family attachment, 5) self-esteem and identity issues, including transracial and nontraditional families, 6) substance abuse prevention, and 7) dealing with adoption with the outside world.

In this session, we present qualitative data from parents taking part in the first year of this randomized, controlled trial. Qualitative data regarding the families' response to each module of the impact of the therapy on the family will be presented. Families' thoughts on the need for each of the modules presented to them, as well as the need for interventions that should be included will be presented. An overview of the families' and the child's responses to therapy will provide insights into the need for adoption specific therapies for families adopting older children.

**Young children in typical and post-intervention institutional environment: development, early deprivation timing, behavior after transition to families**

Co-convenors: R. Muhamedrahimov & D. Chernego (University of St. Petersburg State)

The St. Petersburg orphanage research project designed to improve the social-emotional relationship experience of young children living in orphanages in St. Petersburg, Russian Federation (The St. Petersburg-USA Orphanage Research Team, 2008). This symposium integrates new findings of the evaluated results of the project as well as results of comparative study of children living in orphanages and families. Paper 1 presents the study of an impact of early deprivation timing on development of infants in the typical and post-intervention institutions. Both typical and biological risk groups of children will be discussed in association with duration of early institutionalization. Paper 2 includes research data on emotional expressions of 0-3 years old children in typical/ post-intervention orphanages and families. The variety and intensity of the positive and negative emotions in different episodes of caregiver-child interactions will be presented. Paper 3 analyzes the results of behavior assessment in the group of 5-8 years old children transitioned from typical institutional environment to biological and non-biological families and children without institutional experience. Differences between post-institutional children in biological versus non-biological families are discussed. The findings of this symposium will be discussed in terms of the quality of early social-emotional environment and related child development and mental health issues in institutions and post-institutional family care.
D. Chernego & M.J. Vasilyeva (University of St. Petersburg State): Development of infants in association with duration of institutionalization

Paper 1 presents the longitudinal study of an impact of early deprivation timing on development of infants in the typical and post-intervention institutions. Four groups of young orphan children (preterm and full-term children from typical and post-intervention institutions) were assessed at age 3 and 9 months. The results of comparative analysis of the general development between groups at 3 and 9 months and the analysis of the general development with increasing of the institutional timing from 1-3 to 7-9 months will be presented. Both preterm and full-term groups of children will be discussed in association with duration of early institutionalization.

M.Y. Solodunova (University of St. Petersburg State): Emotional expressions of young children in post-intervention orphanage

The research data on emotional expressions of 0-3 years old children in post-intervention versus typical orphanage will be presented. We will demonstrate the variety and intensity of positive and negative emotions in different episodes of caregiver-child interaction. The association between quality of emotional development of children in typical and post-intervention orphanages and characteristics of social-emotional behavior in adoptive families will be discussed.

V.V. Agarkova & R. Muhamedrahimov (University of St. Petersburg State): Behavioral characteristics of children with institutional experience in substitute families

The results of the behavioral assessments in the group of 5-8 years old children transitioned from one of St. Petersburg institutions to substitute families, and family-reared children without institutional experience will be presented. Results showed behavior problems in both groups of children. Children from substitute families had extreme social and externalizing problems in comparison with standardization sample, and more extreme aggressive behavior than family reared children.

Mental representations of attachment: development and sources of influence

Co-convenors: J. Palacios (University of Seville) & F. Juffer (Leiden University)
Discussant: C.H. Zeanah (Tulane University, New Orleans)

In recent years, research into attachment has gained visibility in adoption research. Nevertheless, whether due to its complex methodology or the need to use measuring instruments that require prolonged training and specific accreditation, attachment is not among the most studied areas in the field. Existing studies could be divided into three large groups: those studying attachment behaviors, those analyzing the mental representations of attachment, and those studying the inter-generational transmission of attachment --that is to say, the influence of parental attachment styles and behaviors on the attachment of their children.

The papers included in this symposium seek to study the second and third of the above-mentioned topics. Although these are questions of interest in any one of the circumstances of human development, interest in this topic becomes particularly valuable in cases such as adoption, an experience that involves major discontinuity
between prior and subsequent experiences, experiences of separations and loss, and integration into new social, family, relational and emotional realities.

The four papers that make up this proposal analyze the subject of attachment representations in children and adolescents with previous adversity having been either adopted or fostered. Some of the papers also analyze parental attachment representations and their influence on their adopted children. The proposals come from research groups in Italy, Holland, Germany and Spain, and are a good example of just how much such research can contribute to both the understanding of and the professional intervention within this reality.

Professor Charles Zeanah, who has extensive experience in attachment research and its dysfunctions, has agreed to be the discussant of this symposium. No doubt, this will greatly enrich this proposal.

M. Román, C. Moreno, M.G. Peñarrubia & J. Palacios (University of Seville):

*Longitudinal continuity and discontinuity in attachment representations of internationally adopted children*

Adoption, as it involves discontinuity of the family context, offers a unique opportunity to explore mental representations in adoptees, whilst theory of attachment offers a rich framework from which to better understand the inner world of adopted children. The main goal of the study was to analyze the continuity and discontinuity of mental representations of attachment in internationally adopted children over time. The sample consisted of 40 children from the Russia Federation adopted by families in Spain, 58 non-maltreated children and 50 institutionalized children in Spain. In the first assessment, all children were between four and eight years of age; adopted children had been an average of three years with their adopted families. The Story Stem Assessment Profile (Hodges, Steele, Hillman & Henderson, 2003) was administered to explore children’s perceptions of attachment relationships. The results showed more negative representations in adopted children than in the control group, while there were no significant differences between adopted and institutionalized children (Román, Palacios, Moreno & López, 2012). The time with adoptive families was also related to security in mental representations in this first assessment. Four years later, mental representations were once again explored using the story stem procedure and the Friends and Family Interview (Steele & Steele, 2005) was also included in the assessment. The results of the longitudinal evaluation are presented in this paper, which discusses continuity and discontinuity in mental representations of attachment and related factors.

F. Juffer, M. Beijersbergen, M. Bakermans-Kranenburg & M.H. Van IJzendoorn (University of Leiden):

*Parental sensitivity is the key to attachment security and attachment continuity: a longitudinal adoption study*

In a longitudinal study with 125 early-adopted adolescents, we examined continuity of attachment from infancy to adolescence and the role of parental sensitive support in explaining continuity or discontinuity of attachment. Assessments of maternal sensitive support and infant attachment (Strange Situation Procedure) were completed when infants were 12 months old. When the children were 14 years old, we observed the
adoptive mothers’ sensitive support during a conflict discussion. The adopted adolescents’ attachment representations were assessed with the Adult Attachment Interview. Mothers of secure adolescents showed significantly more sensitive support during conflicts than did mothers of insecure adolescents. Overall, no continuity of attachment from infancy to adolescence was found. However, maternal sensitive support in early childhood and adolescence predicted continuity of secure attachment from 1 to 14 years, whereas less maternal sensitive support in early childhood but more maternal sensitive support in adolescence predicted children’s change from insecurity in infancy to security in adolescence. We conclude that both early and later parental sensitive supports are important for continuity of attachment across the first 14 years of life.

K. Nowacki (University of Applied Sciences and Arts Dortmund), I. Bovenschen (University of Erlangen, Nuremburg), J. Kliwer (University of Applied Sciences and Arts Dortmund), S. Gabler, K. Lang, J. Zimmermann & G. Spangler (University of Erlangen, Nuremburg): Attachment in foster children during the first year of placement: the role of caregiver’s mental state and behavior

Children who have experienced maltreatment and neglect in their biological families are often placed into new homes with new caregivers. In the German child welfare system, long-term foster family placements are quite common, especially since adoption rates are rather low (Federal Statistical Office Germany, 2010). Due to early adversity and disruptions in caregiving, foster children are at risk for developing a variety of social, psychological, and behavioral problems, especially attachment problems (van den Dries et al., 2009). However, there is emerging evidence indicating that quality of caregiving conditions in foster homes, i.e. the behavior of the new caregivers as well as their internal working model regarding attachment, may positively influence children’s development (Dozier et al., 2001; Oosterman & Schuengel, 2008; Dozier et al., 2006). However, scant attention has been paid to foster children entering foster care beyond the first year of life.

In a current German longitudinal study, 55 children placed between 12 and 72 months of age have been assessed three times during their first year of placement: initially upon placement as well as six and twelve months after placement. At each assessment, the caregiver-child dyads were observed twice, once at home and once at the University. Children’s attachment behavior was measured using a home observation (Attachment Q-Set, Waters & Deane, 1985). If children were older than 36 months of age, attachment representation was examined using the Story Stem Completion Task (Page & Bretherton, 1995). Foster parents’ internal working model regarding attachment and caregiver sensitivity were coded on the basis of, respectively, the Adult Attachment Interview (George, Carol, & Main, 1984, 1985, 1996) and a standardized home observation (free play and semistructured interaction, see NICHD Early Child Care Research Network, 1999, 2003). Finally, case workers of foster care agencies rated the severity of early adversity according to the Maltreatment Classification System developed by Barnett et al. (1993).
Preliminary findings are going to be presented. First results indicate that attachment security increased both on behavioral and representational level during the first six months of placement, but is still lower than in normal samples. Early adversity was solely related to foster children’s attachment representation but not to attachment behavior. Still running analyses will reveal if and how foster parent’s behavior and attachment representation contribute to changes in children’s attachment security.

The findings of the present study may facilitate the development of interventions designed to improve attachment development among foster children.

C.S. Pace (University of Genoa), S. Di Folco, G.C. Zavattini (University of Rome), A. Santona (University of Milano-Bicocca), V. Guerriero & E. D’Onofrio (University of Rome): Association between attachment representation of late-adopted adolescents and attachment state of mind of their adoptive mothers: a pilot-study

Literature in the attachment field have highlighted that one or both adoptive parents with secure attachment states of mind and without any indexes of irresolution with respect to loss or abuse could be a good protective factors for late-adopted children, who were previously maltreated and neglected, allowing them to revise their insecure and/or disorganized attachment representations (Steele et al., 2007; Steele et al., 2008, Pace, Zavattini, & D’Alessio, 2012). On the other hand, studies on intergenerational transmission of attachment in families with late-adopted children provided discordant results during pre-school and school age (Steele et al., 2008; Pace, & Zavattini, 2011; Verissimo & Salvaterra, 2006), and moreover only few researches on late-adopted during adolescence have been run.

Thus, the aim of this study is to explore IWMs of late-adopted adolescents and their mothers in order to assess distribution of attachment representations and intergenerational transmission of attachment.

Our pilot-study involved 38 participants: 22 late-adopted adolescents and their 16 adoptive mothers. All adolescents, without any special needs, were between 12 and 16 years old at time of assessment (M=13.8, DS=1.8) and they aged four to eight years old at time of adoption (M=5.9, DS=1.1). Attachment representations of adopted adolescents were assessed by the Friend and Family Interview (FFI, Steele & Steele, 2005), while their cognitive status was controlled administering the verbal scale of Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children III (WISC-III, Orsini, Picone, 2006). The states of mind with respect to attachment of adoptive mothers were classified by the Adult Attachment Interview (AAI, Main, Goldwyn & Hesse, 2002). All the measures were administered separately to children and mothers during the same session. FFIs were video-recorded while the AAIs were audio-recorded. Both were successively transcribed verbatim.

The attachment representations of late-adopted adolescents were classified: 63.6% secure, 27.3% dismissing and 9.1% preoccupied. None was classified as disorganized, but one girl resulted disorganized as secondary category. Most of adoptive mothers were classified as secure-autonomous (87.5%) in the AAI, while 12.5% (N=2) resulted primarily unresolved regarding past loss or trauma, among these one was secure-
autonomous and one dismissing as main classification. None was classified as preoccupied. A trend towards significance was revealed between children’s FFI secure-insecure classifications and maternal AAI secure-insecure categories. Non-verbal IQ scores of adopted adolescents were at the minimal threshold of the normal range with a wide range of scores.

Our results would provide an empirical contribution to the literature on intergenerational transmission of attachment patterns in adoptive dyads.

Neuropsychological consequences of early deprivation: causes, consequences, intervention
Co-convenors: J. Palacios (University of Seville) & M. Kroupina (University of Minnesota)
Research in recent years has been documenting the “neurobiological toll of early human deprivation” (Nelson et al., 2011). Pre- and post-natal circumstances linked to deprivation (nutritional, health and stimulation problems), as well as institutional care, are not the type of circumstances needed for the appropriate development of the neurobiological system, in either animals or humans. This is particularly true when this adversity takes place in prenatal and perinatal periods and during the first years of life; research with humans has begun to demonstrate the negative consequences in both the short and long term, as well as the repercussions in other aspects.

The four papers making up this symposium deepen into this line of research and show the vibrant progress taking place in terms of research methods and designs (some of which already have longitudinal evidence), but also in the practical implications of these results. Such results motivate the development of intervention programs aimed at improving the developmental circumstances of the children affected by early neurobiological adversity, whether through alternative care systems other than institutionalization or working with adoptive or foster parents to create a more favorable family context for their recovery.

The four papers included in this symposium come from research groups in the United States and Spain. One of the papers (Kroupina et al.) analyzes the predictors of the neuro-developmental status in children who have grown up in an institutional context. Two papers (Zeanah et al., Peñarrubia et al.) look into contents of executive function. The fourth (Fisher) is about interventions developed to improve behavioral and neurobiological outcomes of children with a history of early adversity.

Professor Laurie Miller, with ample experience in researching the pediatric repercussions of early adversity and later recovery, has agreed to be the discussant of this symposium, a fact that will, undoubtedly, enrich the proposal.
M. Kroupina, S. Vang (University of Minnesota), M.M. Aidjanov (Kazakhsthan Academy of Nutrition), M.K. Georgieff (University of Minnesota), M.O. Hearst (St. Catherine University), J.H. Himes, D. Johnson, B.S. Miller (University of Minnesota), A.S. Syzdykova, T.S. Sharmanov (Kazakhsthan Academy of Nutrition) & Spoon Foundation Research Team (University of Minnesota):

Predictors of neurodevelopment status in young children living in institutional care in Kazakhstan

Millions of children are currently living in international institutions, an environment that is considered an extreme on the scale of early adversity. The main goal is to explore the risk factors associated with neurodevelopment of institutionalized children in Kazakhstan (KZ). We hypothesized that child’s height status, which is known to be affected by the growth hormone system and nutrition, would be a sensitive indicator of neurodevelopment.

Children (N=104) from six institutional environments (IE), aged 5 to 29 months were part of the study. Neurodevelopment status was assessed using Bayley Scales of Infant Development II (1993) that included cognitive status /Mental Developmental Index (MDI) and motor status/ Psychomotor Development Index (PDI). The Bayley Behavioral Rating Scales Composite (BRSC), age at assessment, gender and IE variables were included in the analysis. Groups were created to assess the severity of postnatal experience (SPE) that ranged from no family experience, removal from biological family due to abuse/neglect, and family experience/placed due to loss of biological parents. Blood samples were collected for assessment of hemoglobin status. World Health Organization norms were used to define anemia status and physical growth z-scores. Birth weight information was available for 69 children.

It was identified that more than 60% of children were below normal range and 40% within significant delay range on their neurodevelopmental status, and 37% were found to have stunted growth, below -2SD on height measures. 49% were identified with anemia. Maximum-likelihood general linear model analysis indicated that age at assessment (β= 0.8 score/month, p<.02) and BRSC (β=0.51 score/unit, p<.002) were significant predictors of the PDI scores, controlling for other risk factors. Further analysis revealed that child’s height status (β=4.3 score/z score, p <.001) along with SPE (β=-10.76 score/unit, p<.03), and BRSC (β=0.66 score/unit, p<.001) were significant predictors of the MDI scores, controlling for other risk factors. We ran an additional analysis for the subgroup that had the birth weight information available to address the possibility that the height status is reflective of prenatal risks. The analysis showed that the height (β= 3.6 score/z score, p<.01) was a significant predictor of the neurocognitive status along with the birth weight (β=0.01 score/kg, p<.03) and BRSC (β=0.72 score/units, p<.001).

In summary, the results revealed the compromised neurodevelopmental status in institutionalized children in KZ. The neurocognitive status was associated with prenatal and postnatal risk factors. Height status was found to be a sensitive indicator of neurocognitive development. Implications of the results of the study for designing intervention programs will be discussed.
C.H. Zeanah (Tulane University, New Orleans), N.A. Fox (University of Maryland) & C.A. Nelson (Harvard University): Executive functioning following early deprivation

Executive functioning in young children, including working memory, planning, cognitive flexibility, inhibitory control and executive attention, are mediated by the prefrontal cortex, which is a slowly and relative late maturing component of brain development. Non-human studies have shown that executive functioning is particularly sensitive to variations in early experiences, and we wanted to examine this in children with histories of serious deprivation.

The Bucharest Early Intervention Project is the first ever randomized controlled trial of foster care as an alternative to institution care for young children abandoned at or near birth and placed into residential care. We identified 136 of these children who were between 6 and 30 months of age, and we assessed them comprehensively across many domains of development. Following that, we randomly assigned 68 of the children to placement in a foster care network (foster care group, FCG) that we created (foster care was not available in Bucharest at the time the study began). The other 68 children were randomized to “care as usual” (care as usual group, CAUG). We did not interfere with any children’s placements during the study (some were adopted, some were returned to their birth families and others placed into government sponsored foster care that did not exist initially). We also recruited 72 children who had never been institutionalized from pediatric clinics in Bucharest to represent a typically developing Romanian comparison group (never institutionalized group, NIG).

The children were followed at 30, 42 and 54 months, when the formal intervention ended. At that point, the foster care network was turned over to the local government authorities in Bucharest. Follow-ups were conducted at age 8 years (another is in progress at age 12 years).

At age 8 years, inhibitory control was assessed with the GoNoGo task while event related potentials were measured. Overall, the CAUG children were less accurate and exhibited longer ERP latencies (i.e., slower neural responses) compared to children in the FCG or NIG. On tests of visual memory and new learning, working memory, spatial working memory, and spatial planning, the NIG children demonstrated significantly greater skills than the FCG or the CAUG. We did not detect any intervention effect on any of these tasks, however.

The implications for brain development in the context of severe early deprivation are discussed.

M.G. Peñarrubia, J. Palacios, C. Moreno, M. Román, E. León & M.C. Moreno-Maldonado (University of Seville): Executive function and early adversity in children adopted internationally

Executive function (EF) comprises three overlapping skills: cognitive flexibility, working memory and inhibitory control. Studies in both primates and humans suggest that the prefrontal cortex is relevant in understanding cognitive functions and may be vulnerable to post-natal experience. These data point to a protracted period of prefrontal cortex development until 5-7 years of age (Pollak et al. 2010). Some studies indicate
that early and prolonged institutionalization produce serious neurobiological consequences, in particular, metabolic deficits in areas of the brain involved in higher cognition, emotion and emotion regulation (Zeanah et al. 2003). Previous laboratory studies have shown reduced EF in older, post-institutionalized children, as well as attention deficits and hyperactivity symptoms in adolescents, which could point to long-term difficulties with EF. Studies about EF and early adversity are increasing, and normal range EF is recognized as a protective factor, promoting better stress and emotion regulation as well as social and academic adjustment (Hostinar, Stellern, Schaefer, Carlson & Gunnar 2012).

In this study, EF performance was examined in 7- to 13-year-old children who had experienced institutional care in Russian orphanages and compared them with a group of age-matched non-adopted children. EF was assessed with the Cambridge Neuropsychological Testing Automated Battery (CANTAB), an instrument focused on measuring functions of the human brain’s temporal and frontal lobes across three cognitive areas: Visual Memory, Visual Attention and Working Memory/Planning. Subtests of CANTAB have been adapted from experimental tasks with longstanding tradition into a touch-screen format readily accessed by children and older participants with neurological and/or psychiatric disorders (Luciana & Nelson, 2002). In this study, five tasks were selected: Motor Screening Test (MOT)–screens for visual, movement and comprehension difficulties-, Rapid Visual Information Processing (RVP)–tests visual sustained attention-, Stockings of Cambridge (SOC)–asses spatial planning and motor control-, Stop Signal Task (SST)–gives a measure of response inhibition- and Spatial Working Memory (SWM)asses working memory and strategy use.

Data showed that children adopted internationally had lower scores in visual sustained attention, spatial planning and working memory than children with only family rearing. However, adopted children obtained similar scores in strategy and response inhibition. This indicates that children who experienced early adversity and institutional rearing have improved in several EF skills, while they still show deficits or delays in other domains. These data imply that EF may be negatively influenced by early adversity in the form of institutional care.

P. Fisher (University of Oregon): Interventions to improve behavioral and neurobiological outcomes among young children with a history of early adverse experiences

In this presentation we will describe a theoretical model that has been developed and validated linking early stressful experiences, and in particular neglectful parental care, to disruptions in the development and functioning of neuroendocrine and other neural regulatory systems, which it turn increase risks for poor outcomes in terms of behavioral, emotional, cognitive and social development. Support for this model will be presented from the animal literature, from studies of post-institutionally reared children who have been adopted, and from children in foster care. We will then describe a series of intervention studies that have been undertaken to leverage knowledge from the theoretical model as a way of improving children’s outcomes. We will present descriptions of the interventions and consider their application to the adoption context,
and we will provide details about the results of randomized clinical trial studies documenting the impact of the interventions on behavioral and biological outcomes. Of particular note is a set of results showing that one of the primary predictors of children’s diurnal cortisol dysregulation is caregiver stress associated with managing difficult behaviors, and that with interventions it is possible to dramatically decrease both caregiver stress and its effect on cortisol dysregulation. We will conclude the presentation with a description of current work that focuses on the use of video coaching as a powerful and efficient tool for enhancing the effects of caregiver-based interventions.

Ethnic identity, cultural socialization and well-being of transracial adoptees

Convenor: R. Rosnati (Catholic University of Milan)
Discussant: H. Grotevant (University of Massachusetts, Amherst)

Ethnic identity has been largely explored by research projects on immigrants and ethnic minorities. Recent studies, although few in number, have underlined the importance of studying the ethnic identity development among transracial adoptees who are primarily raised by White adoptive parents. Thus, the process of identity development may be more complex for adoptees as they do not share their ethnic identity with that of their adoptive families. Moreover, adoptees have to combine the mainstream cultural background - transmitted by the adoptive family and the current social context - and the ethnic cultural background that in most cases becomes the second one and that has to be learnt rather than acquired through the experiences of growing up in it.

The contributions of the present symposium will analyze in depth these aspects during adolescence and early adulthood, unanimously considered as critical periods for identity formation. The focus will be on the impact of ethnic identity construction on adoptees’ psychosocial well-being as well as on parental cultural socialization strategies. The principle aim is to identify how developmental contextual factors could facilitate adoptees' ethnic identity development and psychological well-being.

R. Lee, R. Reichwald, O.M. Kim & A. Hu (University of Minnesota): The ethnic, racial, and adoptive identity profiles of adopted Korean American adolescents

Drawing upon social identity and intersectionality theories and research, we conducted a person-centered, multi-informant study of 158 pairs of adopted Korean American adolescents (AKAA) and their adoptive parents. Using cluster analytic procedures, we examined AKAA’s patterns of identification across multiple social domains (ethnic, racial, and adoptive identities). The obtained clusters were validated empirically by comparing groups along relevant variables (e.g., engagement in ethnic and racial socialization, dissatisfaction with racial appearance, birth family interest, perceived discrimination, colorblind attitudes, diversity in friendship networks) on which they would be expected to differ. Finally, we examined the association between these identity profiles and psychological adjustment, including behavioral development and other measures of well-being. Results revealed the emergence of six conceptually unique identity clusters that differed significantly on the various validity constructs measured. These identity profiles were largely undifferentiated with respect to
behavioral development per parent and adolescent reports on the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ, Goodman, 1997). However, group differences were found on broad psychological outcomes including life satisfaction, perceived school belongingness and peer competence, and school interest and motivation. Results confirm the importance of considering the collective impact of multiple social identities on a variety of outcomes.

R. Schermer (Auckland University of Technology) & N. Harré (University of Auckland): *Ethnic socialization within intercountry adoptions: how much influence do adoptive parents have?*

This portion of the symposium explores the complex relationship between adoptive parents’ interest in their internationally adopted children’s birth culture and the children’s identification and interest in their culture. It also examines the role of exposure to the birth culture. The study, from which the data were taken, focused on a racially congruent (non-transracial) group of international adoptive families, which allowed the authors to consider the topic of parental ethnic socialization with a population where racial difference would not be a factor.

J. Mohanty (National University of Singapore): *Ethnic identity and psychological well-being: a curvilinear relationship*

Research in general has shown a beneficial effect of ethnic identity on adoptees’ psychological well-being. However, studies also indicate that high emphasis on birth culture and racial/ethnic differences may negatively impact adoptees’ overall adjustment. Using Rojewski (2005) and Brodzinsky’s (1987) proposition of a balanced approach to adoption and culture issues, this presentation will explore the possible curvilinear effect of ethnic identity on adoptees’ well-being i.e. psychological well-being will be high when ethnic identity is moderate instead of low or high. Using data from a study on identity development and psychological well-being in international adoptees, the hypothesized relationship was examined among 100 internationally adopted Asian adolescent and young adults placed with Caucasian parents in the United States. The measures used were the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM), Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale; and Brief Symptoms Inventory (BSI). Results indicated that lower and higher levels of ethnic identity were related to lower levels of psychological well-being. Psychological well-being was highest among adoptees who were able to find a balanced approach to maintaining their ethnic culture. Age was non-linearly related to ethnic identity development. Implications for practice and research will be discussed.

L. Ferrari, R. Rosnati & C. Manzi (Catholic University of Milan): *Bicultural identity integration of transracial adoptees: relational protective factors and psychological well-being*

A number of studies have focused on Bicultural Identity Integration (BII, Haritatos & Benet-Martinez, 2005) to explore whether and how migrants and ethnic minorities who experience multiple cultural belongings perceive their two cultural backgrounds as
compatible (vs. conflictual); some research study also the impact of these differences on their psychosocial well-being. Nevertheless, there is a lack of research on BII among transracial adoptees, who also experience unique conditions of dual cultural belonging. Relying on a sample of 170 Italian transracially adopted adolescents (aged between 15 and 25) and both of their parents, the aim of the present study was twofold: to explore whether and the extent to which BII is related to adoptees’ psychosocial well-being; and to analyze the influence of specific family and social identity variables on BII. Multivariate analyses using Structural Equation Modeling indicated that that adoptive filiation (i.e., belonging to the adoptive family) and parents’ cultural socialization strategies are significant protective factors for adoptees’ psychosocial well-being, and that this relation is mediated by differences in BII.

British Chinese adoption study: concepts, research methods and implications
Co-convenors: A. Rushton (King's College, London) & M. Grant (British Association for Adoption and Fostering)
Discussant: A. Baden (Montclair State University)
The British Chinese Adoption Study was a mid-life follow-up of ex-orphanage internationally adopted women in the UK. The main findings have now been published and we are reflecting on the relevance and validity of the methods used to capture the women’s experiences and outcomes. We welcome the opportunity to discuss our research orientation and to invite debate about some of the issues involved.

A. Rushton (King's College, London): Conceptual issues in designing the British Chinese Adoption Study
This symposium follows on from a keynote presentation about the main findings from the British Chinese Adoption (BCA) study, which was a long-term follow-up study of 72 women adopted from Hong Kong orphanages into British families in the 1960s and 1970s. The three papers focus on design, methodological, ethical and practical considerations in carrying out the study.

In this first paper, two particular conceptual issues that were central to the BCAS study will be presented: 1) capturing adult psycho-social outcomes, and 2) exploring community connectedness.

1) Measuring adult outcomes I will outline the choices involved in trying to capture key aspects of adult life circumstances and achievements, psychological adjustment and social and community relationships in this adult follow up of children who experienced early deprivation. Measures used to compare outcomes with already collected data from the UK National Child Development Study (i.e. Malaise Inventory and GHQ) will be discussed for their relevance and coverage. Some measures used could only be compared with other UK adoption samples (e.g. Rosenberg self-esteem).

2) Some measures had to be invented specifically for the purpose (e.g. community connectedness scales). These were devised in order to develop a better understanding of the participants’ relationships both with the communities of the adoptive family and the UK Chinese communities.
The overall aim was to use standard psychological measures where possible and also to document the lived experience of internationally transracially adopted people in mid-life.

M. Grant (British Association for Adoption and Fostering): *Mixing numbers and narratives: using a mixed methods approach in the British Chinese Adoption Study*

The British Chinese Adoption Study used both quantitative and qualitative data and these were closely integrated throughout the analysis process. Our aim was to gather data that could be used for comparisons with other sources (for example, the UK National Child Development Study) and to explore in depth some experiences specific to this group of women. To achieve this we gathered information via a comprehensive questionnaire pack using standardised measures and a range of other items, plus we carried out face-to-face semi-structured interviews.

Studies using mixed data often present the quantitative and qualitative data in parallel, for example using vignettes from interview narratives to illustrate statistical findings. Within this study, we have used different approaches to combining the data according to the particular research question involved. In this paper I will focus on two areas where we used a particularly detailed mixed methods approach, as follows:

1) Community connectedness – this will pick up on the newly devised scales discussed in the first paper of this symposium. I will briefly present the study’s findings on the women’s ethnic identifications and their connectedness to UK and Chinese communities, drawing on a paper published last year as part of a special edition of the UK’s Adoption and Fostering journal on ‘race’ and ethnicity in family placement.

2) Recall and reflection on adoptive experience – here we had data from both a numerical scale of how positively/negatively the women viewed their experience of being adopted and more detailed responses from the interviews exploring different aspects of those experiences. I will explore how using both sets of data helped to unravel the different strands of what “being adopted” means across the lifespan.

Our aim with both areas was to use a two-way approach to combining the data, by checking the emerging findings from the quantitative and qualitative data against each other continuously in order to arrive at one coherent set of findings. I will outline the processes involved in this mixed methods analysis, and consider how a singular approach (using either the qualitative or quantitative data alone) would have produced a different set of messages about these two important areas of the women’s experiences. I will argue that the findings have been strengthened by using a mixed methods approach and that each source of data was important in helping to interpret the other. Finally, I will give examples of how we have used the full range of data in presenting the study’s findings to different audiences, from policy-makers to social workers.
The British Chinese Adoption Study followed up a group of 100 girls adopted into the UK from orphanage care in Hong Kong in the 1960s. Information on the sample, now in their late 40s and early 50s, was available from the original adoption files. There was therefore a major challenge in finding and then recruiting a sufficient proportion of the women to draw valid conclusions. In making contact with the women after such a long time, a crucial consideration was the potential impact of an unexpected approach from the research team and then the impact of being asked to consider and reflect on their lives for the study. 99 of the women were traced and 72 agreed to participate.

This presentation will focus on two themes:

1. The ethical considerations and the methods used to recruit the cohort and the range of reactions and responses received from the women. In addition it will explore whether or not the approach used to contact the women and to maintain contact with them, became an intervention in itself and therefore potentially a life changing event. This may be so particularly for adopted adults who had little or no knowledge of others who may have been adopted in similar circumstances. There may be other issues of identity confusion or suppression when most of the adoptions were in one way or another trans-national, ethnic, cultural, language and religion. Re-discovering a group that was similar in so many ways in terms of history, heritage and experience provides the potential for re-discovery and development in unimagined ways, both with positive outcomes and with potential risks.

2. The implications for adoption policy and practice of taking a life-long perspective on adoption. Adoption involves major transitions in the lives of children and adopters that includes establishing the basis of a life-long family life, developmental recovery from early deprivation and possibly abuse and neglect. As critical as the early years are, they provide the basis for entry and transitions into adult life with its challenges of independence, education, work and careers, intimate relationships, family life and citizenship.

The study provides a rich source of data for exploring these issues with many questions being raised about current policy and practice despite recognizing that what happened 50 years ago, was in a context that was quite different to what it is today. These include perspectives on issues of developmental recovery, family formation, identity development, transitions and resilience.

**Imagining transnational adoption: constructing families for children and children for families**

Co-convenors: J. Vich (Autonomous University of Barcelone) & J. Grau (Autonomous University of Barcelone)

Discussant: A. Berástegui (Pontificia Comillas University, Madrid)

Over time certain transnational adoption programs have been more popular than others, due in part to the fact that they fit better into a Western ethno-epistemological conception of “adoption”. Thus, transnational adoption programs should not be
understood as linear chains that transfer highly valued ‘goods’ (i.e. children) from a sending country to a receiving one, while transferring ideas/economic resources in the other direction (Howell, 2006). Rather, transnational adoption circulates specific sets of meanings, material and affective resources, and social practices in both directions between sending and receiving countries, generating social and cultural change at both locations (Dorow, 2006). This ongoing process of mutual readjustment does not impact only birth parents and adoptive parents, but has much wider repercussions: (1) the unique net of socio-cultural constructions that shape, consolidate, promote and transform a transnational adoption program (Vich, 2010) and (2) the impact that all those images have on the identity formation of young adoptees.

This symposium inquiries into the cultural construction of transnational adoption and the adoptable child. More specifically, we investigate the discourses and processes through which certain children are constructed as “adoptable” and how international adoption is imagined depending on the interests/perspectives of the different actors that participate in the process. With this objective, Grau (anthropology) draws audiovisual material to identify and analyze culturally specific ideological assumptions embodied in adoption narratives in Spain. Using ethnographic data from a province in central China, Vich (anthropology) reveals the imaginaries that exist among different actors in China surrounding international adoption. García (social work) will describe the evolution transnational adoption from China and Bolivia by proposing a hypothesis about the causes of the current situation and their impact on the processes of adoption, the minors and the families. Finally, Macdonald (sociology) uses data from interviews with U.S. international adoption agency staff and analysis of promotional materials to show the ways agency staff balance the desires of parents with the best interests of children in an ever-changing international adoption market.

Ultimately, the main contribution of this symposium to the conference lies in providing analyses from different disciplines regarding the impact (in both sending and receiving countries) of the imaginaries surrounding transnational adoption on the people involved and on the programs themselves. Each paper will investigate a different aspect of the process by which children become “adoptable” and will demonstrate that transnational adoption programs are constantly constructed, readapted and subject to change.

J. Vich (Autonomous University of Barcelone): Realities and imaginaries on the Chinese transnational adoptive program

Before 2007 Spaniards adopted more children per inhabitant than all other nations and was second only to the United States in terms of the absolute number of children adopted internationally. I argue that this phenomenon is intrinsically related to China’s transnational adoption program, which emerged as a primary source of adopted children. Adoption from China became extraordinarily popular because it fit perfectly into the Western ethno-epistemological conception of “adoption” and, through the construction of a set of idealized notions about the pre-adoptive context, it was transformed into the “model” program for ensuring the protection of forsaken children.
As such, more than 11,371 Chinese minors were adopted into Spanish families between 1995 and 2011.

While much scholarly research has analyzed the growing trend of transnational adoptions of healthy Chinese baby girls by affluent western parents, existing studies focus heavily on the post-adoptive part of the process (Palacios and Brodzinsky 2010:271), largely ignoring the other half of the adoption journey—that which takes place within the sending country. As neither adopters nor researchers inquire into the actual motives for and practices of relinquishing children in the donor countries, Western discourses on the adoptive triad (adoptive parents, birth parents, adoptees) are inevitably biased towards the interests and values of the adoptive parents, which they tacitly assume to be universal. This implies that adopters are ill informed on two counts. First, they are insufficiently aware of the cultural specificity of the kinship values they bring to bear upon the kinning of adoptees (Howell 2006). Second, they are blind to the ways in which adoption practices are co-constructed by the kinship values of the donor countries such as China. Based on more than two years of ethnographic fieldwork in a central Chinese province, it is on this second aspect that I focus in this presentation. Thus, I consider the imaginaries that exist in China surrounding international adoption. My presentation highlights the complicated overlapping of discourses regarding care and “children’s best interests” with practices of commodification in a globalized market.

J. Grau (Autonomous University of Barcelone): Situated imaginaries: cultural narratives and folk representations in international adoption

Among Western countries international adoption programs are built upon the legal basis of well-structured juridical bodies based on two general principles: (1) the dissolution of previous genealogical bonds all together with the reconstruction of a new filial relationship according to specific jurisprudence, and (2) the general statement of the best interest of the child within the adoptive process.

However, such principles derive not only from articulated legal bodies, but also from culturally specific ideological assumptions on procreation and kinship. Furthermore, from an ethnographic point of view, such legal processes are no more than one possible way, among many others, of child circulation among adult members within or between social groups. Nevertheless, such a specific and particular notion has become, in the Western world, the dominant way of conceiving full child transfers with rearing purposes. Hence, we can find a wide variety of representative strategies concerning adoption, which do play a prominent role in the configuration of certain cultural imageries, folk ideological assumptions and theoretical statements over the broad phenomenon of the circulation of children, parental roles and, broadly speaking, of family and kinship articulation.

My interest in this paper comes from of a collateral branch in my main research on the cross-cultural circulation of children and international adoption in Spain. I will explore some particular connections between folk procreative ideologies, cultural representations and audiovisual narratives, as well as the possible connection of these representations with the so-called “ideologies of truth”, as borrowed from Appadurai
and elaborated by Cherot (2009) or Bordo (2002) concerning adoptees’ narratives. Hence, I’ll identify and analyze some dominant ideological loci embodied in some audiovisual examples of adoption narratives, be they TV advertisements, short tales, documentaries or mainstream films.

L. García (Igenus Foundation, Spain): The evolution of international adoption. Hypothesis on the actual situation of China and Bolivia cases

It is well known that in the last several years international adoption has been radically transformed. Not only have the policies regarding child welfare in the origin countries changed, but so too have the number of international adoptions, the process and the timing of those processes and the profile of the adoptable minors.

This presentation will describe the evolution of two transnational adoptive programs, in China and Bolivia. I will present a hypothesis about the causes of the current situation and the impact on the processes, the minors and the families.

S. MacDonald (University of California-Berkeley): Building families: United States adoption agencies and the transnational adoption market

Using interviews with staff members at United States international adoption agencies, this presentation shows how adoption agencies navigate the complicated market for foreign-born children, and how they assist prospective parents during the process of international adoption. The existing literature on transnational adoption in the social sciences has focused heavily on issues related to the experiences of adoptees, adoptive parents and, to a lesser extent, birth parents. Additionally, a number of social scientists have considered the historical, economic, social, and cultural circumstances that cause children from some countries available for international adoption. Rather than focusing on micro-level experiences or macro-level determinants, this presentation considers the importance of meso-level organizations in facilitating the international adoption process.

International adoption agencies present a particularly compelling case for understanding the complexities of the transnational adoption market because as agency staff facilitate adoptions they juggle parental preferences, the best interests of children, legal regulations on adoption practice, changes in country policies, and the availability of adoptable children. The project of transnational adoption agencies is not simply to place needy children into homes, but to satisfy the desires of parent clients who want children (Dorow 2006). Children are at once the primary client of adoption agencies engaged in an altruistic project of caring for children, and also objects of parental desire. Using ethnographic data from observations at adoption agency workshops, interviews with agency staff members and adoptive parents, and agency promotional materials, this presentation will demonstrate the ways agency staff balance the desires of parents with the best interests of children in an ever-changing international adoption market.
Longitudinal pathways of adjustment: birth parent, adoptive parent, and child perspectives

Co-convenors: A. Whitesel (George Washington University)
Discussant: P. Fisher (Oregon Social Learning Center)

As adoption continues to grow as a source of family formation, there is great interest in studying the effects of adoption on a family. These family members include birth parents, adoptive parents, and their children (adopted and non-adopted). Previous adoption studies have examined a myriad of issues, many focused on the adjustment of adopted children. These prior studies also tended to collect data retrospectively; many years after an adoption occurred or at only one point in time. Longitudinal studies allow for the study of adjustment over time and for deeper examination of factors that may contribute to healthy patterns of functioning.

This presentation will focus on the adjustment of birth and adoptive families using two large samples of families that completed an adoption. Both samples collected data longitudinally to examine the course of adjustment as birth parents move forward with their lives and as adoptive families settle into their new familial roles. The first sample is from the Early Growth and Development Study (EGDS) and includes 561 linked sets of birth parents and adoptive families that completed a domestic infant adoption. The first assessment took place 4-6 months post adoption for birth parents and at child age 9 months for adoptive families. The oldest children in the sample are currently age 9 and participants are contacted approximately once per year. The second sample is the Sibling Interaction and Behavior Study (SIBS), which includes adoptive and non-adoptive families (692 adopted and 540 non-adopted offspring). The adopted children in this sample include international and domestic adoptees who are assessed three times, at roughly 14, 18 and 22 years of age.

The first and second papers focus on data from the EGDS. Whitesel et al. will provide an overview of the EGDS and then focus on the characteristics of birth mothers and fathers across the first 4 years post placement. Findings indicate stability of mild to moderate depressive and anxious symptoms with a drop off at 4 years post placement. Leve et al. will present data on the adoptive parents in the EGDS sample, with an emphasis on internalizing behaviors such as depressive symptoms and their associations with marital relations. Findings indicate that as one member of the couple becomes more depressed (with data showing increases over time), feelings of marital warmth decrease and marital hostility increases. The third paper will use data from SIBS to evaluate how adopted children adjust psychologically in late adolescence. While data suggest that adopted children appear to be psychologically healthy, they also are at greater risk for suicide attempts and conflict with parents relative to non-adopted offspring. Implications for supporting birth and adoptive families at the time of initial placement and years following placement will be discussed.
A. Whitesel, J. Ganiban (George Washington University), L. Leve (Oregon Social Learning Center), D. Shaw (University of Pittsburgh), M. Natsuaki (University of California, Riverside), D. Reiss (Yale University) & J. Neiderhiser (University of Pennsylvania State): Birth parents in adoption: characteristics influencing healthy adjustment post adoption

Birth parents tend to be one of the least studied members in an adoption. In the limited research that has been conducted with birth parents, studies have shown they experience a period of grieving following placement of a child for adoption. Birth mothers reported feeling grief, loss, and shame (DeSimone, 1996) while birth fathers reported feeling grief, guilt, anger and resentment (Clapton, 2000). Even less is known about the long term effects of making an adoption plan on birth parent functioning, such as symptoms of depression and anxiety. The Early Growth and Development Study (EGDS), a longitudinal study of 561 linked sets of birth and adoptive families, provides a unique opportunity to examine birth parent functioning over time. This paper presents longitudinal analyses on data collected from the EGDS at 4 months (T1), 18 months (T2), 4.5 years (T3) post placement.

The sample includes 554 birth mothers and 173 birth fathers who placed their infants for adoption. Birth mothers and fathers were an average age of 24 and 26 years old (at T1). Most are Caucasian, completed trade or vocational school, and earned less than $20,000 per year in total household income. Birth parent adjustment post adoption reveals mild to moderate levels of depressive symptoms. Depressive symptoms demonstrate stability from T1 to T2 (r =.61 to .64) with a mean symptom level of 11.1 and 10.7 for birth mothers and 7.9 and 7.6 for fathers. At T3, mean symptom levels dropped to 7.1 for birth mothers and 4.7 for fathers. Birth parents also showed mild to moderate anxiety symptoms, and significant stability from T1 to T2 (r = .60 to .65). The mean levels were 9.9 and 8.9 for birth mothers and 8.6 and 6.9 for fathers, with a drop at T3 for both (6.7 BM; 4.7 BF).

Regression models were used to test whether changes in depression and anxiety at T1, T2, and T3 were influenced by birth parent self-esteem in the areas of global self-worth (GSW), nurturance, sociability and intelligence, measured at T1. For birth mothers, GSW and intelligence were significant predictors of changes in depression (p <.01) and anxiety (p <.05) from T1 to T2. For birth fathers, sociability was a significant predictor of change in depression from T1 to T2 (p <.01). GSW also predicted birth fathers’ change in depression from T2 to T3 (p <.05), and intelligence predicted change in depression from T1 to T3 (p <.01). These findings indicate that the higher self-esteem in these areas, the lower the birth parents’ levels of depression and anxiety. These results suggest that GSW and intelligence may serve more as protective factors for depression for birth fathers than for mothers. Further, interventions focused on enhancing birth parents’ feelings of positive self-worth soon after the adoption may be effective in improving their mental health in the first few years after placement.
Extant research shows that marital relationships decline following parenthood. However, individual differences exist in the extent to which new parents show marital declines, with factors such as parental mental health, self-esteem, and financial stress influencing associations (Conger et al., 1990). Adoptive families might not follow typical trajectories of decreased marital functioning, given that they have typically been married longer, are older, and the transition to parenting is fully planned. In this paper, we focus on adjustment in adoptive parents following placement using a sample of US domestically-adopted infants recruited from The Early Growth and Development Study (EGDS). Adoptive mothers’ and fathers’ changes in depressive symptoms, anxiety symptoms, and marital warmth and hostility across the first 5 assessments in the Cohort I sample were examined: child age 9 months (T1), 18 months (T2), 27 months (T3), 4.5 years (T4), and 6 years (T5). We also examined the role of self-esteem and financial stress on adjustment over time.

The EGDS Cohort I sample includes 361 linked sets of birth and adoptive families who completed adoption placements between 2003 and 2009. Examination of the mean levels of depressive and anxiety symptoms over time revealed that both adoptive mothers and adoptive fathers showed increasing symptoms over time. For depressive symptoms, mothers and fathers increased from mean levels of 3.5 (SD=3.2) and 3.0 (SD=3.5) to mean levels of 5.1 (SD=4.5) and 4.1 (SD=4.0), respectively, from child age 9-months to child age 6 years. For anxiety symptoms, mothers and father increased from mean levels of 3.8 (SD=3.5) and 3.1 (SD=3.1) to mean levels of 5.0 (SD=4.7) and 3.3 (SD=4.0), respectively.

In addition, adoptive mothers and fathers also showed increases in marital hostility and decreases in marital warmth over this time period. For marital hostility, mothers and fathers increased from mean levels of 23.5 (SD=7.4) and 26.40 (SD=8.0) to mean levels of 25.1 (SD=8.6) and 28.8 (SD=9.7), respectively. For marital warmth, mothers and father decreased from mean levels of 51.9 (SD=7.8) and 50.6 (SD=8.0) to mean levels of 49.1 (SD=10) and 47.6 (SD=9.4), respectively. Regression models indicated that increases in mothers’ depressive symptoms were associated with decreases in fathers’ ratings of marital warmth and with increases in his ratings of marital hostility. The reverse was also true (increases in fathers’ depressive symptoms were associated with more distressed marital relations as rated by mothers). In addition, financial difficulties were associated with decreased marital warmth from both parents, and adoptive fathers’ perceptions of marital warmth and hostility were associated with aspects of self-esteem. Implications for the development of marital interventions will be discussed.
M. Keyes, S. Malone (University of Minnesota), A. Sharma (S&S Training & Consulting), W. Iacano & M. McGue (University of Minnesota): Young adult adjustment of U.S. adoptees

Previous research has suggested that adopted individuals are at increased risk for adjustment problems (Juffer & van Ijzendoorn, 2005; Tieman, van der Ende, Verhulst, 2005). Findings from the SIBS (Sibling Interaction and Behavior Study) intake sample have demonstrated that U.S. adoptees have an excess risk of diagnosable DSM disorders in childhood and adolescence (Keyes, Sharma, Elkins, Iacono, & McGue, 2008). In this investigation, we examine adoptee adjustment in young adulthood to determine if these increased risks endure, focusing on clinical assessments of nicotine, alcohol, and other substance use disorders; major depressive disorder; anxiety disorders; antisocial personality disorder; and risk for suicide attempt. We will also examine relationships with parents and siblings and personality traits that contribute to successful adult adjustment.

The SIBS is a study of adoptive and non-adoptive families consisting of an adolescent sibling pair and their rearing parents and is being conducted at the University of Minnesota. The intake sample included 692 adopted and 540 non-adopted adolescents at a mean age of 14.9 years. Of the adopted adolescents, 74% were born outside the U.S., the majority female (60%) and from South Korea (90%). All adopted offspring were permanently placed in their adoptive homes before 2 years of age; 96% were placed before 1 year. All offspring were eligible to participate in the first follow-up assessment, conducted at a mean interval of 3.4 years after intake. A total of 656 adopted and 502 non-adopted adolescents completed F1 at a mean age of 18.3 years. This represents 94% of the intake sample. Offspring who were at least 19 years of age were eligible to participate in F2, which was conducted at a mean interval of 4.0 years after F1. Thus far, 639 adopted and 487 non-adopted offspring, 91% of the intake sample, have participated in F2 at a mean age of 22.4 years.

At F1, most adoptees appear psychologically healthy. Despite reporting more childhood disruptive disorder symptoms at intake, adoptees at F1 did not evidence significantly more alcohol or drug use disorder symptoms than non-adoptees. Although adoptees reported significantly more symptoms of MDD and nicotine dependence, effects are very small, approximately .15 sd. Compared with non-adoptees, adoptees scored higher on personality traits indicating negative emotionality, but these effects were small with effect sizes (ESs) ranging from .18 -.22. Adoptees were distinguished from non-adoptees by moderately large differences on measures of conflict with parents (ESs range from .24-.47). The odds for suicide attempt were also elevated in adoptees (OR=2.96); this increased risk was partially, but not completely mediated by known risk factor for suicide attempt (e.g., personality traits, family environment, and symptoms of psychiatric disorders).
Adoption through the life course: a longitudinal view of adolescence and early adult years

Co-convenors: D. Wijedasa (University of Bristol) & J. Simmonds (British Association for Adoption and Fostering)

Discussant: J. Simmonds (British Association for Adoption and Fostering)

Adolescence is considered a period of transition from childhood to adulthood with many physiological, psychological and social challenges. The accelerated growth and change that occurs during this period is considered second only to the development during infancy. Given all these changes, negotiating the period of transition from childhood to young adulthood can be emotional and stressful for most young people and this can be particularly difficult for adolescents with histories of maltreatment and disadvantage. Most children adopted in the UK, from the state care system, or through international adoptions, have faced adversity either within their birth families or at institutions. Although, previous research indicate that there is rapid developmental catch up across all domains after adoption, there have been a dearth of studies, which have reported on the longer-term adjustment for adoptees or on their transition to adulthood.

The four papers in this symposium will start to address this gap in knowledge, by first looking at theories of transition to adulthood for adopted young people and then looking at outcomes for adoptees from adolescence to early adulthood.

D. Wijedasa (University of Bristol): Transition to adulthood for young people in adoptive care: a comparison with transitions of fostered, disadvantaged and the young people in the general population through secondary analyses of data from the longitudinal study of young people in England

Even though adoption has been used as an intervention for thousands of maltreated children in care in the UK for more than three decades, there have been no recent prospective studies, which have reported on the longer-term adjustment for this group or on their transition to adulthood. Therefore, the main aim of this study was to understand more about the lives of adopted young people as they approach adulthood and to make comparisons with other young people who had not experienced adoptive care. The presentation will focus on results from this research study, which examined the transition to adulthood for adopted young people in comparison with young people in foster care, those growing up in disadvantaged circumstances and the young people in the general population through secondary analyses of data from the Longitudinal Study of Young People in England- LSYPE.

LSYPE began in 2004, with a representative sample of 15,770 young people aged 13-14 years. Data has been collected annually through structured interviews with young people and their parents/carers and six waves of data were available for this research. For the study, all the adopted (n=34) and fostered (n=55) young people in the sample were selected and were compared with a group of disadvantaged young people (n=55) and the young people in the general population (n=15626). The aim of the study was to compare the perspectives of these different groups of young people as they moved from adolescence (13-14 years) to young adulthood (18-19 years) using an ecological
framework, in four areas: (1) behavioral adjustment (2) family support (3) general wellbeing and (4) readiness for independence.

The results indicate that adopted young people grow up in the most advantageous and supportive circumstances and do well as the general population in educational attainment. However, they are more likely than other groups to be bullied, engage in more risky behaviours and report more mental health issues. Amongst others, the results have implications for social work practice in relation to recognizing the importance of post-adoption support in adolescent years.

J. Simmonds (British Association for Adoption and Fostering): *What do longitudinal studies tell us about the early adult years? Reflections on the British Chinese adoption study*

The impact of early adversity on the development of a child has been an issue that has been studied for many years. It is an issue of particular significance in adoption especially where children have spent their early lives in institutions as is common in international adoption or moving between parents and foster careers in adoption of children from care. The general picture is rapid developmental catch up across all domains although there are exceptions. However, there are few studies that give a longer perspective than adolescence. The transition from home adoptive life to early adulthood is highly significant with major change expected in relationships, education, work and responsibility for all the tasks of daily living. The British Chinese Adoption study has followed up a group of women adopted from Hong Kong into the UK in 1960’s and compared them to a large group of women of a similar age who were not adopted and a small group from that group who were. This paper will explore some of issues that might predict transition into early adulthood and how this looks from the perspective of adopted women now in their late 40's and early 50’s.

M. Beek (University of East Anglia): *Continuities and discontinuities in young people’s views of adoption and contact from middle childhood to early adulthood*

This paper will draw on a longitudinal study of adopted children, focusing on data from interviews with children in middle childhood and late adolescence. The experience of adoption and birth family contact from the point of view of these young people will be explored.

The "Contact after Adoption" project began in 1996 and has followed a group of adopted children, adoptive parents and birth relatives over a period of 16 years. In the current study (Stage 3), the young people are now mostly aged between 16 and 20 years. There have been a range of contact arrangements (including no contact) within the adoptions and these have evolved in different directions over the years.

Seventy percent of the sample was adopted from the care system. Many of the young people have adverse family histories or early experiences of abuse and neglect. They have therefore faced additional challenges in building trust with their adoptive parents, as well as integrating difficult information regarding their birth family histories. These challenges can become heightened as young people make the transition from adolescence to adulthood.
The children’s interviews at Stage 2 of the study revealed a majority feeling fully integrated and loved in their adoptive families. At this stage, a quarter of the children had not begun to explore the meaning of adoption or the significance of birth family relationships and a further quarter found these issues unproblematic. However, half of the children expressed complicated emotions that included feelings of loss, sadness or rejection. These differences may have been age related.

At Stage 3 of the study, we have conducted in-depth interviews with many of the young people and they have provided rich and thoughtful accounts of their adoption experiences. These interviews have been analyzed qualitatively and key themes have been identified. Our paper will be taken from this data and it will focus on a sub group of 25 of the young people, all of whom have been interviewed at Stages 2 and 3.

We will follow the development of the young people’s thinking and feeling regarding both their adoptive status and their birth family contact from middle childhood through to the late adolescence and early adulthood. We will consider the range of meanings that the young people have ascribed to being adopted and to the psychological or actual relationships that they now have with birth family members. We will highlight continuities and discontinuities in these two narrative strands and we will summaries the range of factors that might influence the diverse pathways of thinking and feeling that can be identified.
Workshops

Racial and adoption microaggressions: recognizing them and dealing with them
A. Baden (University of Montclair State), E. Pinderhughes (Tufts University), E. Harrington (University of Montclair State) & J. Waddell (Tufts University):
This workshop will build in part on the invited presentation that Ellen Pinderhughes will give on ethnic-racial socialization.

The prevalence of intercountry and transracial adoption has steadily grown within the US, France, Spain and other major receiving countries. Recent estimates suggest that transracial adoptions account for 40% of all US adoptions (Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute, 2011) and of those adoptions, almost all comprise White adults adopting children of color. Given the transracial nature of these adoptions and the well-documented racial and cultural identity issues reported by adult transracial and international adoptees (TRIAs), adoptees must be prepared to cope with racial and cultural bias and with racial microaggressions (Sue et al., 2007), which are the daily insults, behaviors, and slights that communicate derogatory and hostile attitudes and beliefs toward people of color. Similarly, adoptees must cope with bias and the stigma toward adoption as reflected in adoption microaggressions, a construct introduced at ICAR3 (Baden, 2010). These microaggression forms illustrate the complexity of the struggles that transracial adoptees and their adoptive parents face when seeking to cope with biased behavior and attitudes. In response to the needs of their transracially adopted children, adoptive parents commonly engage in some form of ethnic-racial socialization in which they utilize one of four possible strategies to cope with racial and ethnic differences: cultural socialization, preparation for bias, promotion for mistrust, and egalitarianism and silence about race (Hughes et al., 2006).

To support transracial adoptees and to respond to their identity needs, we will define and apply the constructs of racial microaggressions and adoption microaggressions to TRIAs. Next, focusing on the preparation for bias strategy, we will present data from the Adoption and Development Project (Pinderhughes), a study of families raising Chinese children, that illustrate parents’ efforts to prepare children for bias and the differences between proactive and reactive racial socialization. Preliminary analyses of these data indicate the following reactive (in the moment) strategies: actions to empower the adoptee; actions to promote discussion with the microaggressor; actions to shut down conversation; and proactive (creating situation that facilitates or avoids discussion) strategies: educate child about others; educate others about the child/family; make interactions with others (e.g., friends) conditional on elimination of microaggression comments. Lastly, we will present a practice module in which case studies and best practices will be described and constructs of microaggressions, both racial and adoption-based, will be applied.
SafeBase: A targeted adoption support programme increasing the availability and longevity of adoptive placements
L. Charlton & J. Mansfield (After Adoption)
SafeBase is a highly successful therapeutic parenting programme delivered to adoptive families throughout England, Scotland and Wales. The programme aims to increase the availability and longevity of adoptive placements by putting attachment and child development into context for each adoptive family. The programme was developed by After Adoption as a way of responding to the direct need for targeted adoption support.

Findings from the Department of Education (2010) in England, suggest that every year one in five adoptions breakdown in the UK as families struggle to cope. Over 60% of children enter the care system with a history of abuse or neglect (DfE, 2010) and as a result, witness significant instability and disruption in the crucial early stages of their development. This difficult start in life means that these children need committed, well informed, well trained and well supported parents.

The proposed workshop will explore in detail the three key parts of SafeBase which includes: an initial Family Observation, a 4 day taught element and on-going parent support groups.

Delegates will gain an insight in to the profiles of various families who have attended the course, with a selection of SafeBase graduate stories being outlined and the context in which they joined the programme explored. The Family Observation will also be presented via film. This initial stage of the programme identifies the 4 key areas of interest (structure, engagement, nurture and challenge). It acts as a learning platform from which parents can put the exercises and information they gain on the programme into perspective.

Findings from a two-stage evaluation will be highlighted: Crucially, it was found that the combination of attachment theory and appropriate parenting techniques made SafeBase highly effective for adoptive families (providing both understanding and a set of practical tools), parents were shown to permanently adapt their parenting, and appreciably change their response to challenging behaviour, as a direct result of the SafeBase training.

Speakers will also explore the creative partnerships established with Local Authorities, enabling 445 children to benefit from the programme, by providing 294 adoptive families with the building blocks needed to make a positive and sustained change to their family relationships.

Engaging adoptive parents to promote open discussion of adoption when children are young: What does it take?
K. Freeark (University of Michigan)
Various studies from different countries have reported that only around one-quarter of adoptive families regularly and comfortably discuss adoption with their children; this is far lower than either best practices or empirical findings about the benefits of communicative openness would recommend. Despite the fact that parents are encouraged to introduce adoption early and incorporate it into family discussion, it
continues to be very difficult for families to carry this out. This has been particularly true of children who are more vulnerable and feel different from their families, resulting in feelings of isolation and poorer self-esteem.

Post-adoption services have overlooked the opportunity that early childhood offers to acclimate parents to adoption discussion and help them feel prepared to respond to their child’s budding curiosity. Enhancement of this capability has the potential to lessen topic avoidance. In order to accomplish this parents’ reflectivity and tolerance of uncomfortable emotion have to be engaged and supported. The referral rate for adopted children rises during the early elementary years, particularly for boys. Efforts to engage parents, particularly fathers, before this critical time has the potential to lessen confusion and distress in middle childhood.

The Inquisitive Minds Curriculum was designed to address these issues and bring about change. It successfully engages parents, including fathers, in a workshop format which provides developmental information on early childhood and up-to-date findings on the benefits of communicative openness for child adjustment. Support for tackling emotional conversations with young children is provided by workshop leaders, but more importantly, by the participating parents themselves.

Strategies for sustaining parent involvement in the program after the workshop (both in person and online) have been developed and successfully implemented requiring relatively little investment of staff time. A research protocol for monitoring the impact of the intervention has also been developed and tested, documenting shifts in parent-child dynamics two months after the workshop. This approach during early childhood has the potential to establish the foundation for communicative openness before the rates of referral of adopted children for mental health services rise in middle childhood.

This workshop will describe the manualized curriculum and implementation procedures for this intervention program. It will provide illustrations of the power of parent-to-parent support, and a strengths-based link to expert consultation during and after the initial workshop. Given the growing evidence for the role of family communication in promoting positive child adjustment, the goals of this program are especially relevant to adoption practice as well as to research on family processes.

**Screening and selection of prospective adoptive parents: Theory, practice and policy**

A. Vinke (ADOC and Adoptiepraktijk Vinke) & T. Stroobants (Vrije University of Brussels)

Adoption practice in both the Netherlands and Belgium is fairly limited to intercountry adoption. Domestic adoptions are rare. Therefore all preparation, screening and selection of prospective adopters is aimed at parenting a child from abroad. Children that enter both Belgium and the Netherlands were born in far away countries like for instance China, Ethiopia, South Africa, Colombia and Kazakhstan. Meta-analytic research on intercountry adoption shows good outcomes on the long run, however, it is commonly agreed upon that intercountry adopted children are vulnerable children at a significant risk for a number of cognitive, social, emotional, and educational problems.
(Juffer & Van IJzendoorn, 2005; Keyes, Sharma, Elkins, Iacono, & McGue 2008; Van IJzendoorn & Juffer, 2006; Vinnerljung, Hjern & Lindblad, 2006; Wierzbicki, 1993). Good outcomes are for a good deal attributed to parenting skills and additional support during placement. Adoptive children need strong, sensitive parents. It is very important to identify those parents early on in order to optimize chances for good adoption outcomes and prevent adoption disruptions. This becomes more and more important since the children entering both Belgium and the Netherlands do have more and more complex needs. Up to 70% of all Dutch placements are considered special needs, consisting of medical and psychosocial conditions that need extra attention from the start of the placement (source: Dutch Ministry of Safety and Justice). However, the different parties involved are dissatisfied with the existing procedures for screening and selection. Prospective adopters consider it as too subjective and their report as insufficiently representative. The professionals are frustrated because their expertise is not sufficiently recognized. Thus the change in practice as well as the research evidence, makes the tasks of screening and selecting prospective adopters early on in the procedure next to very important also very difficult. Since 1992 research has been done on this topic, which resulted in a framework by Vinke (1999) that was used both in the Netherlands and Belgium for a decade, and recently updated to a strictly evidence based framework by Stroobants (2011). This evidence based framework will be introduced in a presentation by Stroobants. Next to that presentation Vinke will go into the policy and practice of assessment and screening in the Netherlands, by introducing a checklist based on earlier research as well as Stroobants' work.
Oral communications

K. Anderson, M. Rueter, R. Lee & O.M. Kim (University of Minnesota): *Shared fate & adopted adolescent adjustment: implications for acknowledging racial and ethnic difference*

While many adoptees are well adjusted, adopted children as a whole may have more behavior problems than non-adopted children (Juffer & van IJzendoorn, 2005). Shared fate theory (Kirk, 1964) offers one explanation for these adjustment difficulties. While shared fate theory initially addressed the family’s ability to acknowledge adoptive family differences (i.e., acknowledging the adoptive family triad), it has recently been used to examine the family’s ability to acknowledge racial and ethnic difference (Kim et al., 2013). However, no studies have examined the relationship between adopted adolescents’ externalizing behaviors and acknowledging racial and ethnic difference. This study examines associations between acknowledging racial and ethnic difference and externalizing behaviors in a sample of U.S. internationally adoptive families with Korean adopted adolescents. Data were drawn from the Sibling Interaction and Behavior Study (SIBS; McGue et al., 2007). Families were included in this study (N = 222 adolescents from 111 families) if at least one adolescent was adopted internationally from South Korea and both parents identified as White. The other adolescent (i.e., the sibling of the Korean adopted adolescent) may have been adopted or non-adopted. Adolescent externalizing behavior was assessed using the Delinquent Behavior Inventory (DBI; Gibson, 1967). Acknowledging racial and ethnic difference was assessed using observational data. During a family observational task, participants were asked to discuss the importance of race and ethnicity within their families. Using transcripts of these conversations, families were placed into mutually exclusive categories (acknowledging difference, denial of difference, and discrepant views of difference) based on the extent to which families “shared fate” about racial and ethnic difference (shared fate categories). Mean adolescent externalizing levels were compared across shared fate categories using ANCOVA and nested data (i.e., two adolescents from the same family context) were accounted for using the SPSS MIXED MODELS command. The extent to which families acknowledged racial and ethnic difference was associated with adolescent externalizing behavior, F(2, 100) = 4.45, p = .014. Adolescents whose families acknowledged racial and ethnic difference had the fewest externalizing behaviors (M = 3.47, SD = 4.16), compared to adolescents whose families were in denial of difference (M = 5.00, SD = 6.82) and had discrepant views of difference (M = 7.47, SD = 7.40). Adolescent age and sex were also associated with externalizing behaviors. Adoption status did not significantly explain variance in adolescent externalizing behaviors after accounting for the shared fate categories. This paper discusses implications of acknowledging racial and ethnic difference for adopted Korean adolescents and their families.
International research shows that the majority of internationally adopted children are well-adjusted. Nevertheless, compared to their non-adopted peers, these children are more prone to behavioral psychological, academic, and physical health problems. Research has found that physical and psychological adversities previous to adoption affect the development and adjustment of adoptees. However adoption is a protective factor in the lives of children. Different characteristics of adoptive families and their children have been studied to explain the resilience found in adoptees. One of these factors is the quality of parent-child communication. Some authors have suggested that open and emotionally harmonic family dialogue about adoption-related issues is likely to encourage better psychological adjustment. Adoptive parents’ openness in communicating with their child about their adoption would make significant contributions to children's well-being, even when there is little information about their origin (as usually happens with international adoptions in Spain). Since little research had been conducted on communication patterns among Spanish adoptive families, the first aim of the study is to explore the adoption communication openness in the families, and the psychological adjustment of 38 adopted adolescents aged from 12 to 18. Secondly, the predictive relationship between communicative openness and psychological adjustment while controlling for pre-placement risk factors will be studied. Data were gathered with a semi-structured interview, the Youth Self Report and the Spanish version of the Adoption Communication Openness Scale (ACO). Descriptive analysis showed that the majority of the adolescents displayed good psychological adjustment. Only 7.9% scored in the borderline or clinical range for externalizing behaviors and 25.7% for internalizing behaviors. The average score on the ACO scale suggests that most adoptive parents have been able to create a reasonably comfortable communicative home environment for their young adolescents. Regarding to the second objective, communicative openness predicted 4% of the variance of externalizing behavior and 36% of internalizing behavior, after controlling for other risk factors. These findings reinforce the importance of adoption communicative openness for better adjustment of adopted youth. This association is further discussed in the context of other variables relevant to the adoption process.

E. Ballús (Ramón Llull University of Barcelone): Representations of Parental Duplicity in Adopted Children

The condition of being an adopted child entails two indissociable elements: being abandoned by the biological parents and having two sets of parents -biological and adoptive-.

The aim of this study is to know the internal world of adopted children, assessing their parental duplicity conflicts and the internal representations underlying to these emotional experiences. We applied a Projective Method -the Corman’s Patte Noire Test
(1961)- to value the potential impact caused in their emotional development. According to the goals and nature of this work, we used a qualitative methodological design based on case studies. The study was conducted with a sample of 10 children - 5 girls and 5 boys-, aged 6 to 12 years, as part of the group of children for international adoption in Spain, whose home country is Nepal. Inclusion criteria for children, in addition to age and the country already mentioned, is to make more than two years that the adoption has been made. Inclusion criteria for a family is to have no biological children, only adopted children.

The results show that having two sets of parents unleashes multiple ambivalent and contradictory feelings (love/aggressiveness, desire/rejection, etc.) towards the biological and adoptive parents. This affective ambivalence is also reinforced by the experience of abandonment and rejection by the biological parents. Their mental representations show that these feelings are still present despite the amount of time that has elapsed since the abandonment - between 4 to 8 years -. This has been experienced, in general, as a punishment with a keen sense of guilt, hinders the child's emotional development. The adopted child may need more time and specific supports to complete their evolution. To use a qualitative methodology – case studies- and also our feature's sample limits the data generalizations (all the children came from the same country, Nepal). Future researches designs would require a larger sample and a different pre-adoptive context, in order to confirm our results. The use of Corman’s Patte Noire Test provides access to the internal world of adopted children.

M. Barbosa-Ducharne, J. Ferreira, J. Soares, R. Barroso & J. Costa (University of Porto): Communication openness within the adoptive family and the psychological adjustment of adoptees

Communication about adoption is one of the specific features of the adoptive family and is recognised as a major factor to the success of the adoption. The main purpose of the following study is to analyse the process of communication about adoption according to the children’s perspective, and to find out the impact of this process on the psychological adjustment of adoptees.

Fifty-eight children (adopted through the Portuguese National Welfare System), aged 5 to 15 years old participated in this study. The measures used were the Interview to Children and Adolescents about Adoption, the Self Perception Profile for Children and the Self Perception Profile for Adolescents.

The results of this study allow us to describe the adoptees’ perspective on the communication process about adoption. A cluster analysis led to the distinction of three types of adoptive families, according to the level of adoption communication openness: families with closed and delayed communication; families with closed and extremely delayed communication and families with delayed but open communication. Findings also confirm the results of previous adoption research, suggesting that communication openness predicts the psychological adjustment of adopted children. Particularly, the present study suggests that greater communication openness is associated with more positive results as adoptees that experience more open and sensitive communication about adoption within their families seem to display greater self-esteem and greater
social acceptance. Implications for future research and adoption service provision are also discussed.

M. Barbosa-Ducharne, J Soares, J. Ferreira, R. Barroso & J. Costa (University of Porto): *Styles of family adoption communication: how can the openness be worked out from the beginning?*

The communication about adoption is one of the adoptive family specific tasks and it is referred as the main difference between conventional and adoptive families. The quality of the parent-child relationship depends greatly on the quality and openness of the family communication. Communication about adoption is an open and continuous process that involves sharing, not only information but also emotional experiences in an attuned affective closeness. It develops over the entire family life cycle and is common to all adoptive families, regardless of the age at which the child was adopted.

This study aims to characterize the adoption communication process, inside and outside the family, from the parents' perspective; to identify types of families regarding the level of openness communication; to analyze the effect on the family communication style of variables related to the adoption process, as well as parenting and child variables; and to explore the relationship between the family communication styles and child adjustment. One hundred twenty five parents who domestically adopted children aged 3 to 15 took part in this study. Data was collected during home visits using the Adoption Process Interview and the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire.

The findings show the identification of three patterns of family adoption communication from the parents’ point of view: families with closed and delayed communication, families with open and timely communication and families with timely but “still flourishing” communication. Despite the fact that the child adjustment, from parents perspective, does not vary significantly according to the family communication style, the results point to an association between these communication patterns and some indicators prior to child placement, such as the prospective adopters decision-making process or the time they wait for child without being contacted by the agency.

These results provide sound information for the practice, highlighting the continuous character of the communication process and showing that this communication process does not begin only when the child is placed, but long before, when the adoption is projected. Furthermore, this is particularly relevant for the Portuguese context by reinforcing the need to provide pre adoption parental training and allowing the construction of realistic adoption project, given the lack of post adoption services.

V. Bhargava (University of Delhi): *Adoption in India: The Paradigm Shift*

The attempt in this paper is to integrate the macro changes in adoption policy and practise within the country with the impact on the micro family systems. The country has seen major changes in policies and reversal of the ratio of in-country to inter-country adoptions. The paper tracks some of the significant events that have occurred in the last 5 years. These macro events have generated changes in the domestic landscape of adoptive families. Child adoption in India is an amazing multi-layered phenomenon.
A combination of biological need, religious underpinning, cultural roots and contemporary laws are reflected in the practice today. Classical texts and folk tales abound with references to it. The stories of Krishna, Sita, Karna, Shakuntala and Moses are among the most famous ones.

The second section of this paper will discuss the current issues and concerns of domestic adoptive parents. The sample is drawn from the capital city Delhi. The selected families are all part of an adoptive parent support group. All the parents have adopted their children within the last 5-7 years. With the incidence and prevalence of adoption increasing in the country, it has led to a change in the way society perceives adoption. The parental perspectives on selected issues were investigated using focussed group discussions. Data was analyzed using qualitative techniques. Narratives were used to capture the feelings and experiences of the respondents and to construct the cultural context within which the adoptions took place. The context of adoption included the parent and child’s pre-adoption history, the child-rearing practices, the family’s adoption-related attitudes and behaviour, and general attitudes about adoption in the larger community.

The paper highlights the several themes discernible in the interactions and attitudes of the families. The way in which each family handles the issue of adoption was determined by the unique combination of demographic characteristics, family history, the motivation to adopt and individual temperaments. An attempt has been made to construct characteristics that determine optimal family interactions. In the Indian context, success of adoption implies familial interaction, which result in the child completely, and totally “belonging” to a family. This exclusive right of ownership is the primary reason why urban families are opting for extra-familial adoption.


Great efforts have been made to have as many countries as possible ratifying the Hague Convention, especially countries of origin. However, the ratification asks for important preparation work, which may include legal reforms, administrative set-up, training, etc. Based on first-hand field experience, the obstacles and difficulties countries may face in the ratification and implementation of the Convention will be discussed. International relationships in the field of adoption will also be object of debate.

C. Bombach (University of Zurich): International law on children rights and adoption: normative ideas about family-life and children’s well-being?

My presentation aims to show and question if and how international laws on children rights (upon others: Convention on the Rights of the Child; African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child) and adoption (Hague Adoption Convention) establish normative ideas about family-life and in consequence depart significantly from cultural conceptions. Authors like Haukanes, Kaime, Thelen, Thompson and Wanizetz have shown that international law frequently contradicts customary law and indigenous concepts of kinship, adult-child-relations and the perception of children’s well-being.

According to Article 18 of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the
Child “the concept of the rights and welfare of the child should be inspired and characterized by the virtues of African cultural heritage, historical background and the values of the African civilisation.” While this implicates an open understanding of cultural conceptions of kinship, at the same time the Charter defines “family” as “the natural unit and basis of society”. In addition the Charter stipulated the importance of the latter for the child’s development – and thereby underlines its narrow and normative perception, contradictory to the “virtues of African cultural heritage”: “For the full and harmonious development of his personality, the child should grow up in a family environment in an atmosphere of happiness, love and understanding.” (Article 18) Ethnographic research (e.g. Alber and Page) has shown that in western Africa, ten to 30% of all children do not grow up with their biological parents. In Ivory Coast this number goes up to 50%. These statistics show very clearly that the Charter’s definition of “the family” and well-being of the African child is not universally applicable. To enrich this argument, I will show my ethnographic data from South Africa and the Xhosa-people, which was gathered during five months of field research in a Slum. The cultural conceptions of kinship (and mother-child-relations in particular) will be shown. The perspective of the children, their understanding of well-being and their relationships to biological and other mothers and fathers are presented. Supported by my qualitative data I will be bringing forward the argument, that indigenous conceptions contradict but often also support universal law conceptions about family life and children’s well-being.

E. Boyce, M. Hanna (University of Denver) & D. Mulligan (Children’s Help and Assistance for Residential Treatment): *Trauma and adoption: telling the adoptive parents’ story*

Understanding trauma and the importance of trauma-informed care has moved to the forefront of the child welfare literature in the United States. Children placed in the foster care system and subsequently adopted are well known to have experienced trauma due to abuse or neglect. Unfortunately, the impact of this trauma does not disappear at the point of adoption. Adopted children will continue to exhibit traumatic symptomology that may require mental health treatment. Little attention has been paid to the trauma experienced by the adoptive parent as they learn to navigate their way through the mental health system to help their adopted child. This paper presents the qualitative findings from a study designed to explore the experience of adoptive parents who have placed an adopted child in a residential treatment center (RTC). Specifically, this paper reports on then emergent themes related to the trauma experienced by adoptive parents who have had to balance their love and their desire to help their child overcome their traumatic past with the concerns of safety, loss of control, and other trauma effects.

K. Cheney (International Institute of Social Studies): *‘Baby come back’: inter-country adoption, globalization, and crises of social reproduction*

Despite a burgeoning proliferation of scholarship that examines intercountry adoption (ICA) from various sociocultural and demographic angles, the international
development issues that often precipitate – and, some argue, are alleviated by – ICA tend to remain a subtext in analyses. On the other hand, development studies tend to overlook children’s roles, symbolic or pragmatic, in international development.

ICA places (often very young) children at the center of essential development questions – most especially crises of social reproduction, in the global North and South. Drawing on sentimentalized notions of children, arguments about ‘giving children a better life’ through ICA can gloss over the structural issues of poverty, demographic inequalities, and insecurity that gave rise to ICAs in the first place, recasting broader international development questions. While the symbolic value of children as embodiments of a nation’s future has been documented, the symbolic importance of children to a nation becomes globalized in ICA: transnational adoptees become symptomatic embodiments of both receiving countries’ social and economic ‘progress’ and sending nations’ failures to ‘take care of their own’. Through a generational approach to the global political economy of adoption, this paper will thus problematize how children’s exportability in the global economy alleviates crises of social reproduction, from the ‘baby famine’ in Western industrialized nations to the ‘youth bulge’ in developing countries. Considering the ways in which adoptees are recast as powerful symbols of social redemption and renewal, from receiving countries’ narratives of ‘child-saving’ to sending countries’ re-scriptings of adoptees as ambassadors and development allies, it will highlight how studying ICA as development strategy can thus enhance our critical understandings of larger questions of international development and children’s roles within it.

J. Chomilier (Movement for Adoption Without Borders, MASF): Adoption in France

The context of inter-country adoption (ICA) in France is rather unique among the receiving countries, since it is based on a system with two pathways, resulting from the law of July 4th 2005. One way is public, which means that all would-be adopters can apply, provided they are eligible as determined by the Central Authority; the only limitation resides in the requirements of the providing countries. The second one is private, and accredited bodies can apply their own selection criteria for the candidates once they are determined eligible by the Central Authority. Part of the expectation at the creation of the public French agency was an increase in the number of adoptions for people residing in France. Actually, neither public nor private accredited bodies succeeded in maintaining the number of visas issued for children adopted from foreign countries and a rapid fall of ICA occurred. A market rapidly developed in the pre-adoption area, with commercial companies offering their support for desperate parents facing the rapid decrease of ICA. In the meantime, the number of critical articles in the media dramatically increased, revealing supposed hidden numbers of breakdowns and re-abandoned children. Besides, the ideology of the essential roots of the children buried in the pre-adoption phase on one hand, and the supremacy of the blood ties on the other hand, gained prominence into the public. Therefore, an adoption with the effect of terminating a pre-existing legal parent-child relationship was suspected of reducing or decreasing the capacity for adopted people to have certain knowledge of their origins. In other words, a two tier hierarchy appeared, with the blood ties favoured,
and adoption relegated to the second level. A new law devoted to allowing same sex couples to marry, actually reveals this hierarchical system, together with the fact that the adoption field at the Ministry of Family is under the title of “families in danger”. Finally, several hundred French families who adopted in Haiti are faced with a refusal of the courts to allow them to benefit from effects of the Article 27 of the Hague convention on ICA, allowing a conversion into an adoption with the effect of terminating a pre-existing legal relationship. The reason given by the judges relies on an unwritten wish of the authorities of the country of origin to legalize the consent of the birth parents to an adoption that will result in the termination of such a legal relationship between the child and the family of origin.

MASF is a non-governmental organization aiming to diffuse a positive image of ICA, and participate in the construction of responsible knowledge on the particular form of parenthood that is adoption, with no black holes. It periodically organizes research conferences where worldwide specialists are invited to participate for a public of professionals in childhood protection.

J. Conrick (Monash University): “Adopted women as mothers”: preliminary findings of an Australian PhD research study”

Background: Over the past three decades, Australia as a nation and the State of Victoria in particular, have ideologically turned away from adoption as a care option for children who cannot remain with their birth family. However large numbers of people have been affected by adoption in this country and many thousands of adopted persons are now parents. In particular, the journeys of adopted women through motherhood have attracted little attention and there exists a dearth of research about this adoption life stage. This paper will outline the preliminary findings of a PhD study, which is seeking to learn about these experiences within the Victorian context. It builds on the researchers’ Master of Social Work study in the same area.

The study is being conducted through the Monash University School of Social Work under the guidance of Professor Thea Brown and Associate Professor Fiona McDermott, and is due to be completed 2015.

Aims of the study: To hear from women adopted in Victoria who still have children living at home, about the relationship of their own adoption status to the experiences of parenting their own children.

Sample: N=38

Methodology: The exploratory nature of the enquiry and the desire to obtain rich data, conceptually lends itself to a qualitative approach and has used multiple methods for gathering (secondary sources, primary in-depth interviews and focus group) and analysing (thematic analysis and merging) information.

Findings: The emerging preliminary themes have implications for our understanding of the life long impact of adoption and permanent care, and the education, support and variety of therapeutic interventions that can be offered by clinical practice.
M. Dalen, A.L. Rygvold, K. Vonheim & S. Theie (University of Oslo, Norway): *The important toddler years in families with internationally adopted children: outcomes from a Norwegian longitudinal study*

Several studies have followed internationally adopted children in their new families (Lin, Cermak, Coster, & Miller, 2005; McGuiness & Pallansch, 2000; Rutter et al., 2010). However, many of these studies have focused on children adopted with adverse pre-adoption backgrounds, like children from Eastern Europe and Russia. Although many of the adopted children included in these studies make progress in their general development, quite a high percentage lag behind compared to non-adopted children. This is especially true in the case for children from Romania and those adopted when they were above one year (Rutter et al., 2010).

In the Norwegian study, a group of less vulnerable internationally adopted children were included in the follow-up. All the children had an adoption age below two years, 50 % below one year. None of them were adopted from Eastern Europe or Russia and none had stated special needs. The present study gives an opportunity to follow-up a group of more traditionally internationally adopted children in Scandinavia. In the years to come, more countries will be trying to keep their own native born children by increasing domestic adoptions, making more use of foster homes and having better care taken of small children in orphanages and institutions. As a consequence, children with higher adoption age, sibling groups and special needs children will be given priorities for international adoption in these countries (Selman, 2012).

The present study is following 119 internationally adopted children from the moment of adoption, and then again at age two, three and four. All information is gathered by personal interview with parents, using well-established instruments to measure motor development, communication, temperamental traits and problem behavior, as well as social competence. The same design has been carried out on non-adopted Norwegian-born children. This gives unique possibilities to look for differences and similarities in the children’s development.

At the age of two, we have videotaped structured mother/child social interactions and at age three father/child interactions. The aim is to examine what kind of strategies the parents are using in their interactions and to look for patterns in their interaction style that promote attachment and good relationships.

The presentation will focus on the following three different aspects of the study:

1) Similarities and differences in general development, temperamental traits, behavior problems and social competence between internationally adopted and non-adopted children in toddler years, Monica Dalen & Steinar Theie

2) Are there really differences in language development between internationally adopted and non-adopted children? Anne-Lise Rygvold

3) What can we learn from video based mother/child and father/child social interaction in adoptive families at age two and three, Kristin Vonheim.
P. Delgado (Polytechnic Institute of Porto) & V. Pinto (AMI, International Medical Assistance): Adoption in Portugal. Present evidences, challenges for the future

In Portugal, as has occurred in recent decades in other countries following the Western model, adoption is no longer exclusively associated with fertility problems, being a legitimate option for couples with children and a means to ensure, in reconstituted families, a legal bond with the partner’s children. The number of international and multicultural adoptions has increased and the number of Portuguese children adopted by other countries has decreased. There has also been an increase in the number of older children on the waiting list, with health or behaviour problems, cases that are within the so-called special adoption.

This paper presents a portrait of adoption in Portugal in recent years, namely referring to the number of applications that were formalized and selected, and the number of adoptions accomplished. After a brief characterization of the legal framework in force for adoption, it compares the characteristics of children available for adoption and the claims of the candidates on waiting lists, and it analyzes the processes of international adoptions in the same years, distinguishing situations in which the country was the destination and origin of the adoption processes.

Another area of study is the relationship between foster care, residential care, and adoption. These measures are included in the protection system and should work in an articulated way. We have identified just how many children were adopted in recent years as a life project and how many of them left residential and foster care for adoption.

We finish with a discussion of the challenges facing adoption in Portugal, at present and in the future, in a constantly changing world, among which we can mention the selection of candidates with a new profile, better prepared to deal with difficult adoptions, social support work to biological families before and after adoption, the issue of the confidentiality of identity and the possibility of contact between the biological family and the adopted child or the adoption by couples living in a de facto union, whether of opposite sexes or of the same sex.

S. Di Folco (Sapienza University of Rome), C.S. Pace (University of Genoa) A. Santona (University of Milano-Bicocca), G. C. Zavattini (Sapienza University of Rome) & D. Cavanna (University of Genoa): The profile of seeking to adopt couples: assessing the generalized and specific attachment

Introduction Attachment theory has highlighted the relationship between attachment and the quality of couple’s relationship, whose dyadic adjustment is considered an important marker (Feneey, 2009; Santona, Zavattini, 2007). Therefore, this theory has stressed the influence of infant’s experiences with the caregiver on the representations related to the current relationship with partner (Cowan et al., 2009; McCarthy, Maughan, 2010) for their impact on parental style and children’s later adjustment. In line with these considerations, the assessment of the characteristics of parents seeking to adopt can be really important both at individual and dyadic level (Steele et al. 2003; Steele et al., 2007). The aim of this study is to assess the matching of the states of mind with respect to attachment to caregiver and partner in childless couples seeking to adopt, comparing
them with couples similar for socio-demographic characteristics. Method: Participants: 39 infertile and childless couples (age: men M=39.92, SD=3.45; women M=39.10, SD=3.27), in the pre-adoption assessment, without any children previously adopted and 39 non-adoptive couples, drawn from the general population. The two groups do not differ significantly with respect to age. Measures: Adult Attachment Interview (AAI, George, Kaplan & Main, 1985), semi-structured interview which assesses attachment representations with respect to infancy; Current Relationship Interview (CRI, Crowell & Owens, 1996), semi-structured interview which assesses the state of mind with respect to the attachment in adult romantic relationships; Experiences in Close Relationships Scale-Revised (ECR-R, Fraley et al., 2000), self-report for feelings and behaviour related to adult attachment; Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS, Spanier, 1979, 2000), self-report for couple adjustment. Results: Comparison of the AAI matching classifications has highlighted no statistically significant difference between the two groups (χ² exact test=5.393, p=.801). On the contrary, in the CRI a prevalence of secure-secure matching in seeking to adopt parents, higher than the control group (χ² exact test=11.535 p=.029), has been highlighted. Moreover the adoptive group has shown a higher percentage of secure-secure style matching in the ECR-R compared to the control group (χ² exact test=29.219 p<.000). Therefore, couples seeking to adopt show a prevalence of matching with High Dyadic Adjustment compared to the control group (χ² exact test=32.311 p<.000). Discussion: Results show a prevalence of secure matching in partners seeking to adopt and higher levels of dyadic adjustment, except for infant attachment. These findings highlight the presence of positive personal characteristics, as well as the ability to communicate and to share, a positive self-concept and a good level of mutual knowledge, related to a high level of dyadic satisfaction.

P.K. Eriksson (University of Helsinki), M. Eloainio (University of Helsinki and National Institute for Health and Welfare), H. Lapinleimu (University of Turku), S. Mäkipää (University of Tampere), H. Raaska (University of Turku and Helsinki University Central Hospital) & J. Sinkkonen (Save the Children Association): Prospective adoptive parents’ satisfaction with pre-adoption services – expectations, experiences and expertise

Finland is one of the few countries where the adoption process is strictly regulated by law. Before the adoption prospective adoptive parents participate in pre-adoption counseling and are entitled to mediating service. The aim of these services is to assess the prospective adoptive parents’ suitability, prepare for adoptive parenthood and assist in adopting from abroad. In developing social services user satisfaction is one of the most important factors to be considered. This study analyses whether prospective adoptive parents’ were satisfied with received pre-adoption services in inter-country adoptions.

The data was collected by questionnaires by the Finnish Adoption Study (FinAdo) as part of the first extensive research done on children adopted across borders to Finland. As part of the census survey all parents of children under the age of 18 (at the time of survey 2007-2009) adopted from abroad to Finland were asked about their satisfaction with pre-adoption services. The number of questionnaires initially sent out
was 2600, one for each child under the age of 18. The final number of replies by adoptive parents of these children was 1451 (634 boys 44%, mean age 7.5, SD 4.4). This corresponds to a response rate of 55.7%. Open answers about perceived services were analyzed with an inductive content analysis. The focus was on finding explaining factors for satisfaction and dissatisfaction with the services.

The overall satisfaction with pre-adoption services was fairly good and 81% of the adoptive parents were either very or fairly satisfied with the services they had received before the adoption. The results suggest that the interpersonal and communicative skills as well as expertise of the professionals were explaining factors in satisfaction. Also availability and accessibility of services were important aspect of satisfaction. Dissatisfaction was mostly associated with the user’s feeling of being questioned or wrongly treated by the professionals or with accessibility issues.

M. Fargas Malet (Queen's University of Belfast): Comparing contact with birth families and family communication between adoption and foster care

The issue of contact with the birth family in foster care and adoption has been the focus of debate within the research literature for the last 20 years, driven by a dramatic shift in policy and practice in the UK, and other countries, such as the USA (Grotevant, 2000), Sweeden (Andersoon, 1999), Australia (Humphreys & Kiraly, 2010) or Spain (del Valle et al., 2009; Palacios & Jimenez, 2009). The current legal framework in the UK (Children’s Act 1989, Children (NI) Order 1995) actively promotes contact with birth families, especially for children in public care. In the last couple of decades, that has led to an increase in contact and its frequency for looked after children (Cleaver, 2000), and to the promotion of a more “open” approach to adoption (i.e. adopted children having more access of knowledge about their birth families), with post-adoption contact being an available option for these children. However, it is a controversial and complex issue, in that research findings show both benefits but also difficulties in relation to contact. In this presentation, contact issues will be compared between three types of placements: adoption, foster and kinship care. The concept of “ambiguous loss” (Boss, 1980) will also be used to describe children’s experiences in relation to contact.

In addition, the related issue of communication about birth families is also explored for these types of placements. Within adoption research, Brodzinsky (2005) developed the concept of communicative openness, as involving the process of examining the meaning of adoption for the members of the adoptive family. There has been some research exploring communicative openness within adoptive families (Freeark et al., 2008; Jones & Hackett, 2008) and its associations with children’s wellbeing, self-esteem and adjustment or contact (Von Korff & Grotevant, 2011; Beckett et al., 2008; Brodzinsky, 2008). However, less is known about communication between foster and kinship carers and their children.

This presentation will focus on findings from the analysis of interviews conducted with 50 children and their parents/carers: 18 had been adopted from care; 19 were in foster care and 13 were in kinship care. In this presentation, a detailed account of the perspectives of the adopted and foster children and their adoptive and foster parents will
be provided in relation to contact and communication; and comparisons between the groups will be made.

R. Farr, S. Shaikh, C. Chess & H. Grotevant (University of Massachusetts, Amherst): *Family representations among adult adoptees in romantic relationships*

Emerging adulthood is a developmental period of increased independence and responsibility in domains of career, education, and relationships (Arnett, 2007). Adoptees achieve similar emerging adulthood milestones as do their nonadopted peers in arenas of education, employment, and marriage (Feigelman, 1997). Yet few studies have addressed how adult adoptees conceptualize “family” (Moyer & Juang, 2011). The purpose here was to examine how emerging adult adoptees envision creating their own families, and whether and how their adoption has influenced their perspective. The Minnesota-Texas Adoption Research Project began with 190 adoptive families with children (4-12 years), recruited across the United States (Grotevant & McRoy, 1998). In Wave 3, 169 emerging adult adoptees (51% male, Mage = 24.95, range = 21-30 years) were interviewed about their adoption and representations of family. A subsample (n = 21) who reported being in a committed relationship (i.e., living with and/or engaged to a partner) were selected for this study as they had likely imagined starting families but had not yet done so (unlike those who had married and/or children). Interviews were assessed using thematic analysis by two trained coders. Several interview themes emerged about feelings toward adoptive families, ideas of parenthood, and other adult milestones. The majority of adoptees (n = 19, 90%) reported positive feelings about their adoptive families. However, most (n = 13, 62%) did not discuss birth family. Most (n = 13, 62%) also defined “family” broadly; only one had a biologically determined view (i.e., genetic ties define family). The majority expressed a desire for children, with an openness to adopting (n = 18, 86%) as well as biological children (n = 17, 81%). Sixteen (76%) had a preferred route to parenthood: 14 (87.5%) favored biological children and 2 (12.5%) favored adoption. For 19 (90%) adoptees, other themes of emerging adulthood were predominant, such as marriage, owning a home, and job stability. The importance of religion/spirituality was also distinctly evident for some (n = 5, 24%), reflecting values of their adoptive families. Thus, emerging adult developmental milestones, such as marriage, career, and children, may be more salient to adult adoptees’ experiences, beyond the influence of adoption. Nonetheless, some adoption-specific themes contributed to adoptees’ family representations. Most felt positively about their adoption, described broad notions of family not dictated by biological ties, and expressed a willingness to adopt despite a desire for biological children, consistent with earlier research (Moyer & Juang, 2011). These results have important implications for researchers and practitioners about how experiences with adoption and in adulthood influence adoptees’ views of “family”—the ones they grew up in and the ones they hope to create.
R. Fong (University of Texas, Austin): *Abandonment and racism: dilemmas for adoptive parents of Chinese daughters*

The Chinese “One Child Policy” (OCP) creates an environment that encourages people to have only one child, forcing parents to abandon any children, especially daughters. A vast majority of U.S. internationally adoptive parents are white (Crolley-Simic & Vonk, 2011), bringing to those parents, who adopt children of a different race, additional challenges of addressing identity issues their adopted child will face, as well as racist remarks. Other challenges for international, transracial adoptive parents include the delicate issue of birth parent abandonment and racial and cultural identity formation for their adopted children. To address these challenges, many adoptive parents seek to increase their cultural knowledge of China, or the adoptive country at hand, and to assist their child in connecting with that culture through cultural events and activities in the community, such as culture camps.

International adoptees confront not only some of the same challenges as their adoptive parents, but also face the direct impact of racism and stereotypes. Not enough research has been done to know how racism, abandonment, and ethnic identity formation have been handled by parents who have adopted from China. This study fills the gap to provide information from research questions about how White adoptive parents are preparing their Chinese adopted children about their ethnic identity, birth family information, and encounters with racism. This research study is survey data collected in the June 2010 to families who sent their adopted Chinese daughters to a week-long Chinese culture camp in a large metropolitan city in the southwestern part of the United States. The camp, co-directed by the president of a chapter of Families with Children from China and a university professor, had 73 parents (out of 100, response rate of 73%) who filled out the 39 item questionnaire. This qualitative study included 46 mother and 27 fathers, with 96% (n=70) being white. The parents were highly educated (43.8%, n=32 with a bachelor’s degree and 43.8%, n=32 with a master’s degree); employed full time (52.1%, n=38) and mostly Protestant (47.9%, n=35). The data was analyzed using thematic coding and inter-rater reliability was monitored. The main thematic findings to the study were: 1) Adoptive parents adopted from China in great part due to fertility issues, the ease and quality of adoption programs, and availability of healthy children 2) Adoptive parents find it most challenging to discuss abandonment and information about birth families (or lack thereof) with their adopted children from China 3) Racism is a common issue faced by Chinese adoptees 4) Most parents are making an effort to help their adopted child build their cultural identity and 5) Parent support groups are invaluable. Implications for practice include additional post adoption services are needed for parents.

K. Freeark & K. Rosenblum (University of Michigan): *Inquisitive minds and confident parents: promoting communicative openness during early childhood*

“The ultimate aim for adoption is to enable children to tell their own story in their own way.” Adoptive families ideally create a narrative that gives meaning to the way their family came together and to their legitimacy as a family unit. There is growing evidence that the establishment and maintenance of this family dialogue occurs less often than
professionals recommend, and than many parents intend. Actual conversations between parent and child typically begin between 3 and 5 when language and cognitive advances make dialogue possible.

Developmental theory and findings on early childhood processes expand our understanding of what is taking place beyond disclosure and a fact-based exchange of information. Socioemotional and cognitive development at this time (e.g., autobiographical memory, emotional understanding and regulation, and the reworking of internal working models) provide a rich context in which families are able to launch openness and begin this narrative. Young children’s imaginations have tremendous transformative power which can make these early conversations easier and more engaging than later ones, when greater anxiety and misperceptions may have taken root.

Yet parents have received mixed messages about the goals and risks of sharing information with young children. From warnings about early sharing being damaging, to one-size-fits all scripts, parents can find expert advice and resources but still not appreciate how their child is beginning to make sense of his story. This unique and creative process should be paced, scaffolded and suited to the communicative styles of both parent and child. If parents recognize the potential for meaning-making, promotion of emotion regulation and enhancement of security, they are better prepared to affirm adoptive family ties while acknowledging the existence of birth parents.

Unfortunately, post-adoption programming has neglected these early childhood opportunities, and in so doing has failed to capitalize on this formative period when parents’ confidence, competence and entitlement could be enhanced. As a result, parents do not receive the knowledge, skills and support to formulate their own approach to sensitive and attuned communication with their child.

We describe a supportive and interactive psychoeducational curriculum designed to address these issues; it is delivered to adoptive parents in a group format. A pilot evaluation of its effectiveness (n = 37 parents) highlighted what had been gained from the workshop experience, how it changed their perceptions of their child (mean age = 4.6 years), and their experience of parenting at 2 month follow-up. Perceptions of the child’s involvement in the family (trust, reliance, engagement) and emotional strength increased; awareness of the unique tasks connected to adoptive parenting increased and parenting stress decreased.

M. García-González (University of Zurich): And they lived happily ever after: children's literature for adoptees

In the last decade, a growing number of children's books about—and, moreover, for—internationally adopted children have been published. In Spain, the European country adopting the largest number of children from abroad, we find more than a hundred adoption stories for children—both written by Spaniards and translated from other languages. The great majority of these stories is meant to function as building blocks in the (racialized) identity construction of adoptees and are highly revealing of the cultural framework of contemporary international adoption. In this presentation, I will inquire into the origin narratives of adoption books published in Spain focusing the analysis on how international adoption is narrated and explained circumventing the references to the
geopolitical order behind the ‘silent migration’ of adoptees. I will first sketch how we can trace a ‘master plot’, a recurrent story, in most of these books. This repeated skeletal story is most often told from the viewpoint of the adoptive parents and parallels the adoption process with the biological processes of being pregnant and giving birth. I will argue that these stories not only illustrate Signe Howell’s claim that the ‘kinning of foreigners’ needs a certain ‘transubstantion’ of the adoptee, but also that the domestic storytelling of adopters performs kinship. Among the metaphors of biological kinship, I will explore the trope of a ‘magical matching’ between adopters and adoptee and the use of the Red Thread Tale by parents adopting in China. My presentation shall raise the question of how children’s literature on adoption is instrumental to adoptive parents and how in these origin narratives the racial difference is negotiated in a form that may be not so different to that of the criticized ‘color-blind’ adoptions of Korean children in previous decades.

S. Gair (James Cook University): *Social norms and moral judgments informing social work students’ empathy: implications for professional adoption practice*

The primary aim of classroom-based research undertaken at a regional Australian university in 2009 and 2011 was to explore the concept of empathy with social work students using selected, real life vignettes. Students’ responses to two specific vignettes, those featuring a birth mother’s story of coerced relinquishment of her baby, and an inter-country adoption scenario, provided some evidence that for these students, personal value judgments may impact on their ability to enact compassionate empathy in professional contexts. The promotion of empathic, non-judgmental helping is very familiar discourse in social work practice, and empathy is considered to be a vital ingredient in helping. Yet, how to teach, learn and enact empathy is less well documented in the literature. Equally, the literature suggests that for health and allied health students, their empathy may decrease rather than increase across their professional training. Recommendations from this study include more proactive engagement with students, graduates, and adoption professionals to promote empathy and non-judgmental helping for working effectively in adoption practice contexts. The need for future research to explore the influence of deservedness and judgment on empathic responses to adoptive parents, birth parents and adopted children may be indicated, in order to better facilitate and enable deeper empathy in professional adoption practice and service provision.

S. Golding, C. Williams & S. Leitão (Curtin University): *An exploratory study of the knowledge, beliefs and experiences about speech and language development of parents who adopt children from overseas*

Literature identifies children in institutional care as an at risk population due to the privation and lack of stimulation they experience. It is therefore essential that adoptive parents are aware of this and are able to support their children’s optimal development post adoption. In order to assist parents and improve services for intercountry adopted children, Hwa-Froelich and colleagues (2006) stated that the communication and social-emotional needs of both the adopted children and their families had to be better
understood. Linville and Prouty Lyness (2007) believed more research was needed about the family context rather than focusing solely on the adopted child’s developmental outcomes. Together, these recommendations provide a direction for the current study that offers further description about the context for an intercountry adopted child’s development and the post adoption experience. In this explorative study a unique insight into Australian intercountry adoptive parents’ knowledge, beliefs and experiences about speech and language development is provided. Data was collected from intercountry adoptive parents throughout Australia who had adopted a child aged 0 to 6 years in the past five years. Data was collected via online questionnaires and semi-structured interviews at two time points to allow follow up of the participants’ experiences. The study used descriptive statistics and thematic analysis, according to Braun and Clarke’s (2006) protocol, to analyze data relating to the parents’ knowledge of speech and language development, the effects of previous care on this development and the way the parents facilitated speech and language development in their adopted children. The findings of this study included qualitative data that related to six main themes, the process of intercountry adoption, intercountry adopted children, attachment, speech and language development, support and professionals, and future recommendations. The links that the adoptive parents made between these factors and a child’s speech and language development highlighted the complexity of this developmental process. Detailed description of the adoptive parents’ knowledge, beliefs and experiences about these factors allows insight into the way that their knowledge and beliefs influence their behaviors and interactions as parents. These results are important for any professionals or organizations who work with intercountry adopted children and their families. The adoptive parents’ recommendations may provide a direction for the development of evidence based service and support to meet the specific needs of this population.

H. Grant-Marsney, H. Grotevant & C. Roth (University of Massachusetts, Amherst): The strengths in adopted adolescents: links with emerging adulthood

Much of the research literature on adopted children has focused on risks and problem behaviors, rather than strengths or assets. As researchers, it is important to better understand not only what leads to higher risk for adopted children, but what the strengths within this population are as well. This study examined the positive attributes of adopted adolescents as described by self-report and by reports of their adoptive parents. Open response questions and standardized scales from Achenbach’s (1991) Youth Self Report (YSR) and Child Behavior Checklist (CBCL) were analyzed, based on reports from the adolescent, the adoptive mother, and the adoptive father. Data were drawn from Wave 2 of the Minnesota-Texas Adoption Research Project (MTARP), a longitudinal study following 190 same-race domestic adoption kinship networks in which the children were adopted as infants who were voluntarily placed by their birthparents (Grotevant & McRoy, 1998). At Wave 2 participants included adoptive parents and target adopted adolescents from 177 adoptive families: 173 adoptive mothers, 162 adoptive fathers, and 156 adopted adolescents (age 11 to 20; M=15. 7; 75
boys and 81 girls). A descriptive analysis was performed on the open responses, and coded strengths were compared to standardized scales to test validity.

Initial analyses found some differences between male and female adoptees but differed by respondent (mother, father, adolescent): age differences were found between early and late adolescents; and respondents differed in their reports of adolescents’ strengths. The coded strengths were found to be valid indications of competency. The five summary categories consisted of relational competence, specific skills, positive disposition, moral behavior, and motivation. Attachment was generally found to significantly correlate with standardized scales of competency, with some exceptions, and correlation with coded attributes tended to differ by respondent.

The initial scale provided important descriptive information about adopted adolescents and their positive attributes, but the limited variability and highly skewed distributions within the sample makes it difficult to relate these positive attribute scores to outcomes of functioning in emerging adulthood and parent-child relationships. In the current study, in progress, we are using item response theory (IRT) to create models within HLM (hierarchical linear models) to develop more psychometrically sound scales, which we will, in turn, link with data about emerging adult outcomes. Thus, this presentation will make both a methodological contribution (application of IRT in the field of adoption studies) and a substantive one (greater understanding of the strengths of adopted adolescents).

O. Greco (Catholic University of Milan): The story of the origins in Italian books for adopted children
The purpose of this qualitative study is to identify the main representations of the process of the international adoption through a comparative analysis of the Italian fairy tales and stories used to talk about their adoption to adopted children, from 4 to 10 years old.

The sample of the study includes 50 Italian fairy tales and stories, written since 1995 up to now, that tell the adopted children something about their origin and their adoption.

The verbatim of the tales and the stories were analyzed through content analysis, using a computer assisted text analysis program (T-Lab).

The main results show the very different images of the various protagonists - adoptive parents, adopted child, birth mother, birth country, “bridge” caregivers (operators of institutes, or houses for children or foster families in the birth country…), social and legal operators both in the birth country and in the adoptive one… The two moments of the "beginning" of the story and of its "happy ending" result topical, together with the crucial description of the “first meeting” and the attribution of responsibility to someone for the child’s abandonment.

The representational quality of the narrative productions created by adoptive parents or used with them in the post adoption groups is very important because it is one of the tools that communicate the image of adoption to adopted children. It can vary from a polarized image - all the positive pertains to the adoptive world and all the
negative to the world of the origins - or a better integrated image, with positive aspects both in the adoptive and in the birth worlds.

M. Hanna (University of Denver), D. Mulligan (Children’s Help and Assistance for Residential Treatment) & E. Boyce (University of Denver): Residential treatment and adoption: the adoptive parent perspective

Adopted children have long been found to be overrepresented in clinical populations (Schechter, 1960; Jerome, 1986, 1993, Brand & Brinich, 1999, Vostanis, 2010). While there has been some debate as to how much this overrepresentation is or is not a result of the adoptive parents’ lower threshold for referral (Miller et al., 2000); most researchers would agree that the vast majority of the adopted children presenting in need of mental health services are behaviorally and emotionally challenged. Adoptive parents often seek to address these issues through the use of outpatient services; however, a higher level of care or residential treatment care is sometimes warranted. Adopted children have been found to be overrepresented in residential treatment (McRoy, Grotevant, & Zurcher, 1988). Approximately 12% of adoptive families nationally receiving an adoption subsidy have used residential treatment services for their adopted child (Malm, Vandivere, & McKlindon, 2011). A recent study in a western state found that 17.5% of the children in residential care were adopted (Barber, 2012).

This paper will present the results of a qualitative research study designed to explore the experience of adoptive parents who have placed an adopted child in a residential treatment center (RTC). Twenty adoptive parents across the United States who placed an adopted child in residential treatment between 2007-2012 were interviewed using a semi-structured interview. This paper presents the qualitative findings and recommendations from the adoptive parents. Interviews were analyzed using a grounded theory approach and emergent themes were used to identify key strategies that will be used to develop an adoption competent curriculum for RTC professionals and staff working with adoptive families before, during and after the child’s residential stay. Findings from this study will be of interest to adoption professionals, researchers, parents, and educators.

P. Hayes (University of Sunderland): Gaps between the recorded age and chronological age of internationally adopted children and treatment for ‘early’ puberty

We know that in some cases internationally adopted children have an age on paper that is at variance with their true chronological age. However, more precise information on the frequency and extent of such age gaps is lacking. It is not known whether significant age gaps are very rare, or if they have been be quite common amongst children from certain states or adoption agencies. The research considers ways to fill the gap in our knowledge in light of the difficulty that when a child’s date of birth is unknown there is no reliable physiological method of accurately determining their age. Given the uncertainties over recorded age, the research also questions the treatment of adopted children to suppress ‘early’ puberty. Such treatment has been undertaken in a number of European states since the late 1990s. In 2001 it was found that treatment might have the
side effect of reducing IQ. Despite this finding, treatment has continued. A parallel research program into the etiology of ‘early’ puberty amongst adopted children has been inconclusive. However, it is known that adopted children at a high risk of ‘early’ puberty have fast and pronounced catch-up after adoption and are in an older age range at the time of adoption (most are aged around 3 to 7 years). These two characteristics are consistent with under-recorded age; catch-up will follow a steeper trajectory if age has been under-recorded, and plausible potential age gaps increase with the age of the child.

K. Hoffman (Consultant Researcher): **Beyond a two-tier service? Supporting intercountry adoptive families in the UK**

Intercountry adoption (ICA) in the UK has historically been a small-scale, virtually unregulated practice and arguably 'tolerated' at best by government officials and social work practitioners. In order to enable the ratification of the Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption, the New Labour government introduced significant changes to adoption policy between 1997 and 2010. These changes aimed to place ICA on equal footing with domestic adoption by applying to it the adoption procedures and services prescribed by the Adoption and Children Act 2002 and its subsequent regulations. Theoretically, legislative provisions would eliminate any trace of a ‘two-tier service’ by fully integrating intercountry adoption into the state service and ensuring that ICA services are neither inferior to nor less rigorous than those for domestic adoption. However, in the context of an overburdened national care system, discriminating policy provisions, tensions between ideological support for and opposition to the practice and a well-established national ICA support community, it appears that the 'two-tier system' has not yet been eliminated, particularly with regard to post-placement support.

Based on a doctoral study which explored the complexities of adoption support service provision and the relationship between adoption agencies and intercountry adoptive families in the UK, the findings presented in this paper will address the extent to which adoption policy in the UK has achieved this objective. More specifically, the paper presentation will encompass the appropriateness and availability of services for intercountry adoptive families, support needs, factors which impact parents’ service use and preferences and perceptions of claims and entitlement to services among both families and service providers. Furthermore, the implications of policies enacted by the newly elected Coalition government will be briefly discussed. As research into adoption support for intercountry adoptive families in the UK, both in the past and present, is limited, this study has offered much-needed insight into the implications of adoption policy for intercountry adoptive families.

S. Keller & T. Gabriel (University of Zurich): **Adoptive parents and adoptees in the first years: Findings of the Zurich adoption study**

Like in many Western countries, most adoptions in Switzerland are from abroad (94%). International research literature shows contradictions when discussing factors that affect adoptees’ well-being. This is why this study undertook a closer look at children, their
families and the complex interactions within the official procedure. The research analyzed outcomes of adoption procedures as a combination of protective and risk factors from different perspectives.

Questions included ‘Which protective factors contribute to the well-being of the adoptees?’; ‘How do the protective factors and the risk factors interact?’; and ‘Where is there scope for improvement in adoption procedures?’

The study is based on a Mixed Methods design. It used a general census by means of questionnaires (Child Behaviour Checklist: n=116), which provides an overall view of the current behaviour of all adopted children (2003 to 2009) in the Canton of Zurich. It also used narrative interviews with controlled selected adoptive parents(n=23) to record their actual individual experiences and analysis of the questions and concepts in the official documents. In 2014 the census as well as the narrative interviews will take place again with the same population. It’s planned to be a longitudinal study.

The study showed the behaviour of the adoptees is in a good standardized average with several children being considerably above average but also with a small group who has to deal with multiple behaviour problems. The study also worked out six implicit parental models of dealing with the challenges of adoption:

- Harmony: “Everything is very perfect!”; when deviations/problems aren’t available or not recorded by the adoptive parents
- Explanation: “All because of adoption”; when adoptive parents always see deviations/problems with the adopted child
- Irritation: “Do others also do that? Am I reacting correctly?”; when adoptive parents fell unable to classify behaviour, or one’s own reactions to it
- Understanding: “Why is that? Why this reaction?”; when adoptive parents always try to understand the behaviour of the child and one’s own behaviour because of the (possible) past and present
- Optimism: “The progress is unbelievable”; when adoptive parents focus on progress. Perceiving but not over-emphasising deviations/problems
- Calmness: “As with others, too. Each child is different”; when adoptive parents try to deal with deviations/problems relevant to the present and not comparing to others (subjective)

This design allows to show effects of the adoption procedures on those parental models and to point out important processes and sensitive phases. The first period of the Zurich Adoption Study at last worked out pivotal recommendation for the official procedure and discussed them with practitioners.

S. Laws (Coram, Head of Policy and Research) & J. Kaniuk (Coram, Head of Adoption Services): Concurrent planning: outcomes for children

There is much attention currently in the UK to ways to reduce delay for vulnerable young children in reaching the most suitable permanent placement. Coram is the only specialist centre for Concurrent Planning practice in the UK. It has been active in the field for 13 years, and has undertaken a study to examine the social, emotional and educational outcomes for the children who have reached permanency through the scheme. In concurrent planning foster carers are recruited who are also approved as
adopters. They must, in the first instance, be willing to foster a baby and support his or her return to the birth parent, with the possibility that, if unsuccessful, the fostering arrangement will lead to adoption. This minimises the disruption to secure attachment that so often occurs where a baby with a high probability of needing to be adopted (on the basis of past history) is first placed with foster carers and then moved to an adoptive placement only once a final decision can be made by the courts. Coram’s Policy and Research team has undertaken a detailed study of the outcomes for 29 of the 58 children placed through the scheme, including interviews with the adoptive and birth family members currently caring for the children, study of files for early history, and completion of Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaires by parents and teachers. It is also important to consider these findings in the context of wider research results. Coram’s Head of Adoption Jeanne Kaniuk and Head of Policy and Research Dr Sophie Laws report on the findings and reflect on their significance.

E. León, M. Román, C. Marin & C. Moreno-Maldonado (University of Seville): Co-construction task: a comparative and longitudinal analysis of parent-child interactions in adoptive families

Adoption research has been very much oriented towards the analysis of children’s outcomes. Comparatively, much less is known about intra- and inter-personal processes. Very few studies that have analyzed the interactions between adoptive parents and adopted children (Stams, Juffer & van IJzendoorn, 2002; Steele et al., 2007). As a contribution to overcoming this limitation, a sample of 88 parent-child dyads (34 adoptive and 54 non-adoptive) were observed while interacting in a co-construction task. The adopted children in this sample had been born in Russia and were later adopted into Spanish families. In the context of a wider study, parent-child interactions were analyzed using a building task (“Co-construction task”, Steele et al., 2005, 2007). Both verbal and non-verbal contents were coded. Verbal interactions included contents such as vocal expressions, reference to shared past experiences, use of the child’s name, use of pronouns “we” or “us”. Non-verbal interactions included expression of affection, patterns of touch and patterns of proximity. Data was collected at two different times: three years, on average, after the beginning of the adoption (T1) and after six and half years, on average, in their adoptive homes (T2).

The results, in general, demonstrate a notable continuity from T1 to T2 in the behaviors evaluated during the interactions, both by the parents and by the children. Centering on T2, a great deal of similarity between the two groups of parent-child dyads studied, can, in addition, be seen an average of six and a half years the adoption. Nevertheless, the significantly greater presence of some attachment promoting behaviors stood out in the adoptive dyads (looking behavior, positive verbal expression, use of child’s name, asking questions/making suggestions, positive verbal reinforcement, encouraging behaviors, sensitivity to child). Also, the results show a significant coherence of different contents in the interaction (e.g., a more frequent use of “we” or “us” shows a significant positive correlation with parental use of positive vocal expressions).
Also, parental reflective thinking about the child and the relationship, explored with “Parenting Development Interview” (PDI) (Henderson, Steele and Hillman, 2007), showed significant correlations with the interactions in the co-construction task (e.g., a more positive perception of the child and the relationship was negatively correlated with a higher use of parental facial negative expression).

The comparative and longitudinal analysis of parent-child interactions has enabled us to establish an interesting discussion about some intra- and inter-personal processes in adoptive dyads, helping us to gain a better understanding of the complex dynamics of parent-child interactions in adoptive families.

E. León, M. Román & J. Palacios (University of Seville): *Parental reflective thinking about their adopted children and their relationship: a comparative and longitudinal study*

With the central goal of exploring adoptive parents’ representation of their adopted children and of the relationships between them, two groups of adults were compared in a sample of 98 Spanish families: a group of 40 adoptive parents and another group of 58 non-adoptive parents who served as a control group. The main content of this study, Parental Reflective Functioning (RF), was assessed with a “Parent Development Interview” (PDI) (Henderson, Steele and Hillman, 2007). Data was collected at two different times: three years (on average) after the child’s adoption (T1) and three and half years later (T2). The control group was matched in age with the adopted children and was studied in parallel with them at both T1 and T2.

Regarding parental RF about their child and their relationship, adoptive parents scored higher than non-adoptive mothers in most positive contents. Moreover, control (non-adoptive) mothers scored higher on contents that were less clearly positive or openly negative. Most of the statistically significant differences found between adoptive and non-adoptive families are the same in T1 and T2. Thus, among parent affective experience codes, adoptive families stand out in codes such as joy/pleasure or level of child focus; among the contents of child affective experience, adoptive families score higher than non-adoptive families in child affection; in the global codes, adoptive families score higher in codes such as parent reflection on relationship or coherence, both at T1 and T2.

However, some of the contents studied differed significantly from T1 to T2. Thus, among non-adoptive families, a decrease was observed in parent affective experience codes (e.g., joy/pleasure and attachment awareness & promotion), while the code disappointment/despair increased with age. Regarding the contents of child affective experience, these families scored higher for child aggression/anger in T1 than in T2; and in the global codes (parent reflection on relationship, coherence, richness of perceptions and description of relationship) non-adoptive families scored higher in T1 than in T2. In contrast, adoptive families obtained lower scores in parent affective experience in T1 compared to T2 at child focus level, while they also scored higher in negative contents (e.g., degree of anger and hostility). In the contents related to child affective experience, the average score was higher in T1 than in T2 in child controlling/manipulating, while
rejecting child decreased. Finally, from T1 to T2 a decline was observed in the global score related to parent reflection on relationship and coherence.

F. Lionetti & L. Barone (University of Pavia): Adoptive parents’ stress: the role of couple alliance and mental representations of attachment

Becoming a parent has been defined as a major adjustment and thus a source of possible stressful feeling in this new role (Judge, 2003). Studies conducted until now involving adoptive parents reported mixed results, suggesting that further family-related variables should be investigated beyond the adoption condition itself (Palacios & Brodzinsky, 2010). Aiming at giving a contribution in this field, the present study addressed the role of adoptive parents’ attachment representations (using the Adult Attachment Interview) and couple alliance (assessed by means of the Parenting Alliance Measure) on adoptive parents’ self-reported stress (using the Parenting Stress Index). 120 parents (n=60 mothers, n=60 fathers) with preschool-aged children were involved in the study. Parents’ attachment states of mind were assessed within the first semester from the adoption placement; parents’ alliance and stress were assessed 20 to 24 months later. Results showed that means scores of parents’ self-reported stress were within the 50° percentile along all the Parenting Stress Index scales. Unresolved attachment predicted a higher level of self-reported stress along the Parenting Stress Index parent domain (β=.29; p≤.001) and the parent-child domain (β=.30; p≤.001), whereas no significant effect was found on the child domain. Parenting alliance interacted with unresolved state of mind in mothers in the prediction of self-reported stress in the parent-child relationship (β=-.36; p=.05); on the other hand, no interaction effect of relevance was found for fathers. Specifically, mothers with an unresolved attachment state of mind were more permeable to the quality of the perceived alliance with their partner in their caregiving role, and presented higher stress when the alliance was lower. Clinical applications in terms of adoption policy to promote families’ adjustment are discussed.

J. Logan (University of Manchester): ‘Knowing about’, ‘relating to’ or ‘knowing who you are’. Questions of identity and kinship in contemporary adoptions

Contemporary adoption practice, with its emphasis on ‘openness’ and an expectation that children will have some form of contact with their birth relatives bears little resemblance to early adoptions which were constructed as ‘socially and legally endorsed forms of kinship equivalent to blood ties’.

Openness in adoption covers a variety of arrangements from ‘the most minimal sharing of information to continued visits between birth and adoptive families’. It is now well established that adopted children benefit from that degree of openness that enhances their understanding of why they were placed for adoption, provides them with information about their birth families and facilitates an acknowledgement of adoption within their adoptive families. The benefits or otherwise of on-going face to face contact is however more contentious and despite a growing body of research into openness generally, practitioners still struggle when making decisions about what sort of contact for each child. In an era of openness, practitioners need to consider the purpose of contact, what factors contribute to making contact work or not? What does
face-to-face contact achieve that differs from other forms of indirect contact. Is face-to-face contact about information, rights, identity or facilitating and extending kinship?

This paper draws on the authors own work on post adoption contact as well as her more recent work on theorising adoptive kinship. The analysis is located within both a sociological and anthropological discourse of kinship – an arena in which adoption has been remarkably absent despite it having much to contribute to the heterogenous family landscape. Concepts, such as the primacy of the ‘blood tie’ and the ‘legal fiction’ of adoption are analysed critically, as is the common discourse of ‘blood is thicker than water’.

Parallels are drawn with children born as a result of New Reproductive Technologies; families which are only just beginning to embrace some of the issues and questions raised in adoption decades ago. What constitutes 'meaningful' kinship is currently contested. The increasingly complex means by which families are formed and children produced raises new questions about openness, contact, secrecy and truth. Does 'knowing about' have to lead to ‘relating to’? The paper suggests that locating these questions in a wider sociological or anthropological context may be helpful for social workers when making decisions about what sort of (post adoption) contact for adopted children.

The comparative and longitudinal analysis of parental reflective functioning about their children and their relationships is a fruitful conceptual tool to gain a better understanding of the context in which adopted children develop in their new families.

M. MacDonalds (Queen's University of Belfast): Configuring adoptive family relationships in the context of open adoption: adoptive parents’ experiences

The focus of adoption policy in the UK is on providing permanent family relationships to children in care who are unable to live with their birth families, and it has become the norm that post-adoption contact with their birth family will be at least considered for most children adopted from care.

Adoptive parents are crucial in achieving the aim of a life-long, stable experience of family for these vulnerable children. However, the trend towards increasingly open adoption presents adopters with unique parenting challenges as they navigate the uncharted territory of relationships with birth family. Adoption practitioners are familiar with Grotevant’s conceptualisation of the adoptive kinship network, but this view of kinship that includes birth and adoptive family members in a joined network is still outside of social norms (Jones and Hackett, 2011), and adopters are faced with negotiating these relationships in the absence of a cultural script to guide their interactions. This paper will develop our understanding of the relationship complexities involved in open adoption by reporting on adoptive parents’ accounts of their lived experience of adoptive kinship relationships.

Drawing on relational sociology, in particular the concept of families as configurations (Widmer and Jallinoja, 2008), this paper will give an insight into how adopters configure their family relationships, the ways in which birth family are incorporated into adoptive family configurations, and how relationships with birth
family are actualised. The adoptive parents’ accounts are organised and discussed under the following themes:

- Prioritising connectedness to the child
- The importance of symbolic interactions
- Negotiating the boundaries of ‘our family’ and ‘their family’
- The use of kinship labels to position birth family members
- Managing ambiguous kinship role expectations
- Risks and resources for parental investment

The findings are taken from a doctoral study that explored the lived experience of adoptive parenthood in the context of birth family contact, focusing on the evolution of adoptive kinship relationships during the child’s adolescence. 31 adoptive parents, representing 17 families, participated in semi-structured interviews. Their children were adopted from care in Northern Ireland between 2000 and 2006, and were aged 10-15 years at the time of the interviews. The adoptive parents’ accounts were analysed following principles of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009).

E. Madden (University of Texas at Arlington), R. McRoy (Boston College), T. Holmes, S. Ayers-Lopez (University of Texas at Austin), K. Ledesma (AdoptUSKids), J. Kroll & D. Martin-Hushman (North American Council on Adoptable Children):

The respite needs and experiences of families who adopt and foster children from the U.S. foster care system

Purpose: This presentation shares the results of a survey to assess the respite needs and experiences of a nationwide sample of families who had adopted or were fostering children from the U.S. foster care system.

Methods: Respondents (N=201) completed surveys in fall 2012. Questionnaires included both quantitative and qualitative questions. Survey data were entered into SPSS to calculate frequencies, and qualitative responses were coded using thematic analysis.

Results: Slightly less than half (46%) of the respondents were Caucasian, followed by African American (36%) and Hispanic (14%). Half (50%) were age 50 or older, and half (50%) reported total annual incomes of $40,000 or below. More than one-third (39%) reported parenting a child of a different race/ethnicity. The majority of respondents (59%) indicated that they were caring for a child with a disability or special need, including behavioral (43%), learning/developmental (43%), and emotional/mental (31%) disabilities.

Need for respite: More than one-quarter (28%) of respondents received between 1-10 hours of formal respite services per month; however, the majority (67%) indicated that they did not receive any hours per month. While 68% had access to informal respite support from relatives and/or friends, 32% of families did not have access to any informal support. Only 20% of respondents reported that respite services were consistently available, with 21% saying services were available but only sporadically and 50% indicating respite services were generally not available. When families were
asked why they needed respite services, the two most frequent reasons provided were “relief from stress” (53%) and to “allow time with spouse/partner” (45%).

Experiences with respite: More than half (57%) of respondents felt as though respite services made a considerable impact on their ability to keep the placement stable. Three-fourths of respondents (76%) reported that respite had made a positive difference in their lives and 62% felt as though respite helped lower their stress levels. The survey concluded with an opportunity for respondents to add any information to further help the researchers understand their experiences with respite services. The most common themes which emerged related to families’ need for more respite services and the difficulties they experienced finding approved/suitable respite caregivers.

Implications: The findings suggest that most families who have received respite services believe respite improves family stability and decreases stress levels. However, respite is not consistently offered or accessible, with only 20% reporting consistently available respite services at the time of survey completion. Continued research is needed on barriers to access and the elements of respite that are most beneficial for families adopting or fostering children from care.

S. Marinho, M. Barbosa-Ducharme (University of Porto) & R. McRoy (Boston College):

*Protective factors in the adoption of older children*

In 2011, in Portugal, 8938 children/youth were in foster care, 8453 of these were in institutions and 485 in foster family home (non-relative). Only 570 children were legally available for adoption, and 345 of them were over 6 years old (60.5%). From 2006 to 2009, disruption (termination of a placement before the adoption is legally finalized) rate is estimated as 6.2%. Internationally, reported disruption rates vary from one study to another, but the average ranges between 10% and 20%, as estimated by Rosenthal (1993) and Rushton (2004).

Among child-related factors the age at placement is generally agreed to be the greatest risk factor, with older children being more likely to experience disruption. Nevertheless, many studies (e.g. Barth & Berry, 1988; Festinger, 1986) compared a group of children in disrupted placements to a group of successfully adopted children who were on average 1 to 5 years younger. As a result the possible effect of other variables has been clouded by failing to control for age at placement when selecting comparison groups of successful adoptions. Moreover, adoption of older children (over 5 years old), despite challenging, can be successful.

The study reported in this presentation was designed to analyze child, adoptive parents and agency protective factors on the adoption of older children. The case records of 92 adoptive placements of older children (≥ 6 years old), encompassing 46 disrupted and 46 finalized adoptions, matched by age of child at placement, were systematically reviewed. Data was recorded and coded on a survey developed for the study, regarding child and prospective adopters’ pre-placement characteristics and agency practices.

Main findings indicated that the child’s readiness for adoptive placement, the absence of a strong attachment to birth parents and the less intense/frequent externalized behavior were associated with success. Regarding parental characteristics, a dual-parent
adoptive family, mothers level of confidence in their adoptive parent role and in dealing with lifelong adoption issues, parents more flexible and aware of the specificities and challenges of adoption, with more support systems available, and with children more receptive to adoption, were associated with positive outcomes. Agency practice results indicated that the involvement of only one agency (without transfer of responsibilities) was associated with success as well as when the previous status (only child or with sibling) and sibling position (older, younger) of the child was maintained when placed into an adoptive home. By using logistic regression techniques, a final model was obtained to discriminate intact placements from those that disrupted. Implications for practice will be provided. Emphasis will be placed on best practices in assessment, preparation, matching and support of families.

S. Mendonça, A. Almeida, C. Nunes & J.C. Giger (University of Algarve): Attachment representations of adopted children

Research has demonstrated that early adverse experiences (e.g., maltreatment, neglect or institutionalization) promote the internalization of longstanding insecure working models (Kobak & Madsen, 2008), and can have a major impact on the viability of adoption placements. However, the radical changes in care patterns and emotional relationships implied by adoption have been shown to be linked to a revision of attachment representations (e.g., Steele, Hodges, Kaniuk, & Steele, 2010).

The present study was aimed at analyzing the representations of attachment that adopted children may have in specific situations, such as: (a) parental authority; (b) responses of attachment figures in painful situations; (c) responses of attachment figures in fearful situations; (d) separation, and (e) reunion.

Participants were 30 adopted children, 9 girls and 21 boys, with an average age of 6.9 years, in 30 adoptive families in the Algarve region (Southern Portugal). Five incomplete stories describing scenes of family routines (i.e., Attachment Story Task Completion; Bretherton & Ridgeway, 1990) were presented to children. Responses were recorded on video and later rated by two researchers. Results showed that: (1) attachment representations were on the threshold between insecurity and security, (2) children used both positive and negative parental representations equally often, and (3) children had more secure attachment representations in stories in which parental authority and availability were needed and less secure attachment representations in stories describing the separation from attachment figures.

The findings provide further knowledge to the study of adopted children’s attachment representations.

S. Mendonça, A. Almeida, L. Silva, J.C. Giger & C. Nunes (University of Algarve): Relationships between adoptive parent’s characteristics and adopted children adjustment to adoption and behavior problems

Parents who acknowledge the additional tasks that adoption involves (e.g., adoption revelation process) and are comfortable with it and talk about it, are more able to help their children to explore openly adoption’s related issues (e.g., loss of birth origins),
which is known to contribute to a more positive global adjustment (Brodzinsky, Smith, & Brodzinsky, 1998; Kirk, 1964).

Several adjustment theories, such as the theory of social role (Nickman, 1985; Kirk, 1964, 1981), family systems theory (Reitz, & Watson, 1992) or communication theory (Rueter & Koenen, 2008; Wrobel, Kohler, Grotevant, McRoy &), stress the importance of communication between parents and children, and recognize the reality of the difference of their adoptive status, for the children's adjustment to adoption.

The present study was aimed at analyzing different family aspects that could be associated with children's adjustment to adoption, namely the parent-child communication openness, the parents’ attitudes towards adoption and the parental educational level. It was also intended to investigate the association between children's adjustment to adoption and their behavior problems.

The sample was composed of 112 family members from Algarve region (South Portugal) among whom 38 adopted children, with an average age of 7.3 years, 38 adoptive mothers and 36 adoptive fathers. Adoptive parents filled out different questionnaires.

Findings showed that: (1) mother’s positive attitudes towards adoption, and openness in communication with the child were related to positive children’s adoption adjustment; (2) higher parent’s education level was associated with more positive children’s adoption adjustment, and (3) positive children’s adoption adjustment was related to less children’s total and externalizing behavior problems.

The observed results outline the importance of identifying the most appropriate features of adoptive parents for a better children's adjustment to adoption, which can serve as selection criteria for candidates for adoption, or as aspects to be taken into consideration on the part of professionals for parental training in the adoption process, prior to the delivery of the child to the adoptive family. More specifically, professionals of adoption could evaluate, identify and promote positive attitudes towards adoption, adequate parent communication skills, and a better understanding of these aspects for a better adjustment of the adopted children.

J. Mohanty (National University of Singapore) & J. Ahn (Sookmyung Women's University): Adoption disclosure: a comparative study of Korean and Indian domestic adoptive parents

Adoption disclosure is an important indicator of healthy development and psychological well-being of adopted children. However, findings from studies conducted among Asian domestic adoptive parents show some concerns. Using Kirk (1984) and Brodzinsky (1987) theoretical propositions, a comparative study was conducted among 109 Korean and 85 Indian domestic adoptive parents to find out the societal and familial factors that relate to adoption disclosure. The results indicate that overwhelming majority of Korean adoptive parents (N=88, 88.9%) have told the child or planning to tell the child about his/her adoptive parents; however, only 43(51.8%) Indian adoptive parents have told or planning to tell. Further, the results of multi-nominal logistic analysis showed that monthly income, child’s age, perception on the importance of social disclosure, such as attending workshop/events related to adoption, educating people about adoption etc.,
stigma related to adoption, positive effects and concerns about adoption disclosure, and the country where they live significantly discriminated the group of adoptive parents who have told or plan to tell their child about adoption and who don’t want to. Adoptive parents who told/planning to tell their child about his/her adoption tended to have higher monthly family income, have an older adopted child living with them, more likely to perceive the beneficial effects of adoption disclosure to the child and less likely to feel stigma related to adoption. However, contrary to our expectations, adoptive parents who disclosed to the child about his/her adoption status perceived social disclosure as less important. Implications of this study include providing appropriate strategies, resources and support to adoptive families to help them deal with adoption disclosure.

C. Moreno, M. Peñarrubia & C. Moreno-Maldonado (University of Seville): *An analysis of sociometric status and social network in adopted and institutionalized children*

Peer relationships are a good indicator of psychological adjustment as well as a good predictor of future adjustment. An important protective factor for children is to have a good, stable, satisfactory and reciprocal friendship; they need to be loved and recognized within the peer group (Berndt, 2002; Gifford-Smith and Brownell, 2003; Schneider, 2000). On the other hand, children who lack friends presented more feelings of loneliness, dissatisfaction, low self-esteem and depression (Berndt, 1996).

The sample included some 35 children from the Russia Federation (adopted by families in Spain), 25 institutionalized children and a third (control) group made up of boys and girls who had always lived with their biological Spanish families (35 children). All children were between 7 and 13 years-old. A sociometric status task was administered to each child in the classroom. This technique obtained several indicators, including: positive nominations received, negative nominations received, positive reciprocity, negative reciprocity, opposing peer feelings, social preference and social impact. It also included an interpersonal satisfaction scale. Likewise, the scores of how each child was perceived by others were collected (behavioural reputation) in a series of relevant characteristics from the standpoint of social competence: prosocial behaviour, shyness, aggressiveness, and the playful component of social behaviour.

The main goal of this study was to analyze the quality of the social network of adopted, institutionalized and control children, their sociometric status and the quality of their friendship relations.

A. Muntean, R. Ungureanu & M.A. Tomita (West University of Timisoara): *Adoptive parents’ feelings and the success of adoption explored on national adoption sample in Romania*

The satisfaction of parents and their feelings regarding the adopted child is widely recognize within the literature based on research as having a great impact on child development as well as on the success of adoption (Castle & All, 2009). For the current papers we define the success of adoption through the quality of attachment build-up by adopted child towards his or her adoptive parents.
The research is developed within a national research project focused on domestic adoption in Romania. The project named: “Factors which influence the success of adoption” (FISAN) was developed during 2008-2011, by a research team of West University in Timisoara, Romania, with the financial support of Minister of Education in Romania. The investigations done within the project’s framework were based on the official agreements with the governmental authorities on child’s adoption, on the national and local levels.

The sample explored here contains 56 cases of adopted children and their adoptive parents. The 56 cases were found and assessed by the research team within 10 different counties of Romania, with the support of the local child protection department, according with the following procedure: The workers of county’s child protection department contacted first the adoptive families and having the agreement of the families they put the research team in connection with families. Most of the evaluations were done home, at the adoptive families’ places.

The adopted children are 56 adolescence, 19 girls and 37 boys, aged 10-16 years old at the assessment moment. All of them were adopted during the first 4 years of their life. The assessment of children attachment and development is based on Friend and Families Interview (FFI) (Steele, Steel, 2009).

Parents’ feelings towards their child are highlighted within the interviews done using Parent Development Interview (PDI) (Steele, Hederson, Hillman, 2009). Out of 56 cases investigated here, only in one case the responder was a father; in 16 cases both parents answered and very often negotiated the answers, and in 39 cases only the adoptive mothers participated at the PDI interviews. We focus the present investigation on the following feelings exhibited by the adoptive parents towards their adopted children, during the interviews: the anger, the guilt, the joy/pleasure, the disappointment/despair, the warmth, the hostility of adoptive parents.

The statistical analyze of the collected data and the conclusions will emphasize the importance of positive feelings of parents towards their adopted child for supporting the secure attachment development of the child. The cultural aspects regarding child-parent interactions will be also discussed.

K. Narzisi (Open University): Openness in international adoptions: the Italian scenario
This paper explores the concept of openness in the Italian context of international adoptions. Growing acknowledgement of the importance of openness and communication has led to a burgeoning of research in this field (Wydra et al 2012 and Neil 2012). However, most of the research has looked at the situation in English speaking countries. Openness in adoption is understood here as the willingness of adoptive parents to discuss the process of adoption and the origins of the adoptive child (Wrobel and Ayers-Lopez 1996). The concept of openness is important for the Italian context for two reasons: the age of the child and the international nature of the adoption. The average age at adoption for international adoptees in Italy is 6.1 years old (C.A.I 2011). Thus children have already experienced a significant period of their childhood in another country usually with different cultural and national environment. This study explores the views and experiences of children of their adoption and the communication
from parents regarding the child’s history and adoption to Italy. This paper seeks to address a gap in the literature by drawing on the first findings collected from a small-scale qualitative research project outlined within a new sociology of childhood (Woodhead 1997) framework. The research involves 15 families with children aged from 8 to 12 years, that have been adopted to Italy through an accredited body based in northern Italy. The approach used to gather the data could be defined as the “mosaic approach” (Clark and Moss 2011), as different methods are included, with the aim of finding ways of harnessing young children’s creativity and physical engagement with their world. The methods include the production of a narrative on the process of adoption with drawings and photographs produced and taken by children (Leitch 2008). A brief overview of the actual international legal framework will be presented as the context for this study and will include a discussion of the proposed laws on adoption in Italy.

M. Ntouma & P. Vorria (Aristotle University of Thessaloniki): The ‘Metera’ Adoption Greek Study (MAGS): socio-emotional development and school adjustment of post-institutionalized adopted adolescents

Studies have shown that adopted children with early experiences of institutional care are more likely than other children to show psychological difficulties and behaviour problems in adolescence (Beckett et al., 2010; Audet, & Le Mare, 2010).

The developmental outcomes of 52 adopted adolescents reared in an institution, compared to that of 36 adolescents who were brought up in their own families. Adolescents’ attachment relationships with their parents, friendships, self-esteem, cognitive, development, school achievement and behavioural adjustment were assessed. The quality of parenting environment, i.e. parental education, maternal general health and stress, was also examined.

The results of the study showed that there were no significant differences between adopted and comparison adolescents on the quality of attachment with their parents, on friendships with peers and on levels of self-esteem. Nevertheless, compared to non-adopted adolescents, adoptees were less emotionally expressive. Furthermore, adopted adolescents had lower cognitive development and school achievement, than their comparisons; however, their overall cognitive level was approximately average according to the general population norms. As for behavioural adjustment, compared to non-adopted adolescents, adoptees were rated higher in hyperactivity and inattention at school, but the higher level of hyperactivity applied only to some of them.

The quality of parenting environment in adoptive and comparison families was also investigated. No significant differences were found on parental educational level and social class. The majority of parents in both groups was middle-class and had secondary education. The majority of adopted adolescents grew up in high-quality adoptive families, which brought benefits in their overall development. It is interesting to note, that adoptive mothers had less anxiety and fewer somatic symptoms than their comparisons. Moreover, good maternal health was associated with better adjustment in adoptees.
Adopted adolescents had generally a positive outcome. It seems that adoption in a good and caring family offers the adolescents the opportunities needed to overcome the difficulties from their early experiences.

This research has been co-financed by the European Union (European Social Fund – ESF) and Greek national funds through the Operational Program “Education and Lifelong Learning” of the National Strategic Reference Framework (NSRF) - Research Funding Program: Heracleitus II. Investing in knowledge society through the European Social Fund.

H. Ottaway (Cardiff University): Conceptualizing and experiencing siblinghood: adopted people’s relationships with their adoptive siblings across the life-span

Adoptive sibling relationships appear on the surface to mirror kinship relationships with siblings raised together in intact families in terms of experiencing the day-to-day sibling relationship in childhood and beyond, but without a blood tie. As Modell (1994) states, they are raised together as siblings ‘as if begotten’ through blood. However, very limited work has been completed to date exploring adoptive sibling relationships. Studies have tended to focus on psycho-social aspects of siblinghood in childhood and adolescence (Charbonneau et al, 2000; Berge et al, 2006, Glover et al, 2010), with few studies considering the relationship longitudinally (Howe and Feast, 2000).

This paper will focus on adopted people’s experiences of their adoptive kinship sibling relationships across the life-span. The findings are taken from a wider UK qualitative PhD study that explored adopted people’s longitudinal experiences of their birth and adoptive sibling relationships. A sub-sample of ten adopted adults within the wider study sample of twenty participants grew up with adoptive siblings who were unrelated and also adopted into the family, and/or were the birth children of their adoptive parents. In-depth semi-structured interviews were carried out with this group (aged 33-65 years), who had a range of one to five adoptive siblings.

Adoptive sibling relationships were reported as being extremely stable over time. In many respects this mirrors longitudinal research that has been undertaken with biologically related sibling groups raised together. Only rarely were the participants not in touch with their adoptive brothers and sisters, and in these cases significant problems within the relationship began in childhood. This was usually a result of one child being perceived, or experienced, to be favoured over the other (not always the birth child of the adopters), and subsequent feelings of rejection that continued into adulthood. However, issues of adoption pervaded all aspects of family life. The reality of their birth and having birth families was ever-present; in childhood and adolescence through stories of arrival in the family, in how similarity to and difference from siblings were explained, their experience of family life, communication about adoption and how they began to construct their identities. In adulthood, these issues particularly came to the fore through the process of search and reunion with birth families, and the negotiation of contact within the adoptive kinship network. However, there was a strong sense of stability and permanence in adoptive sibling relationships across the life-span. Adoptive siblings were usually regarded as brothers and sisters ‘no matter what’, and furthermore had distinctive roles to play with regard to supporting one another around specific issues pertaining to adoption.
G. Pagé (University of Quebec in Outaouais): *Adopting a child without being his/her legal parent: the experience of foster-to-adopt parents*

In Quebec, Canada, most domestic adoptions occur in the context of a foster-to-adopt program called the Mixed-bank. Within this program, prospective adoptive parents have to agree to foster a child before they can legally adopt him or her, without knowing how long their fostering role will last or whether the child will ever become adoptable. Even if the child is under their care 24 hours/day, 7 days/week, foster-to-adopt parents have no rights over him or her because they are not legally recognized as the child's parents.

The main objective of this research was to better understand how foster-to-adopt parents develop a sense of being the parent of the child they foster under these circumstances. The research was conducted using a grounded theory method. Twenty-five (25) foster-to-adopt parents from twenty (20) different families were interviewed. In this presentation, the author will discuss a model developed inductively, according to the analysis of the participants' discourse. This model explains how foster-to-adopt develop a strong sense of being the parents of the child they foster long before they are legally recognized as such. In fact, it seems the legal act of adoption is not what makes foster-to-adopt parents consider themselves as the child's parents. Rather, they become the parents when they reach a point of no return, i.e. when they can not imagine their lives without this child. To legitimize what they feel is their right to be the parents, participants rely on four (4) main elements: 1) their profound desire to have a child of their own, 2) their experience of being the only ones taking care of the child, 3) the significant relationship they develop with the child, and 4) the fact that others around them consider them as the parents. While being convinced that they are entitled to be the parents of the child they foster is not problematic when the child has in fact been abandoned, the author will discuss how this attitude from foster-to-adopt parents must be taken into greater consideration when adoption is being pursued against the birth parents' will.

M.G. Peñarrubia, M. Román, C. Moreno & E. León (University of Seville): *Individual and interpersonal emotions in internationally adopted children*

A positive sense of self is very important to the adaptive functioning of the individual (Harter, 1990). People with high self-esteem act independently, accept responsibility, tolerate frustration, attempt new tasks with confidence and readily offer assistance to others. Those with low self-esteem are likely to show depression, have suicidal thoughts and have difficulty in forming and sustaining social relationships. Adopted children are hypothesized to be at risk of low self-esteem; however, several studies have shown no differences in self-esteem between adopted and non-adopted individuals (Juffer & Van IJzendoorn, 2007), or even higher scores of self-esteem in internationally adopted children in Sweden (Irhammar & Cederblad, 2005). Other very important domains are internalizing problems, referring to depression, anxiety or emotions that could damage children development. However, research into internalizing problems in adopted children is small and contradictory, while there are a lot of studies about behavioral problems such as hyperactivity. American studies have obtained higher anxiety and
depression levels in adopted children (Sharma, McGue and Benson, 1998), although other studies found no differences (Palacios & Brodzinsky, 2010).

Self-esteem and internalizing problems were analyzed in 40 internationally adopted children from the Russian Federation, compared with an age-matched non-adopted group. This was a longitudinal study that compared the development of self-esteem and internalizing problems over time. These dimensions were assessed with several instruments: Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (Goodman, 1997), Children’s Depression Inventory (Kovacs, 1992), Self-Perception Profile for Children (Harter, 1985) and Social Skills Improvement System (2008).

In the first assessment, performed, on average, three years after adoption, the results showed significant differences in self-esteem and internalizing problems between adopted and non-adopted children, with adoptees scoring lower than non-adopted children in both emotional domains. In preliminary the data from the second assessment, seven years after adoption, no differences in self-esteem between adopted and non-adopted children were found. However, adopted children still showed lower levels of internalizing problems than control children.

This data will be also analyzed in terms of early adversity, emotional recovery and practical implications.

A. Pertman (Donaldson Adoption Institute): Rethinking adoption in the 21st century
This presentation examines the evolution of adoption and the transformative changes it is undergoing, raising significant questions about whether current law, policy, practice and research genuinely (and adequately) address or meet the needs of the contemporary institution and the tens of millions of people it encompasses. The framework for the presentation and discussion is built by bringing together a range of research papers published by the Adoption Institute -- on openness in adoption, gay/lesbian adoption, adoption on the internet, birthparent rights, and adoption's lessons for assisted reproductive technologies, among others.

A.M. Piché (University of Quebec and Montreal): Adopting older children from abroad: parental perspectives
This doctoral study explores the evolution of significant parent-child relationships outside the usual family building process, from the perspective of Canadian parents who recently adopted older children from abroad. Findings from the study provide insight into 12 adoptive parents confronted with the recent decline in international adoption and the shortage of younger, healthier children for adoption. Encouraged to reflect on their psychological and material preparation for parenthood, the parents also spoke of strategies they developed post-adoption to build strong parent-child relationships, to help their children become accustomed to their new homes, and to meet the children’s various special needs and health requirements. These strategies were developed in a process of co-construction involving parental knowledge and interpretations of the latest childhood development theories introduced in pre-adoption workshops and in literature. Older adopted children, who enter their new families with emotional, social, and physical experiences gained elsewhere may have endured multiple ruptures or
maltreatment, often incite their new parents to consider new ways of establishing relationships. Findings thus revealed that, in the case of older children, the adoptive family building process follows a unique path and that participants do not benefit from an early life start or knowledge of the children’s earlier histories due to lack of access to the children’s personal information. The study involved 20 semi-structured, in-depth interviews conducted with 12 adoptive parents from Montreal, Canada between 2008 and 2010. Some parents were met prospectively over the first year post-adoption, while others were met retrospectively two years later. Participant families represented 28 children recently adopted internationally from China, Haiti, Russia, Vietnam, Cambodia, and Mexico. All children had a prolonged history of institutional care in their countries of origin and were adopted between 14 and 54 months of age. A qualitative, constructivist approach based in grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006) was applied to lead the analysis and develop themes. The presentation of findings will include four main themes: 1) extended family building process: normalcy, interruptions (grief, renunciations, reevaluations); 2) active construction of a normal relationship (building the “good adoptive parent”); 3) self as parent; self as child therapist (drawing the line, meeting special needs, decrypting children’s histories through present behaviours); and 4) prescription of attachment (parents as adoption specialists in the making). The conclusion will include clinical practice and local policy recommendations to offer accessible, coordinated support and preparation to adoptive families in their communities.

C. Piermattei, C.S. Pace & R. Tambelli (Sapienza University of Rome): International late-adoption: assessing parent-child relationship through free-play interaction and attachment representations

Introduction: The adoptive experience is considered an opportunity to experience a new relational environment that offers the possibility to revise early insecure or disorganized attachment in abused and/or neglected children (Van IJzendoorn & Juffer 2006; Pace et al., 2012).

While attachment assessment allows the internal representations of children and parents about their relationship to be evaluated, the observation of their interaction allows the specific way in which the two individuals co-construct the reality of their unique dyad (Sander 2007) to be looked at. Several studies have found a relationship between the assessment of interaction through dyadic emotional availability and infant attachment, although the strength of this association has been proved to be modest (Van Den Dries, Juffer et al. 2012).

The aim of this study was to evaluate the relationship between attachment representations and dyadic emotional availability, so as to deepen the understanding of the relational functioning of families with late-adopted children.

Method: The sample was composed of 18 Italian adoptive families recruited through health services and authorized agencies for international adoptions. Children were aged between 4.5 and 8.5 years and the time spent in the adoptive family ranged from 1 to 3 years.
Measures: Dyadic emotional availability was assessed through the Emotional Availability Scales - EAS (Biringen 2008), adult attachment through the Adult Attachment Interview - AAI (George, Kaplan & Main 1985) and child attachment through the Manchester Attachment Story Task - MCAST (Green, Stanley, Smith, & Goldwyn 2000).

Results and discussion: The attachment distribution of the parents shows an overrepresentation of insecure categories. The distribution of child attachment is 56% Secure (with respect to at least one parent), 22% Insecure, and 22% Disorganized (with respect to at least one parent). Results reveal a matching between parental attachment models and children attachment patterns and a weak association between parental emotional availability and adult attachment classifications.

These outcomes indicate that insecure and disorganized attachment patterns of late-adopted children in the first 3 years after adoption may change; nonetheless, parental attachment security is not a sufficient condition. These data also suggest that free-play interactions may not necessarily lead to distress and therefore to the activation of the attachment/care-giving system, offering a possible explanation for the weak correlation between emotional availability and child attachment.

E. Pinderhughes, J. Matthews (Tufts University), A. Pertman & G. Deoudes (Donaldson Adoption Institute): Voices from the field: professional and parent perspectives on intercountry adoption practices and impact of The Hague

The purpose of the Hague Convention on the on the Protection of Children and Cooperation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption (Hague, 1993) was to establish safeguards that protect the rights of children in need of permanency. The Hague set forth rules to prevent abduction, sale or traffic of children, essentially to ensure that children found safe permanency options and intercountry adoptions would be legal and ethical. Since 1993, 89 countries have become signatories. However many countries continue to engage in intercountry adoption (ICA) without endorsing the Hague. News accounts emerge each year pointing to ongoing fraud or other unethical practices in intercountry adoption, highlighting the importance of the Hague and its intent.

This presentation will report on a study underway examining adoption professionals’ and adoptive parents’ experiences with ICA. To date, 248 professionals and 505 parents have completed some part of their respective surveys; parents’ surveys represent over 40 countries of origin (COO) and professionals’ surveys 20 countries (both COO and receiving - RC).

Preliminary analyses of data from professionals indicate a decrease in ICA adoptions (into or out of countries) and increase in time to finalize adoptions. Responses to open-ended questions point to more diverse problems identified (e.g., costs are higher for agencies and for families; children can’t have relative adoption in some countries; fraud is at a higher level in the system than before) than benefits (e.g., greater transparency and standardization; illegal activity is minimized; more training for adoptive parents). Several thematic areas emerged: 1) issues at multiple ecological levels: macro- intercountry politics (Hague countries can close adoption to non-Hague countries), macro-intracountry policies (paperwork and timeline burdens are greater;
greater transparency), local-agency and family impact (higher costs for agencies and more time for families; more info on child); 2) implementation and enforcement issues (sometimes legal placements are stopped; eliminated some unethical agencies); and 3) unintended consequences (children can’t be adopted by relatives in some countries; children aging in orphanages).

Parent responses to questions about the role countries’ Hague signatory status played in their choice revealed: 70% said Hague was not considered. Reasons for adopting from a non-Hague country varied, including going where children were most in need; having a personal link to the country, and a shorter wait.

The presentation will include aggregated responses across COO and RC, as well as a breakdown by COO and RC. In addition, questions addressing the intent of the Hague (e.g., exhaust options in birth country; enhanced record-keeping and reduce fraud; post-placement supports for adoptive families) and implementation will be reported.

S. Ranieri, R. Rosnati, D. Barni, L. Ferrari & E. Canzi (Catholic University of Milan):

Adoptees’ psychosocial well-being in the context of parent-child relationship: what is the best protective factor?

Research guided by the perspective of risk and resilience and the catch-up model has well shown that adoption may represent a “protective factor”, providing an effective alternative for the healthy development for children whose biological parents cannot take care of them (Van IJzendoorn & Juffer, 2006; Whitten & Weaver, 2010). However, little is still known about the contexts which support children’s recovery after adoption and improve their lifelong well-being. Family has been identified as a source of resilience, triggering noteworthy improvements in adopted children. In particular, family processes and relational quality turned out to be more relevant for the adoptees’ development than family structure (Landsford, Ceballo, Abbey, & Stewart, 2001; Palacios & Brodzinsky, 2010; Rueter, Keyes, Iacono, & McGue, 2009). The influence of parent-child relationships on adolescent development has been deeply studied, documenting that warm, open, and supportive relationships are related to positive psychosocial well-being and conflictual relationships to more negative outcomes. With regard to the adoption field as well, there is a growing evidence that a good quality of parent-child relationship promotes children’s psychosocial well-being also during adolescence and the transition to adulthood (Palacios & Sanchez-Sandoval, 2005; Rueter et al., 2009; Whitten & Weaver, 2010). Well-being may be considered as a multifaceted and dynamic concept, that includes subjective, psychological, and social dimensions, such as self-acceptance, personal growth, purpose in life, positive relations with others, environmental mastery and autonomy in thought and action (Ryff, 1989). This study focused on the psychosocial well-being of Italian internationally adopted adolescents and emerging adults in the context of parent-child relationships. Specifically, the aim was twofold: 1) to assess the adoptees’ psychosocial well-being in terms of individual psychological functioning and social competence, and some key dimensions of parent-child relationship quality (low-conflict, promotion of volitional functioning, adoption-related family communication), comparing adolescents’
perceptions of maternal and paternal bonds, and taking into account adolescents’ gender and age; 2) to examine, through dominance analysis (Budescu, 1993), the relative importance of different dimensions of parent-child relationship quality for adoptees’ well-being. Participants were 160 Italian adoptive family triads (father, mother, and one internationally adopted child aged between 15 and 24), for a total of 480 subjects. The instrument used was a self-report questionnaire. Data analyses are still in progress and the results will be discussed in relation to implications for intervention with adoptive parents and for adoption related organizations.

M. Reinoso (University of Barcelone), F. Juffer (University of Leiden), W. Tieman (Erasmus University of Rotterdam), N. Pereda & M. Forns (University of Barcelone): Children’s and parents’ thoughts and feelings about adoption, birth culture identity and discrimination in families with internationally adopted children

International adoption is a worldwide phenomenon and adopted children’s adaptation and outcomes have become a central issue. Extensive research has been conducted on the psychological adjustment of internationally adopted children (for a review, see Juffer et al., 2011; Palacios & Brodzinsky, 2010). However, relatively few studies have examined their experiences related to their adoptive status. A lack of measures to address this issue is noteworthy as well. On the other hand, Spain has become one of the receiving countries with the highest numbers of intercountry adoptions. As a large number of international adoptees are growing up in Spanish society, their experiences of adoption should be investigated.

In the present study, we examined the perceptions of adoption and related issues in 68 families with internationally adopted children in Spain. The adopted children, between the ages of 8 and 12 years, and their parents answered questions about the children’s thoughts and feelings about adoption. The questionnaire My Experiences was created ad hoc for the research’s purpose, and descriptive data and scores on four scales – family, adoption, birth culture identity and discrimination – were obtained.

Results showed that compared with same-race adoptees, transracial adoptees scored significantly higher on birth culture identity and perceived discrimination. High levels of convergence between the children’s and parents’ viewpoints on the experiences of adoption and related issues were found. Nevertheless, the adopted children scored higher than their parents on birth culture identity, suggesting that at this age adoptive parents may underestimate their children’s connection to their cultural origins. In contrast, the same-race adoptees scored significantly lower on perceived discrimination than their mothers.

We conclude that at this age adoptive parents should acknowledge their adopted child’s daily-life experiences regarding cultural identity with the birth country and discrimination. To provide adopted children with sufficient empathy and understanding, it is important that adoptive parents gain accurate insights into their children’s thoughts, feelings and experiences related to adoption.
S. Richards (University Campus Suffolk): *Chóng ěr fēi: cultural performances of belonging*

This presentation scrutinizes three ‘canonical’ narratives crucial to the discourse of adoption in general and intercountry adoption in particular (Bruner 1990), as they are revealed in the ‘performances’ of a group of adoptive families. These specific narratives focus on the primacy of the biological family, birth as a point where ethnicity and culture is fixed; and that the loss of each of these endangers a complete identity. Using performance theory I illustrate the strategies employed by families who live in the UK and have adopted children from China to address the deficit of these origin narratives for their adopted children. This ethnography explores how these families construct familial and cultural belonging across ethnic, cultural and biological boundaries. I argue that these families display and perform their belonging narratives whilst finding cultural strategies to connect their daughters to China and an absent biological family. By these means they conform to the expectations of the ‘good adoptive parent’.

The first performance explored is from an annual gathering of the small group of families. At this event a well-known Chinese Flautist plays haunting music evoking a lost and mystical China. Members of the audience are moved to tears and motivated to speak of their regret at their daughters not knowing birth families and the lifelong loss that this represents. The continued homage to the biological family model even as it subordinates adoptive claims is part of how these parents support their children. The supremacy of the biological model is assumed and orthodox even amongst families whose construction might conceivably destabilise it.

The second example relates to the approach to culture as a birthright which adoptees need to be able to access in order to develop an authentic identity. This narrative is found in the girls performing a song taught to them at an annual summer school event. The song speaks of long lost friends, which though absent remain part of them and are continually missed. The girls collectively learn to sing this song in Mandarin and in doing so perform what is lost to them through adoption.

The final performance reveals the imperative placed upon adoptive parents to celebrate birth culture. The example provided here is the ritual opening of an annual event with this small group. The lion dance, traditionally symbolic of celebration is performed here and used to link this group and the girls with China’s cultural heritage. Ultimately this is a spectacle of cultural liminality is performed, neither quintessentially Chinese nor English but holding elements of each culture, symbolic of the girls themselves (Turner 2004).

These performances speak to the canonical narratives of intercountry adoption and reveal the complexities of belonging narratives in these families.

K. Rotabi (University of United Arab Emirates) & J. L. Gibbons (University of Saint Louis): *Does The Hague Convention on intercountry adoption protect orphaned and vulnerable children and their families?*

The Hague Convention on Intercountry Adoption, designed to protect the best interests of the child in intercountry adoption, has been signed by over 80 nations. We evaluate both the strengths and the weaknesses of the Convention in achieving this purpose and
also in protecting a second vulnerable population, birth families. A case study example of the United States’ implementation of the Hague requirements reveals several weaknesses with respect to non-Convention countries as sending nations, financial oversight, and oversight of foreign collaborators.

This presentation will highlight US adoption agency director salaries and other financial transparency considerations. Also explored are international birth families, especially birth mothers giving consent to an adoption, are often vulnerable because of a lack of power and resources, as well as different cultural understandings of the nature of family and adoption. We conclude that in order to protect vulnerable children and birth families, individual sending and receiving countries need to supplement the Hague Convention with specific, contextually appropriate laws and regulations.

H. Ruohio (University of Turku): From interest to actions? Intercountry adoptees’ motivation to take actions concerning origin

Intercountry adoptees usually lack/lose (natural) access to their origin when they are adopted. This alienation from the origin is nowadays often counterbalanced by adoptive parents’ attempts to maintain access to child’s country of origin and especially to its alleged cultural aspects (e.g. Jacobsson 2008; Marré 2007). This cultural practice concentrates on limited aspects of origin. In my paper, I ask what Finnish intercountry adoptees find interesting in their origin and foremost, how do they possibly start to act on their origin?

These questions are answered through the qualitative data that I have collected for my PhD study. The data consists of interviews with 24 adult intercountry adoptees of which 15 are women and 8 are men. The majority of the interviewees (n=17) were 18-25 years old and the rest (n=7) were 25 years old or older. Interviewees come altogether from 9 different countries of origin, including Russian-born adoptees. The data has been analyzed by using qualitative content analysis methods.

The theoretical framework of my PhD study derives from the perspective of symbolic interactionism. According to symbolic interactionism, a meaning is not innate in an object or a thing; rather we give meanings to matters in interaction with other people – and ourselves (Blumer 1969; Charon 1995). Although adopted person’s origin is a fact, it is not meaningful before we become aware of it. We are forced to take a stance on it: we either accentuate it or downplay it. Human beings act on the basis of the meaning that things have for them (Blumer 1969; Charon 1995). This perspective is useful to find out what makes some of the interviewees step from interest to some kind of action towards their origin.

My data shows that adopted persons are indeed interested in different aspects of origin: biological kin, country of origin and its culture or being adopted. Being interested in the origin does not necessarily mean taking any concrete actions towards it. In spite of a rather common interest towards biological kin (especially the mother and her looks), only few of the interviewees had started actively to search for it. The act of searching and its possible consequences are carefully pondered, and always discussed in relation to adoptive parents. Actions towards the country of origin are more common and less controversial than actions towards the biological kin. Usually it means interest
in the language, popular culture and cultural artifacts – and at some point, possibly a journey to the country of origin. For some interviewees being adopted seem more relevant than biological kin or country of origin. This interest could be taken into action by becoming active in the adoptive community. To take actions requires right timing and mental resources.

R. Scherman & N. Garrett (Auckland University of Technology): The state of adoption knowledge: comprehensive analyses of adoption literature published in the scholarly journals from 2000-2012

As academics and professionals who research and publish in the field of adoption, we are faced with numerous challenges when choosing who we research or write for. For example: do we choose advancement—and publish in scholarly journals or service to the end-user—and publish in more accessible locations like books and magazines? If we choose the former, what are the best journals to publish in?

With so many disciplines publishing in adoption (psychology, sociology, medicine, law, social work, woman’s studies, anthropology, etc.), there are now hundreds of journals that one can publish in—as well as seek out adoption-related studies. How easy is it to locate the best studies? Can we rely on the databases and search engines, or should we go directly to the journals?

In this paper, we present the results of our stock-take study of adoption literature: a comprehensive review of adoption-related scholarly publications from 2000 to 2012. We’ll present a summary of the publication trends, rankings of the primary authors to publish in the field, and a list of the top 100 journals that publish adoption research. We also discuss the results of search engine, database and keyword analyses, to enhance successful search strategies and minimise manual screening of results.


Background: 190 early-adopted children were followed from infancy to young adulthood. Our research question was whether early health and malnutrition, and later health and intelligence could predict socioeconomic success in young adulthood. We were also interested in the influence of early malnutrition on IQ and in possible genetic aspects of intelligence.

Method: We examined the adoptee’s birth weight, health condition and intelligence, and mothers and siblings were also involved in intelligence assessments. To predict socioeconomic success, structural equation modelling was used and the relations between malnutrition, health and intelligence were examined at multiple measurement waves.

Results: Correlations between IQs of mothers and children were only positive and strong in genetically related dyads. Children with poor health in infancy had significantly lower intelligence in middle childhood than children with normal health, and (marginally) significant differences were also found at later ages. Based on the
structural equation model, we found some instability of health over time, but health in infancy was a significant predictor of later health. Health condition indirectly predicted socioeconomic success through intelligence, indicating the interdependence between health and cognition. Strong longitudinal stability of intelligence emerged. Higher IQs at all waves predicted higher rates of socioeconomic success in young adulthood.

Conclusions: We found evidence for a genetic component of intelligence, but the importance of nurture influences should also be emphasized. Poor health and malnutrition in the earliest months of life negatively affect children’s later cognition, while cognitive functioning lays the foundation for socioeconomic success in adulthood.

P. Selman (Newcastle University): One million children moving; the demography of intercountry adoption since the 2nd World War

This paper would explore the demographic history of intercountry 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. The level of intercountry adoption (measured as a rate per 1,000 live births) would be measured for key countries over time.

Particular attention would 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. Key social and demographic characteristics of countries would also be examined and how changes in these affected practice. Attention would also be paid to characteristics of children sent (e.g. age, gender and special needs) and how these vary between countries and over time.

The paper would conclude with a consideration of of likely future trends and ask what we can learn from past experience, how the story of intercountry may be viewed in years to come with comparisons of other examples of children moving such as the child migrants from the UK to Australia and North America.

P. Selman (Newcastle University): The global decline in intercountry adoption 2004-2012

The aim of this presentation will be to explore the decline in the number of intercountry adoptions worldwide over the past seven years, looking also at the changing characteristics of children sent. Data on 23 receiving states have been used and the analysis will extend to the end of 2011, so covering the expedited adoptions following the earthquake in Haiti; the case of Artyom Saveliev and its impact on Russian adoption culminating in Putin’s ban on all international adoptions to the United States; and the ongoing problems surrounding other sending countries such as Guatemala, Nepal, and Vietnam. The implications of these changes and prospects for the future will be discussed with special reference to Africa as a more recent major source of internationally adopted children.

The global number of intercountry adoptions peaked in 2004 after a steady rise in annual numbers from the early 1990s. Since then, annual numbers have decreased to the point that by 2009 the annual total was lower than it in 1998. During this time, the rise and fall was evident in most regions and countries. In 2009, however, things began to
change, with more children going to European countries than to the United States – which had accounted for about half of all international adoptions since the mid-1980s - and Italy replacing France and Spain as the country receiving most children for ICA after the United States. This pattern continued in 2010 and 2011, when the global total fell to c 23,500, the lowest figure since 1993.

The presentation will review these recent trends, giving particular attention to variations between key sending and receiving countries while exploring some of the factors that lie behind the numbers. It will also consider the changing characteristics of children sent for adoption with a focus on the increasing age of children sent and the growing proportion with special needs. The paper would look at emerging data for 2012 and argue that the decline is likely to continue and speculate on the future for intercountry adoption in the 21st century.

M. Sousa, M. Henriques (University of Porto), M. Gonçalves (University of Minho), I. Cavadas & E. Mendes (University of Porto): Adoptive mothers’ sensitivity and narrative style: relations with children’s mental development and adaptation

Over the last decades, several studies have shown the importance of maternal sensitivity to the development of a secure attachment, as well as to the children’s language, cognitive, social and emotional skills (Ainsworth et al., 1978; Bowlby, 1969; Landry et al., 1997). Likewise, other authors have highlighted the relevance of the mother-child conversations to these development domains (Cole, Michel, & O’Donnell-Teti, 1994; Fivush, Haden, & Reese, 2006). Two parental narrative styles have been distinguished in this field (elaborative and repetitive), in which empirical data indicated a positive influence of the elaborative style on children's developmental skills (Reese & Fivush, 1993). The present study aims to describe the mothers’ sensitivity and narrative style, relating these dimensions with children’s mental development and adaptation. Therefore, it intends to contribute to a deeper understanding on this matter, by studying non-biological dyads, as well as children who have experienced severe emotional adversity in early life. The participants were 25 preschool-aged children and their adoptive mothers, who were assessed two years after placement. The measures were: i) Ainsworth’s Maternal Sensitivity and Cooperation Scales (Ainsworth, 1969) to assess maternal sensitivity and cooperation; ii) Maternal Reminiscing Coding Manual (Fivush, 1994) and Narrative Habits Questionnaire (Henriques, Baptista, & Sousa, 2007) to obtain mothers’ narrative style; ii) Child Behavior Checklist 1-1/2-5 (Achenbach & Rescorla, 2000) to evaluate children’s adaptation; and, iv) Griffiths Mental Development Scales–ER: 2 to 8 years (Luiz et al., 2006) to examine children’s mental development. Results showed that maternal sensitivity and cooperation were positively associated with children’s mental development and with mothers’ narrative habits. Mothers’ narrative habits were positively associated with children’s mental development. In turn, they were negatively associated with some dimensions of Child Behavior Checklist, showing that mothers, whose children have more adaptation difficulties, have fewer narrative habits. This is an ongoing study and for that reason the coding based on Maternal Reminiscing Coding Manual is in progress. Results suggest that mothers’ interactive behavior plays an important role on children’s mental
development and adaptation, as children have the opportunity to participate in scaffolded interactions, in which specific developmental skills seems to be potentiated.

A. Vinke (ADOC and Adoptiepraktijk Vinke): *Reflections on the possible impact of illegal adoption on the child and the birthfamily*

Although the majority of the international community agrees upon safeguards and rules to protect children that will be adopted internationally, practice shows that illegal adoptions occur worldwide. Also, the Netherlands are sometimes confronted with illegal adoption cases.

When adoption laws and procedures are not followed, the rights of children and birthfamilies may be severely compromised. The adoption might become a secret and when found out both children and parents face loss. Firstly they lose the formal legal status of adoptive family. Secondly trust between parents and child is compromised. This might have impact on the child.

When a child has been intentionally illegally adopted, a decision needs to be made whether the child and the parents’ formal family bond is still legally valid. Sometimes this might not be the case, which leaves a child without a family and sometimes even without a nationality. A state guardianship order, termination of the ‘adoption’ even finding a new family for the child might be legal steps that are taken.

Next to the intentional disobeying of laws, there is also the complex theme of adoptions that seem to be fully legal but where at some stage possible illegality, falsified papers or even trafficking is discovered. Do such issues affect the children that are involved? Do the adoptive parents need to be punished? There is no research available that can give insight on what these situations mean for the individuals involved nor what reactions are in the best interest of the child.

Still in these cases legal and psychological decisions need to be made and these decisions should be in the best interest of the child, guided by theory and research as far as possible. Also practice shows that making a system that prevents all illegal adoptions seems not yet possible. Therefore it is important to be able to deal with these situations from a child’s point of view. The least to be done seems to act in the best interest of the child involved.

In 2011 I published a discussion paper (in Dutch) on this topic using general research and theory to take into account what issues an adoptee and his families might face when encountering illegality. I wanted to answer the question what the impact might be on a personal level when children face illegal adoption. The importance of attachment (breaking or keeping the bond), the child’s own view, parenting issues, legal issues, resilience, family history and repair through therapy and life story work were addressed in this paper and will be addressed in this presentation. In doing so I hope to provide some background and contemplations that can be used as tools to find suitable answers in individual cases of illegal adoption, that may differ per case.


Domestic Adoption in the Netherlands: psychological and social functioning of young adult domestic adoptees and their families.

In this presentation we will present the findings of our research project called ‘A Forever New Home: Domestic Adoption in the Netherlands’. Our aim was to assess the social, familial and psychological functioning of Dutch domestic adoptees and their adoptive parents. Ever since the Dutch adoption law came into force in 1956, about 17,000 children were domestically adopted. This is about a third of the total Dutch adoption population. In recent years domestic adoption has declined to about 20 babies each year, whereas about 500 children enter the Netherlands to be adopted internationally.

Most national and international research focused on assessing problems and challenges that intercountry and interracial adoptees and their families face. Studies therefore have taught us how young adult intercountry adoptees fare, but we had no idea how the domestic adopted children make the transition to adulthood (for intercountry adoptions e.g. Jaffari-Bimmel et al. 2006, Tieman et al., 2006; Storsbergen et al., 2010).

Within a political climate in the Netherlands where the discussion whether adoption could provide an alternative to abortion, emphasized the urgency to obtain more information on domestic adult adoptees. In reviewing the literature we found little knowledge on how domestic adoptees experience themselves, their psychological wellbeing, their social, partner and family relationships.

In this project we focused on these three topics and randomly selected 253 families that adopted a Dutch child (from a total of 567 domestic adoptive families that adopted domestically between 1980 and 1989). The families were recruited through the Department of Safety and Justice and a total of 97 adoptive parent couples and 79 young adult adoptees participated in the interviews and questionnaire survey. The data were compared to both intercountry adoptees as well as to large study findings concerning the general population (Nemesis-2, Graaf et. al, 2010 Kinship Panel study, Dijkstra et al. 2007).

Main findings were that in young adult domestic adopted more often than in the general population, mental health referrals were found, which is similar to intercountry adoptees. Also young adult domestic adopted experience more often mood, anxiety and substance abuse related problems than non adopted peers of the same age.

Domestic adoptive parents report a high satisfaction with the adoption of their child. Frequency and quality of reported contact between adoptive parents and their adopted children in domestic adoptions does not differ from patterns found in the general population, as will be shown in this presentation. Report and literature (in Dutch) http://bit.ly/143JXCv.
The purpose of the present study was to examine the developmental course of adopted children who had been followed from their period in group residential care, the first two years of their life, through the early period after adoption in preschool years and then to early adolescence at an average age of 13 years. Adoptees’ attachment relationships with their parents, cognitive development and behavioral adjustment were compared to that of a comparison group of adolescents who experienced full-time early day care, but had lived all their lives in their families. A further aim of the study was to investigate the effects of early and current experiences on adopted adolescents’ development.

The results showed that there was a massive drop in the rate of disorganization of attachment in both adopted and comparison adolescents from infancy through adolescence. However, half of the adopted adolescents were insecurely attached to their adoptive parents. Regarding their cognitive development, there was a remarkable improvement over time in adopted adolescents, however, they still lagged behind their comparisons. Adoptees had also lower school achievement and tended to make more use of psychological services than their non-adopted peers. As far as behavioral adjustment is concerned, the only long term difference between the adopted and the comparison adolescents was on hyperactivity and inattention at school.

The majority of the adopted adolescents showed a profound recovery in almost all aspects of their development. However, it was found substantial heterogeneity in outcomes; some adopted adolescents were functioning very well, whereas others showed impaired function. Biological mother’s predictors, institutional experiences and aspects of the adoptive rearing situation were considered as predictors of individual differences in outcomes. The results showed that the strongest predictor of individual differences in outcome concerned institutional experiences. Adoption after the age of two years predicted difficulties in attachment qualities and increased the likelihood of referral to psychological services in adolescence. In addition, disorganization of attachment in the institution did have a just-significant effect in increasing the likelihood of insecurity of attachment in adolescence. The social implications of the present’s study results will be discussed.

This research has been co-financed by the European Union (European Social Fund – ESF) and Greek national funds through the Operational Program “Education and Lifelong Learning” of the National Strategic Reference Framework (NSRF) - Research Funding Program: Heracleitus II. Investing in knowledge society through the European Social Fund.

This paper will focus on the case histories of adoptive families in México City. Clinical tools, results and advancements regarding attachment issues will be shared, including the Psychological and social challenges faced by adoptive families in México and the particular relationship between the religious (catholic) and secular approaches. Topics:
   1. The compulsion to repeat: common myths revisited.
   2. Do we really care about children? Integrating child development psychology to the adoption process. Resistance to modernize adoption
   3. Fantasies vs. Realities: when the "real child" and the "real parents" collide.
   4. The case for specialized therapists and social workers.

B. Willis Hepp (Towson University): Conceptualizing openness in international adoption in the United States

This paper explores the concept of openness in the Italian context of international adoptions. Growing acknowledgement of the importance of openness and communication has led to a burgeoning of research in this field (Wydra et al 2012 and Neil 2012). However, most of the research has looked at the situation in English speaking countries. Openness in adoption is understood here as the willingness of adoptive parents to discuss the process of adoption and the origins of the adoptive child (Wrobel and Ayers-Lopez 1996). The concept of openness is important for the Italian context for two reasons: the age of the child and the international nature of the adoption. The average age at adoption for international adoptees in Italy is 6.1 years old (C.A.I 2011). Thus children have already experienced a significant period of their childhood in another country usually with different cultural and national environment. This study explores the views and experiences of children of their adoption and the communication from parents regarding the child’s history and adoption to Italy. This paper seeks to address a gap in the literature by drawing on the first findings collected from a small-scale qualitative research project outlined within a new sociology of childhood (Woodhead 1997) framework. The research involves 15 families with children aged from 8 to 12 years, that have been adopted to Italy through an accredited body based in northern Italy. The approach used to gather the data could be defined as the “mosaic approach” (Clark and Moss 2011), as different methods are included, with the aim of finding ways of harnessing young children’s creativity and physical engagement with their world. The methods include the production of a narrative on the process of adoption with drawings and photographs produced and taken by children (Leitch 2008). A brief overview of the actual international legal framework will be presented as the context for this study and will include a discussion of the proposed laws on adoption in Italy.
Many adopted children in the UK are described by carers and professionals alike as having a generic attachment disorder. However, the ICD-10 diagnoses of Reactive and Disinhibited Attachment Disorders (RAD and DAD, respectively) are rare disorders of early childhood and are difficult to diagnose reliably. Furthermore, the practice of identifying attachment disorders may be over-shadowing the identification and treatment of more common problems such as conduct disorder, ADHD and neurodevelopmental disorders. The current study utilised a case note review of 100 young people referred to a national and specialist adoption and fostering service in the UK to compare the identification of attachment disorders in this specialist service with referrals from community services. It was hypothesised that attachment disorders would be more frequently identified in the community than in the specialist service, and that the over-identification of attachment problems would be related to an under-identification of more common disorders. This hypothesis was partially supported. While attachment disorder was identified four times more often in the community than in the specialist service, this did not explain the significant under-identification in the community of the more common disorders, with some disorders under-identified by more than a factor of ten. The findings are discussed in terms of recent practice parameters for identifying and treating attachment disorders (e.g., Chaffin et al, 2006), and the implications for evidence-based service models for adopted children.

We present a case study of a 9 year-old girl placed late for adoption with a complex presentation of marked oppositionality, separation anxiety and attachment problems. We consider the theoretical issues surrounding an attachment-sensitive formulation for this complex presentation and the challenges of applying standard diagnostic categories. The paper then provides an account of how an evidence-based treatment can be extended to address attachment specific problem behaviour in a child placed late for adoption. In particular, we present session by session observational data of treatment progress that demonstrates the transactional nature of the carer-child interactions that led to an improvement in the carer’s reports of attachment behaviours, as well as oppositional and anxiety symptoms in the home. Positive gains were also noted in school, and most importantly, a placement in imminent danger of breakdown was stabilised, allowing the child more time to negotiate a reliable attachment to her new carer. The discussion of this case proposes that while the evidence for treatments to address complex attachment difficulties is not well-established, it remains possible to use the evidence-base to derive a personalised treatment package for individual adoption cases, based upon a detailed formulation of complex presentations, consistent with the relevant practice parameters (e.g., Chaffin et al, 2006).
Adoption organizations

The National Center for Adoption
D. Baltimore (National Center for Adoption)
The National Center for Adoption (www.thenationalcenterforadoption.org) is a new, non-profit organization dedicated to promoting adoption as a positive parenting option through education, research, and collaboration. It emerged as a result of findings derived from one qualitative study with 8 adoptive mothers and fathers, and one web-based survey investigation of 175 adopted adult college students. A majority of parents in the qualitative study recommended that widespread adoption-related education be conducted, such as promoting:

- adoption as a positive parenting option for prospective adoptive parents and birth parents,
- favorable media portrayals of adoption stories,
- positive adoption language and sensitivity to word choices used in conjunction with adoption, and
- the adoption process to alleviate misconceptions.

Quantitative data derived from the survey investigation demonstrated that a majority of participants (N = 175) completely agreed or generally agreed that

- more education is needed to promote adoption (n = 157),
- they would recommend adoption to others (n = 164),
- birth parents who make an adoption plan for their child are acting in their child’s best interests (n = 168),
- they would recommend adoption to birth parents who are uncertain about rearing a child (n = 135), and
- adoption is a good option (n = 164).

Qualitative comments from 139 of these adoptees also substantiated the findings.

We plan to conduct follow-up research with the parents to gather longitudinal data, and to disseminate the survey to college students enrolled at different institutions.

Our organization is also in the process of

- collaborating with The Infant Adoption Awareness Training Program to utilize its free materials to promote adoption via a media campaign,
- soliciting funds to pay for the advertisements, and
- conducting a quasi-experiment to determine the efficacy of the campaign.

The adoption promotion media campaign will be launched in a few Iowa counties for one year. At the end of the campaign, the number of finalized domestic adoptions that occurred within the counties will be assessed to determine any changes from the prior 10 years, and will be compared to other counties that did not receive the campaign.

In sum, our aims and activities include, but are not limited to

- Conducting research and sharing findings on the organization’s website and in scholarly journals to inform policy, research, education, practitioner, and parenting endeavors.
• Collaborating with national and international organizations.
• Promoting adoption to prospective adoptive parents and birth parents via national media campaigns, revised pregnancy prevention and education curricula, and mandatory education/coursework for those who will work with expectant parents and prospective adoptive families.
• Educating others about adoption terminology, facts, etc.

Rudd Adoption Research Program
H. Grotevant (University of Massachusetts, Amherst)
The Rudd Adoption Research Program, a unit of the University of Massachusetts Amherst (USA) Psychology Department, has several goals: a) to advance knowledge about the psychology of adoption, b) to provide evidence-based knowledge to inform adoption policy and practice, c) to build capacity for excellence in adoption research, and d) to promote adoption research initiatives of emerging scholars. The program, launched in 2008, seeks to develop synergy among scientists, practitioners, and policymakers from varied disciplines who share interests in the many topics relevant to adoption. The ultimate goal of these activities is to contribute to evidence-based practice in adoption and to provide research-based information that will influence policy at agency, state, federal, and international levels. The program has an international advisory board of adoption researchers and practitioners and is directed by Harold D. Grotevant, Ph.D., who holds the Rudd Family Foundation Chair in Psychology at the University of Massachusetts Amherst.

The Rudd Adoption Research Program hosts an annual conference for researchers, practitioners, policymakers, and the community; most recently in April 2013, on the topic: “Contact Between Adoptive and Birth Families: What Works?” The Rudd Program is also one of the primary partners in the Adoption Mentoring Partnership, a unique university-community partnership which matches college students who were themselves adopted as mentors for adopted children in the local community. Rudd is also a co-convenor of the innovative Re-Envisioning Foster Care in America initiative, which incubates creative new initiatives on behalf of children who have experienced foster care. The program is also home to the longitudinal Minnesota Texas Adoption Research Program (PI: Harold Grotevant) and Contemporary Adoptive Families Study (PI: Rachel Farr). The Rudd Program shares knowledge with the world through its You Tube Channel, web site, Facebook page, and Scholar Works site, all of which will be demonstrated during the presentation.

Neurodevelopmental and mental health program, International adoption clinic, global pediatrics, University of Minnesota
M. Kroupina (University of Minnesota)
The International Adoption Clinic, University of Minnesota is the oldest in the US, founded more than 25 years ago. The program provides clinical services for more than 250 children every year. Initially this program was built as a pediatric practice. The latest research focusing on brain development has shown that early adversity is a significant risk factor for later abnormal neurodevelopment and psychopathology, and
underscored the need for a broader pediatric practice and including a mental health component to meet the needs of at-risk children

Currently Mental Health program includes three major components: education, research, and clinical practice.

Education: the main goal of our education program is designing programs and implementing education programs for training mental health and health professionals who are working with children who currently live in the context of adversity or experience different types of early adversity.

Research: Internationally adopted children provide a unique model that allows us to isolate early risk factors and investigate mechanisms of how early adversity impacts later development. Our collaborative research program has been focused on understanding the impact of early adversity and toxic stress on neurodevelopment and mental health of young children. We have found that a combination of risk factors, including nutritional deficiencies, to be associated with long-term neurodevelopmental problems. The research data shows that initial growth failure and a compromised Growth Hormone System puts at risk normal brain development. Moreover recovery post-early adversity in multiple domains including the Stress Sensitive system was found to be associated with a prolonged period of time. Rapid recovery in rate of physical growth was also associated with an increased risk for nutritional deficiency, which suggests that this period is a sensitive time and child’s health and development have to be monitored during this period.

Clinical Model: Our research findings emphasized the importance of a multidisciplinary approach to address neurodevelopmental and mental health problems, an approach, which has become one of the major principals in our work. One of the overarching goals in our clinic practice is early identification of children at risk for long-term neurodevelopmental and mental health problems. Thus the focus on the initial developmental/mental assessment is on the domains that are particularly sensitive to the impact of early adverse experiences. The research findings showed the importance of building a longitudinal clinical practice. Currently our practice allows us to follow our patients for one-year post adoption, and for a high-risk group we are providing ongoing services to address their neurodevelopmental and mental health needs.

Introduction to the Donaldson Adoption Institute
A. Pertman (Donaldson Adoption Institute)
The Donaldson Adoption Institute (formerly the Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute) is the leading research, policy and education organization in its field (in the U.S.). The Institute is essentially a think tank, but one that not only develops and disseminates evidence-based knowledge, but also provides legislative testimony, educational initiatives, media outreach and other forms of advocacy. Its goal is to improve the lives of the millions of affected parties -- children, families, practitioners, mental health professionals, researchers, teachers, etc. -- by effecting systemic change in law, policy and practice relating to adoption and foster care and the broad range of issues they encompass (family diversity, gay/lesbian issues, race and ethnicity, etc.).
National Adoption & Fostering Service, Maudsley Hospital, London, UK
C. Pinto, S. Scott & M. Woolgar (Michael Rutter Centre, Maudsley Hospital, London)

We are a publically funded National service in the UK for adopted and fostered children. The team is comprised of child and adolescent psychiatrists, clinical psychologists, and specialist mental health practitioners with social work backgrounds.

We see adopted children across the age span from infancy to adulthood. We operate broad eligibility criteria because we recognise that many adopted children experience a range of complex problems which may not fit easily into standard psychiatric diagnoses or associated care pathways. As a result there can be a high level of unmet need in adopted families in the UK because their child does not meet standard referral criteria for general services even though they may present with a high degree of complexity, for example with a constellation of sub-threshold or emerging difficulties.

At the heart of our service model is a comprehensive assessment package, which draws upon the current international best practice parameters for the assessment and treatment of children who have been maltreated or who have attachment problems. We provide a comprehensive multidisciplinary report, including a bio-psycho-social formulation with a care plan that opens up a range of evidence-based treatment options and care pathways. We also provide a clinical psychology report focussing on the child’s specific emotional, behavioural, psychometric & scholastic abilities. Where indicated we will assess and provide detailed written reports for ADHD, autism and specialist neuropsychological assessments that are helpful for planning both short and long term support. Our service model is geared towards brief interventions with targeted measurable outcomes that can be assessed by referrers for their effectiveness.

We would like to present two specific pieces of information about our service. First the benefits of a specialist adoption-focussed multidisciplinary assessment compared with non-specialist services. We do this with data that compares the identification of disorders amenable to evidence-based treatments between the non-adoption services and our specialist adoption-focussed service. We also compare these data with what the evidence base indicates is likely to occur in the population of adopted children in the UK. Secondly, in the light of extensive cuts to publically funded services, we would also like to talk about an innovative partnership we have entered into with voluntary sector post adoption support services. This partnership will use a private investment vehicle (a social impact bond) to fund post adoption support for children with the most complex needs. In this way we aim to continue to provide a comprehensive and intensive adoption-specific assessment and treatment service to the most complex children, despite the current climate of deep cuts to public services, which remains free for families to Access.

AFIN
B. San Román (Autonomous University of Barcelone) & N. Barcons (AFIN Research Group)

AFIN is an interdisciplinary and interuniversity group of basic and applied research. It focuses on age, gender, race/ethnicity, class, religion, sexual option and disabilities' inequalities and their intersections and diversities from the perspective of social and
health sciences and humanities. The group is located at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona and its Principal Investigator is Diana Marre (Social Anthropology PhD).

Kinship and social relationships as well as their risks and crisis, difficulties and opportunities, rights and duties, public policies and domestic and public spaces/places are AFIN’s research objectives. It works on the personal, familial and social life of children, teens and youths from a cross cultural perspective, looking at the challenges and opportunities that living in a globalized world presents.

Since the very beginning in 2004, AFIN disseminates its research results among ‘users’, groups and associations for whose wellbeing the group works, as well as among academic and faculties through scientific publications –books and papers–, a monthly journal (that begun in 2009, is published in three languages –Spanish, Catalan and English– and sent to 25.000 subscriptors), a yearly international conference, and seminars, talks, courses, etc.

Since 2007, its main research line is financed by the Spanish Ministry of Science and Innovation

Its members come from different disciplines such as social anthropology, law, medicine, psychology, sociology, social work and education.

The group is developing several projects with professionals, universities and institutions from United States and Canada in North America; France, Italy, United Kingdom, Netherlands, Finland and Sweden in Europe; India, China, Malaysia in Asia; and Brazil, Argentina, Colombia, Venezuela, Uruguay, Mexico, Bolivia and Ecuador in Latin America.

CORA Federation

B. San Román (Autonomous University of Barcelona) & J. Alvarez-Ossorio

(Association in Defense of Adoption and Foster Care)

CORA is a federation that joins together 29 associations of foster and adoptive families and adoptees from different parts of Spain. Born in 2000, it has developed an important task in the evolution of adoption culture in the country. Among its main projects, one could highlight the Service Information on Intercountry Adoption (until 2010), the Paediatric Guide to Adoption (first published in 2005 and revised in 2008), a National Survey on Adoption and Foster Care (2009), a Guide to Adoption for primary school teachers, and other documents as the Adoption Code of Ethics and the Good Practices Guide in Intercountry Adoption.


CORA is committed to supporting adoptive and foster families and their children, before and after placement, and to the reform of the adoption system so that it guarantees the best interest of the children and protects the birth families’ rights.
Hadley Centre for Adoption and Foster Care Studies
J. Selwyn (Director of the Hadley Centre)
The Centre was established in 2000 through generous core funding by the Hadley Trust. The Centre is based at University of Bristol, England. Our work focuses on abused and neglected children who are unable to live with their birth families and who live in adoptive, foster, or kinship care. Maltreated children carry a range of vulnerabilities that affect their life chances and well-being. We know that adoption and stable foster care produces remarkable catch-up in many developmental areas. However, for some children significant problems remain. What are the mechanisms of change? Why are some children more resilient? Which interventions work? What are the characteristics of successful adoptive and foster families? How can professionals support carers and children? The Centre is dedicated to making a difference to the lives of maltreated children. The research we undertake employs quantitative, qualitative and economic analyses. We are committed to linking research findings with good practice and disseminate widely. The presentation will focus on our work and research programme.

British Association for Adoption and Fostering
J. Simmonds (British Association for Adoption and Fostering, BAAF)
The British Association for Adoption and Fostering was established 30 years ago as a result of the merger of two organisations set up by adoption and fostering agencies to promote and develop best practice in adoption and fostering in the U.K.

BAAF is a membership organisation consisting of all U.K. Adoption and Fostering agencies in both the public and voluntary sector and a large number of agencies in the independent sector. There is also a individual membership including members from other countries.

BAAF is inter-disciplinary and includes a social work, law, health and research focus. The membership of BAAF is represented through a local groups who elect members to a national advisory group structure with advisory groups in social work, the law, health research and black and minority ethnic perspectives. BAAF also holds regular meetings for independent foster care providers, those that work in private fostering and a other specialist groups where there is a need.

The increasing devolved powers across the four countries of the U.K. - England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland mean that there are difference in policy, practice and the law and while some of these are substantial there is also a uniform belief in the importance of permanence and effective, child and family centred services.

BAAF undertakes a number of direct functions. It advises government on policy, practice and the law in family placement. It develops policy and practice by writing practice guidance and providing training and consultancy. BAAF also provides an information and advice line for professionals and members of the general public.

BAAF has developed the infrastructure of forms in both social work and health for use in family placement. BAAF publishes a wide range of literature from research monographs, to practice guidance, leaflets, personal anthologies, children's literature
and practice tools. We also have an extensive web presence and are developing this to reflect current expectations about web based materials.

BAAF undertakes research usually with U.K. Universities as partners. It also undertakes pilot projects to explore and develop best practice.

BAAF runs a number of contracts for the government for the 4 countries including the National Adoption Register for England and Wales and equivalent functions in Scotland and Northern Ireland. It also operates the Independant Review Mechanism for England in adoption and fostering which reviews decisions taken by adoption and fostering agencies where these are disputed by adopters or foster carers. there is an equivalent mechanism in Wales

BAAF is funded by subscriptions from members agencies and individuals, sales of books and materials, training and consultancy, special projects and government contracted services.

The Adoption Triad Research Centre ADOC: A bridge between science and practice

G. Ter Meulen & A. Vinke (Adoption Triad Research Centre, ADOC)

ADOC is a scientific research centre, aiming to make scientific information on adoption and foster care accessible to organizations and individuals working in or connected to the field of adoption. ADOC also facilitates in the other direction by answering questions from the field through research, literature searches and redirecting questions to the right experts. In this way ADOC tries to bridge the gap between science, policy and practice in the field of adoption and foster care.

ADOC is an independent organization, situated at the Centre for Child and Family Studies, close to the Chair for Adoption Studies at Leiden University.

ADOC’s board consists of experts from different organizations working in the field of adoption and leading scientists. Scientific advisor is Femmie Juffer, professor of Adoption Studies at Leiden University.

Funding for ADOC is provided for by private donations of e.g. adoption agencies.

For a fee ADOC can offer individual support in making a research proposal, searching for funding for a research project and then executing research, by itself or with others.

ADOC has a weekly updated scientific reference database on adoption and foster care publications. Studies on foster care, effects of institutionalization and early life stress are also included as this knowledge can be useful for adoption issues. Most articles in the database are kept in file as PDFs. The reference database is accessible by means of the ADOC-website www.adoptionresearch.nl. This website also provides an overview of the most important recent articles, highlights some interesting facts from articles and shows interesting publications to be used by both scientists, field workers, policy makers, medical doctors, members of the adoption triad, adoption organizations and media.

Next to website and database, ADOC contributes to research at Leiden University, such as the Adoption Meta-analysis Project (MAP) on which results Van IJzendoorn and Juffer made several international publications. In 2011 ADOC conducted a large
study on adult domestic adoptees and their families in the Netherlands – requested by the Dutch Government. International articles are being prepared (Dekker, Vinke, Ter Meulen, & Juffer, 2011). Currently we are involved in a study on special needs adoptions from Taiwan (Juffer, Ter Meulen, & Vinke, 2013), based on a question from an adoption organization, but also on general requests from organizations like the child welfare council, inspection and policy.

ADOC trained adoption-professionals from adoption agencies in the Netherlands and provides lectures and presentations at e.g. EurAdopt. To keep the field informed a newsletter is published and in future social media will be used.

For the future, ADOC is looking for more international collaboration in order to provide a strong scientific base to adoption policy and practice.
Posters

E. Arranz (Basque Country University), A. Oliva (University of Seville), F. Olabarrieta (Basque Country University), A. Parra (University of Seville), A. Manzano (ETXADI, University Center of Family Psychology), L. Antolín (University of Seville) & J. Martín (ETXADI, University Center of Family Psychology): Family context and child adjustment in a Spanish sample

This paper presents the results of a study carried out in Spain with 214 families with children aged between 3 and 10, comparing the quality of family context and the internal and external adjustment of children living in six different types of family structure: traditional, singleparent, stepfamilies, adoptive, same-sex parent and multiple-birth. Members of the research team interviewed the families in their homes and administered the assessment instruments (Development History, HOME inventory, Parenting Stress Index and Behavior Assessment System for Children). The lowest quality of family context was observed in stepfamilies and the highest in same-sex households. Regarding child adjustment, data indicate that although some significant differences were observed between families (children living in same-sex parent families scored higher for internal and external adjustment, and those from stepfamilies scored lowest in these same measures), these differences disappeared when the effects of socio-demographic and contextual variables were statistically controlled in a covariance analysis. It can therefore be concluded that it was not family structure itself that was related to children’s adjustment, but rather the socio demographic and contextual variables associated with it. Thus, all the family structures analyzed in the study are capable of promoting positive child development and adjustment, providing they meet the necessary conditions, such as good-quality care and a stimulating environment free from conflict and stress.

D. Baltimore (University of Iowa State): A survey examination of gender and adoption-related topic avoidance between adopted college students and their parents

This study examined gender differences between adopted male and female college students’ adoption-related topic avoidance with their adoptive parents and topic avoidance with their adoptive mother and father. Research has shown that 11-17 year old (a) males engage in more topic avoidance with both parents when compared to females, (b) children engage in more topic avoidance with their fathers and their mothers than do emerging adults, and (c) children’s topic avoidance decreases with their fathers as children age (Guerrero & Affifi, 1995). In stepparent families, adolescent and young adult females showed more avoidance with their fathers than did males, and all children were least avoidant with mothers (Golish & Caughlin, 2002). We were unable to locate a study that explored topic avoidance combined with adoptive families, gender, and emerging adulthood, thus we posed these hypotheses: H1: Adopted males would report more topic avoidance with their parents when compared to adopted
females. H2: Adopted males and females would report more topic avoidance with their father than with their mother.

Participants (N = 175) adopted via domestic, transnational, stepparent, foster care, surrogate, kin, and assisted reproductive technology responded to a new web-based survey e-mailed to all adult students enrolled at a university. Participants ranged in age from 18 to 53 years; 96 were female; 70 were male; and 9 did not report a gender. Closed-ended questions regarding 10 adoption-related topics that adoptees perceived having ever avoided discussing with their adoptive mother or adoptive father were analyzed via a 0-6 Likert-type scale. A test of between-subjects effects of adopted females’ v. males’ topic avoidance with their adoptive mothers and fathers (combined) revealed no significant differences. These results contradict hypothesis 1 and topic avoidance research. Hypothesis 2 was supported. A one-way MANOVA revealed a multivariate main effect for topic avoidance that demonstrated a marginally significant difference (p = .051); participants engaged in slightly more topic avoidance with their fathers. This study makes significant contributions to adoption and communication literature, and may demonstrate enhanced parent-child communications among adoptive families. However, generalizability may be limited due to adoptees’ retrospective reports and few participants from three adoption types. Adoptive families can enhance their well-being (Brodzinsky & Palacios, 2005) and their children’s positive adoptive identity development by engaging in communicative openness (Neil, 2009). Subsequent studies should examine parent-child adoption-related topic avoidance to determine how it may impact adoptees’ identity development and family well-being. The final paper will include all demographic data, detailed statistical analyses, adoptees’ comments, and implications.

J. Baptista, M. Henriques (University of Porto), I. Soares (University of Minho), M. Sousa (University of Porto), J. Silva, S. Marques & C. Martins (University of Minho): Child’s mental development and caregiver/mother narrative competence

The focus of the present study was to look at the relation between child’s cognitive and language development (Bayley Scales of Infant Development, 3rd ed.; Bayley, 2006), and institutional caregivers’ and adoptive mothers’ narrative competence in interaction with the child. Twenty two institutionalized children, up to 32 months of age, were assessed twice: first, when all were living at a Portuguese institutional care center (Time 1, M=14.09 months of age; SD=5.90); and, 6 months later (Time 2), when already living with their adoptive family for 5 months. The sample also included the child’s caregiver of reference in the institution (Time 1; M=36.69 years; SD=11.44) and the adoptive mother (Time 2, M=37.45 years; SD=4.04).

Narrative competence in interaction with the child was assessed from a videotaped interaction, with the only instruction to caregivers (Time 1) and mothers (Time 2) being to tell the child a story using an age-appropriate picture book. Adult’s speech during the interaction was transcribed verbatim and analyzed in terms of its structure, process and content, based on specific coding systems (described elsewhere, Gonçalves et al., 2011). Independent teams of graduate students, previously trained by a specialist, coded the interactions. Inter-rated agreement was calculated based on 35% of narratives.
and proved to be more than adequate (above 80% for all the dimensions analyzed), before consensus scoring of disagreements on ratings.

Results revealed a significant association between child’s language development and caregiver’s narrative structure (Time 1, rs=.55, p<.05; Time 2, rs=.62, p<.05) and process (Time 1, rs=.59, p<.05; Time 2, rs=.56, p<.05). Therefore, children with better language results, at the institution and at the adoptive family, had caregivers that produced more coherent narratives, along with a better exploration of emotional and cognitive events. The adoptive mothers’ narrative process, at Time 2, was significantly associated with language development, at Time 1 (rs =.50, p<.05). Thus, children with a better performance in terms of language development, when institutionalized, had mothers’ that, latter, developed richer narratives in terms of its exploration of emotional and cognitive events. We discuss the importance of considering pre-adoption experiences, as well as individual characteristics, to better understand child’s development during the first months in the adoptive family.

R. Barroso & M. Barbosa-Ducharme (University of Porto): Adoption losses and psychological adjustment of adolescent adoptees

Research on adoptive identity formation in emerging adulthood has shown the relevant role played by coping with adoption losses and searching for origins. This study is part of a larger research on adoptive identity formation in emergent adulthood. The specific goal of this study is to analyze the impact of age at placement, before or after the third birthday, in the meaning atributed by emerging adults adoptees to adoption losses and in the curiosity that they hold towards their birth relatives.

Twenty-two young adults, aged 18 to 29 years old, equally divided by sex took part in this study. Thirteen participants were adopted before the age of three and the rest 9 of them were adopted later on. Data was collected in home visits through a semi-structured interview (Interview about adoption for emerging adults) specially developed in the context of the study. The interview focused on 7 themes such as, memories from moment of placement, adoption losses, adoption communication within the family, characteristics of the adoptive family, information about birth family, search of origins, perception of relevance of adoption on self.

Results showed differences between the two groups of participants according to age at placement in relation to memories from time prior to adoption, meaning of adoption loss and enrollment in searching for origins. Early adopted emerging adults emphasized the loss of genealogical continuity, of status and identity whereas late adopted participants stressed the loss of stability and of biological siblings. The great majority (82%) of the participants acknowledged that they had been enrolled in a inner search of origins whereas only half of them has searched externally for information concerning their birth family. Inner search of origins was present in all late adopted participants. Among the participants that searched externally, the early adopted ones searched for information regarding the birth mother and the late adopted ones searched for biological siblings. For both groups, enrolling in searching for origins was motivated by a need of more and in depth knowledge about themselves and their background.
Findings not only provide new information about identity formation among adopted emerging adults but also allow new insights for professional post adoption practice.

R. Barroso & M. Barbosa-Ducharne (University of Porto): *Grandparents, parents and adopted children: an intergenerational view of the adoption process*

Considering that any adoptive family is primarily a family, that grandparents are an integral part of the family and that currently the different generations of a family have more opportunities for socializing for increasingly extended periods of time along the life-span, the purpose of this study is to analyse the adoption process from an intergenerational perspective, confronting the adoption related experiences of the grandparents, the parents and the adopted children/grandchildren.

Fifty-eight families of grandparents, parents and children participated in this study. The instruments used in data collection were the EAPA - Interview to Grandparents about the Adoption Process, the EPA - Interview about the Adoption Process and the ECAA - Interview to Children and Adolescents about Adoption.

The results illustrate the intergenerational experience of adoption, highlighting the impact of the generation on the adoption process and of the specific role played by grand-parents, parents and children.

The results of this study, that is pioneer in the proposal of an intergenerational approach for adoption, are emphasized by the importance that they might assume for all the people that are directly involved in adoption, particularly investigators and professionals. In providing information about the way the different generations of the family live the adoption process, the results evoke the need to reconsider the professional practice in adoption, and confirm the potential of assuming an intergenerational approach in the adoption research.

S. Bereny & M. Barbosa-Ducharne (University of Porto): *Adoption losses and search of origins: impact of adoptees’ age at placement*

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Findings not only provide new information about identity formation among adopted emerging adults but also allow new insights for professional post adoption practice.

I.M. Bernedo, M.D. Salas, M.J. Fuentes & M.A. García-Martín (University of Malaga):

Emergency foster care in Malaga province

Emergency foster care is a relatively new and little studied resource of the child protection services in Andalusia. The aim of this study is to analyze some features of emergency foster care and the performance shown in some specific cases held nowadays in Malaga province. The participants were 89 children, 84 biological families and 38 foster families. The Data Collection Sheet was used to gain the relevant information about the cases studied. Focusing on the most outstanding results obtained, it is necessary to remark that: a) 59.6% of the foster children analyzed have suffered maltreatment; b) The quality and regularity of the birth family visits is slightly higher than what is observed in other types of foster care; c) a 32.4% success rate in reintegration to birth family has been reached in the foster care cases analyzed; d) Having suffered maltreatment was related to the decisions taken by the professionals when the foster care came to an end: The percentage of reintegration into birth family was higher when the children had not suffered maltreatment, and the percentage of adoption was higher when the children had suffered maltreatment; and e) Reintegration into the birth family was also related with the quality and regularity of the visits by birth families.

A. Brodzinsky (Family Mental Health Consultants): Adoption Clubhouse: transracially adopting families reaching across the divide

Recent research has shown that young adults who have been adopted transracially are growing up feeling significant levels of alienation from the cultures of their birth as well as the cultures of their adoptive families. The Adoption Clubhouse project, sponsored by the Donaldson Institute in the United States, is designed to educate transracially adopting parents and their children about the profound racial and ethnic realities that threaten to divide them. The model involves a year-long commitment. Families meet on alternate weeks; parents and children, each with their own facilitators work separately and sometimes together in search of a meaningful and lasting communicative way of living their lives together. The poster session will clarify the major points of the project.
A. Brodzinsky (Family Mental Health Consultants): *The On Your Feet Foundation*

It is well-known that the life of a birthmother following the placement of her child for adoption has been and continues to be, fraught with emotional, financial and social difficulties. The On Your Feet Foundation, based in Northern California and founded in 2002, has continued to flourish. The organization offers peer support in the form of social/educational gatherings, weekend retreats, private counseling, and educational and vocational grants. The poster will be focused on the primary goals of the organization and feature stories of success and gratitude as well as the challenges we face going forward.

D. Brodzinsky, A. Smith (Donaldson Adoption Institute) & Staff of On Your Feet Foundation: *Post-placement adjustment of birthmothers*

This study examines the emotional and physical health and support needs of women who placed an infant for adoption during the first year post-placement and in their current life. Questionnaire data were collected from 235 women across the U.S., on average 3.5 years after placement. Most women were in their early 20s at the time of adoption placement.

Although considerable variability was noted in perceptions of adjustment, approximately 75% of women viewed their emotional health as very poor, poor, or neutral in the first year post-placement and 80% believed that one or more of their problems was directly related to the loss of their baby. Despite improvement in emotional health over time, over a third of women continued to report significant problems in emotional health in their current life. The most frequent post-placement symptoms reported were depression, anxiety, grief, guilt, and diminished self-esteem. Birthmothers’ adjustment was positively related to greater support, especially from family, friends, other birthmothers, and mental health professionals, as well as to level of support satisfaction. Extent of openness and satisfaction with the placement arrangement also were linked to women's health ratings. Women in more open adoptions generally displayed greater satisfaction with the placement arrangement than those with less information about and contact with their child and the adoptive family. They also reported better physical and emotional health in the first year post-placement and in their current life. The most distressing experiences for women, however, were not associated with completely closed adoptions. Rather, those with identifying information about the adoptive family, but who had no contact after placement, and those whose contact was limited and then terminated, reported the greatest emotional and physical health problems. Comments from the respondents suggested that violated expectations about post-placement contact contributed to their emotional distress. Findings confirm the negative impact of child loss for many birthmothers and are discussed in terms of their implications for helping women recover from this major life stressor.
E. Canzi & R. Rosnati (Catholic University of Milan): *The “birth” of an adoptive family: the psychosocial development of children and the construction of family ties. A longitudinal research Project*

This research project was promoted by the Athenaeum Centre for Family Studies and Research with the cooperation of the public adoption agency “Il Cerchio” Centro Adozione ASL Milano 1. The main aim was to assess the recovery of adoptive children in their physical and psychological development, from their entrance into the adoptive family up to the following year and to observe their adjustment within the family. In particular it was aimed at:

1. Investigating the physical and psycho-social development process and recovery in adopted children (taking into account their pre-adoptive experiences and some crucial relational and family dimensions);
2. Examining the adjustment process of children after their placement within the adoptive family and the transition to adoptive parenthood;
3. Analyzing how relationships in adoptive families are redefined, particularly the marital relationship.

The unit of analysis was the family, meaning the parents and their children (siblings included). Thus, all the families involved in the adoption process (domestic or international) by the public adoption agency during the year 2012-2013 were contacted and invited to participate in the research project (about 60 families).

The research had a longitudinal design. Meetings were arranged with the parents in two different moments during the post-adoption period: T1 – a few months after the arrival of the children in their new families – and T2 – approximately a year after their arrival.

The research had a multi-methodological approach and data were collected through the cooperation of professionals working in the agency. We intended:

- To administer a self-report questionnaire to both parents in T1 and T2 (to investigate couple’s motivation to adopt, the adoption process, children’s pre-adoptive experiences, children’s emotional and behavioural difficulties, children’s attachment problems, parental stress, the quality of the relationship within the couple, the relationship with the extended family and with the social context, parents’ psychological wellbeing, parents’ openness in the communication about adoption issues, parent’s perception of their adoptive parenthood, demographical information and SES);
- To monitor children’s physical recovery through paediatric boards and to administer to the children a non verbal cognitive test (Leiter International Performance Scale-Revised) in T1 and T2;
- To observe the entire family interacting during the execution of a joint task (Sceno Test) in T2.

The research project and the preliminary data collected in T1 will be presented.
L. Charlton (After Adoption) & J. Mansfield (After Adoption): *Families that last - child specific recruitment model*

After Adoption is a Voluntary Adoption Agency (VAA) and a major provider of adoption support services in England and Wales. The proposed poster presentation will explore the creative processes involved in our specialised family finding service, Families That Last, developed by After Adoption in response to the increased number of children placed in Local Authority foster care in the UK.

At present VAAs have placed 16% more children in the UK than in the previous year. Not only does this show an overall growth in the number of children in need of permanent homes, it identifies the need for VAAs to adapt to this increase and to recruit more adoptive families.

Families that Last provides a unique approach to family finding which meets the needs of children who wait in care the longest - older children, children of black/ethnic minority groups and sibling groups. We work to a Child Specific Model where adopters are recruited, assessed and prepared for an individual child, focusing on the child’s (often complex) needs. Each child has a dedicated Marketing Officer who develops a personal profile and DVD to express their individual needs and to convey to potential adopters, the realities of living with each child. The specific needs of each child are then advertised in the press and at our Exploring Adoption Events, attended by prospective adopters.

This process ensures that our recruitment campaigns focus on the qualities of the children for whom we are family finding, and that prospective adopters are assessed and prepared with the specific needs of the child in mind. This includes additional modules in preparation training and one to one support which focus on, e.g. specific medical / behavioral issues the child may bring. At the point of matching, each family is assigned an educational worker who will work with the family and the child’s school to ensure that the school is prepared to be able to meet the child’s need, and be aware of any behaviors and challenges that the child may bring.

In essence, the Families that Last child specific model makes adoptions work by helping adoptive parents to understand and manage the needs of their child. This is highlighted in the disruption rates which remain well below the national average and continue at around 2% of all placements made.

J. Costa & M. Barbosa-Ducharme (University of Porto): *What kind of parenting can enhance emotional knowledge of adopted preschool children?*

Research has shown the level of importance of the parent-child relationship on the child’s social-cognitive development, in particular vis-à-vis the emotional knowledge that plays a leading role in the quality of children's social interactions. Research has also revealed the impact of early adversity on this social-cognitive skill, as well as the resilience and developmental catch-up shown by children with a history of early deprivation after placement in a stable family context.

This study aims to explore the development of emotional knowledge of preschool children adopted after an institutionalization experience, as well as to identify the parenting dimensions that have an impact on this social-cognitive ability and on
children’s behaviour. Thirty adopted children, with a mean age of 4.76 years, with an average time of adoption of 3.02 years, after an average period of residential care of 1.42 years, and their mothers, aged 40.30 years and 11.97 years of education in average, participated in this study. The children’s data was collected through the Emotional Knowledge Task for preschool children, and mothers completed the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ), the Questionnaire about Parenting for Parents (QPP) as well as the Interview about the Adoption Process (EPA).

The results suggest that children have normative abilities in relation to emotional knowledge and also show adjusted behaviours. Mothers’ disciplinary behaviours, particularly the use of punitive strategies, as well as negative emotionality in the parent-child relationship, is positively correlated to children’s emotional difficulties and behaviour problems, which are negatively associated with emotional knowledge. These preliminary results show the crucial role of sensitive parenting on children’s development and adjustment, after early adversity.

B. Decaluwe (University of Laval), M.A. Poirier (University of Montreal), J. Gagnon, N. Forget-Dubois (University Hospital of Quebec), J.L. Jacobson, S.W. Jacobson (Wayne State University) & G. Muckle (University of Laval): Inuit customary adoption and behavioral development of Inuit school aged children

Background: Customary adoption is a feature of traditional Inuit culture. According to the Qanuippitaa health survey(2004), about one-third of Inuit children in Nunavik, a region in Arctic Québec, are adopted, usually by a close family member. By contrast to adoption in Southern Canada and the U.S, this practice takes place at birth, the adopted child knows who his/her biological parents are, and will typically have contact with them. In Western countries, adopted children exhibit more externalizing behaviour that non adopted children. To date, there are no empirical data on the development of adopted Inuit children. The available descriptive information comes from a sample of children followed by the youth protection services.

Objectives: The aim of this study was to determine whether adoption status was a significant predictor of behavioural problems in school-age Inuit children, after controlling for prenatal, socioeconomic, and psychosocial determinants of child behaviour.

Methods: The Nunavik Child Development Study (NCDS) was conducted to document prenatal, socio-economic, and psychosocial determinants of child development. The cohort was recruited at birth, and children were followed up at age 11 years (231 non-adopted and 46 adopted children). Prenatal variables, such as in utero exposure to lead, mercury, and other environmental contaminants, were measured in cord blood; prenatal exposure to tobacco, alcohol, and drugs were documented from a maternal interview conducted at the 11-year follow-up. Sociodemographic variables included age, sex, birthweight of the child; age, parity of the biological mother; primary caregiver’s years of education, socioeconomic status, psychological distress and domestic violence. An assessment of attention, externalizing and internalizing behavioural problems was obtained from the child’s classroom teacher on the Teacher Report Form from the Achenbach Child Behavior Checklist.
Results: Compared to non-adopted children, adopted children were born to mothers who were younger on average and were raised by older and less educated caregivers who were more likely to receive welfare assistance. At 11 years, adopted children lived in family environments where psychological distress, domestic violence, and alcohol consumption were less prevalent. After controlling for confounders through multivariate regression analyses, adoption status was not related to the teacher’s report of attention, internalizing, or externalizing behaviour.

Conclusion: This study is the first to provide empirical data on Inuit traditional adoption. Although the adopted children lived in economically more disadvantaged families and were raised by less educated mothers, they were less likely to be exposed to psychosocial environments that increased the risk of behaviour problems and they did not experience greater behavioural difficulties.

O. Dercks & P. Ramsey (Mount Holyoke College): Experiences and perceptions of transracial adoptees in Germany

Ethnic identity development of Transracial adoptees (TRAs) is influenced by environmental factors such as diversity of communities and experiences with racism (McGinness, Smith, Ryan, & Howard 2009). Most of the studies on this topic have been conducted in the United States, so we interviewed four TRAs who had grown up in Germany to see if similar patterns would emerge in another county. Germany has a lower adoption rate than the United States and a less diverse population. However, both countries have a long history of racism toward different groups.

The first author, a native of Germany, conducted the interviews via skype. The interviewees were encouraged to talk about their ethnic identity development and how it had been influenced by their experiences and social and attitudinal contexts. The interviews were taped, transcribed, and translated into English and coded by both authors. Codes included stages of ethnic identity (Phinney, 1992) and experiences of inclusion, discrimination, and stereotyping.

Two of the respondents, one from Asia and one who was half Turkish but “passed” as German, were in Phinney’s (1992) first stage of unexamined ethnic identity; they saw themselves only as Germans and dismissed any interest in or allegiance to their birth groups. The third individual fit Phinney’s second stage of searching, confusion, and unsettled identity. He disavowed any connection with Germany and had just started to learn about his birth culture. His birth parents were Yugoslavians, but, because of his physical traits, Germans often assumed he was Turkish. The fourth interviewee was from Latin America and fit Phinney’s third stage of identity achievement. She described a cohesive identity and embraced both her adoptive and birth cultures. The TRAs in Phinney’s first and third stages acknowledged that many Germans hold negative stereotypes of people from the Middle East, especially Turkish people but said that they themselves had felt included by their German peers. Not surprisingly, the TRA who was seen as Turkish felt that Germans were exclusionary and recounted numerous incidents when he had been the target of racism. In contrast to studies in the United States that report that TRAs often move to diverse communities when they grow up (e.g., McGinness, et al., 2009), all four respondents reported that
they had continued to live in predominately white settings. However, three of them reported using the internet and travel as a way to connect with different ethnic groups.

M. Díez & M-M González (University of Seville): *Single and married adoptive mothers in Spain: the psychological adjustment of their children*

The profile of adoptive parents is changing. Now, almost a 10% of international adoptions are made by lone mothers in Spain, and this phenomenon has also been observed in other countries. We have little knowledge about the psychological profiles of these lone mothers and also about the developmental outcomes of their children. So that, we studied 41 single adoptive mothers and 43 married adoptive mothers and their 1 to 9 years-old children, who were internationally adopted in several countries. We evaluated the mothers’ self-esteem, life satisfaction, coping strategies, educational styles and social support. We also evaluated the psychological profiles of their children: self-esteem, academic and social competence, emotional and behavioural adjustment, gender roles and developmental level.

Our results indicate that the adoptive mothers studied have, as a group, good psychological resources to cope the motherhood by themselves: medium-high self-esteem, high life satisfaction, coping strategies oriented to solve the problems, authoritative educational patterns and a highly satisfactory social support network. The comparison between the two subsamples only yielded significant differences in social support (lone mothers have less) and restrictive educational style (married mothers showed more).

For their part, the children of single mothers studied also showed a good self-esteem, medium-high academic and social competence and no significant presence of problems in emotional and behavioral adjustment; most of them were in or over their expected developmental level. Comparing the development and adjustment of children adopted by a single mother and adopted by a couple, appeared only one significant difference between them in a subscale of behavioral problems, after controlling the time since the adoption.

We discuss these data in the light of the prejudices frequently formulated about lone adoptive mothers and their children.


**Background:** There are few objective predictors of future developmental trajectories in children adopted from environments of early adversity. Poor prenatal care, institutional neglect, sparse reliable history/information and various prenatal exposures are all prevalent in international adoption histories. This study examines the cognitive and growth outcomes of children with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) facial features as an identifiable risk factor for poor growth and decreased cognition.

**Methods:** Participants were a subsample of children adopted to Minnesota from Eastern European institutional care and followed at time of adoption, 6 mo post
adoption and at 30 mo post adoption. Anthropometry was measured at the time of adoption and at 30 mo post adoption. Facial features were assessed using photographic software (1) at the time of adoption and at 6 mo post adoption. Group 1 (G1, n=61) had no facial features consistent with prenatal alcohol exposure (Face 1-2). Group 2 (G2, n=10) had facial features consistent with significant prenatal alcohol exposure (Face 3-4). To assess cognitive abilities at 30 months post-adoption, the Stanford Binet Intelligence Scales, fifth edition was administered.

Children were 37.6 to 83.4 months old at the 30 mo post adoption visit and the 2 groups had comparable mean ages.

Results: FASD Facial features were associated with lower non-verbal fluid reasoning (G1=10.82, G2= 9.75, p<0.02) and verbal working memory scores (G1=10.0, G2= 8.1, p<0.05). While non-verbal, verbal and full scale IQ scores were higher in G1, they were not significantly different, and both groups had IQ’s within the average range (G1=106, G2=98). Occipital Frontal Circumference (OFC) and height z scores showed catchup growth in G1 from the time of adoption to 30 months. However in G2, OFC (p<0.001) and height (p<0.002) z scores were lower at 30 mo post adoption compared to initial exam and were significantly lower than the G1 comparison group. G2 mean head size remained more than 2 SD below the mean for age (-2.16).

Conclusions: These findings show that alcohol related facial features are a marker of future developmental risk. This emphasizes the need for careful FASD screening and identification of newly adopted children who have the potential for special learning needs and endocrine referral for growth.

M. Fernández-Borrero, A. Jiménez-Iglesias (University of Seville). F. Rivera (University of Huelva) & C. Moreno (University of Seville): What maternal and paternal family dimensions are more important for adopted adolescents?

Introduction: Research in family relations with adopted and non-adopted adolescents indicates that family climate, characterized by good communication and affection, is usually more positive in adoptive than non-adoptive families (Bernedo, Fuentes, Fernández-Molina, & Bersabé, 2007). Besides, communication with parents and parental control are especially important for adopted adolescents’ adjustment (Palacios, Sánchez-Sandoval, & León, 2005).

Aims: This study analyses important family dimensions (affection, communication and knowledge) and their effects on adjustment (life satisfaction) in adolescents from non-adoptive and adoptive families. Specifically, the aims were: (1) to examine the differences in maternal and paternal family dimensions between non-adopted and adopted adolescents, and (2) to explore how these family dimensions influence their life satisfaction.

Method: A representative sample of Spanish adolescents aged 11 to 18 was selected as part of the 2010 edition of the Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC) study. Specifically, two groups were compared: adopted and non-adopted (N = 97) adolescents. Statistical analysis included mean comparisons, Cohen’s d as effect size test and separate General Linear Model (GLM) for the adopted and non-adopted adolescents.
Results and discussion: Mean comparisons showed that there weren’t statistically significant differences in family dimensions between adopted and non-adopted adolescents, except in communication with father, in which adopted adolescents had better communication with their father than non-adopted adolescents.

On the other hand, the GLM of life satisfaction with all family dimensions for non-adopted adolescents was statistically significant with medium effect size. Specifically, the most important family dimensions were maternal affection, paternal affection and communication with father. All of these family dimensions promoted high levels of adolescent life satisfaction.

The same model for adopted adolescents was statistically significant with medium effect size. In this case, the most influential family dimensions were maternal affection, communication with father and paternal knowledge. Again, these family dimensions favoured high scores of adolescent life satisfaction.

In conclusion, adoptive and non-adoptive families are very similar in the key maternal and paternal family dimensions, affection, communication and knowledge, and in their influence on adolescents’ life satisfaction. However, the frequency of paternal dimensions, especially of communication with father, is higher in adopted adolescents than in non-adopted adolescents.

R.M. Fernández, J. Cortés, D.C. Grajales (University of Coruña), E. Rodríguez, E. Barca (ALEN Center) & E. Pásaro (University of Coruña): Diagnostic procedures used for the detection of ADHD in adopted population, therapies and effectiveness

The prevalence of ADHD in populations of adopted children significantly exceeds the incidence of this disorder in the general population (Barcons-Castel et al., 2011; Jacobs et al., 2010; Simmel et al., 2001). Moreover, many of these children are being medicated (Lindblad et al., 2010).

From the scientific literature several hypotheses have been suggested to explain this reality, trying to find the source of this population vulnerability: the effects of early deprivation (Colvert et al., 2008, Stevens et al., 2008), the duration of the circumstances of risk (Jacobs et al., 2010), etc.

However, the high prevalence in this population could be due to symptoms that are similar to those observed in the disorder, but that do not fully meet the criteria listed in DSM - IV, hence, leading to confusion.

In this research the authors attempt to rigorously study the different aspects of this disorder: the initial processes, the diagnoses used to corroborate the presence of the disorder in these children, the most commonly used treatment approaches and the effectiveness of these.

Information from adoptive families, such as the diagnostic procedure used in each case, the treatment recommended and the degree of perceived effectiveness of this treatment, will be used to gain more knowledge about the disorder.

We designed a survey that records the recommended diagnostic procedures and the variables of the treatment.
As a result of this research, we offer insight into the description of the diagnostic process applied to the adopted population common to ADHD symptoms, the different approaches and the effectiveness thereof.

M. Fernández-Borrero, P. Ramos, F. Rivera & C. Moreno (University of Seville):

_Differences in positive development according to the type of child protection modality (adoption, foster family, guardian grandparent and foster care center) in Spanish adolescents_  

Studies report that institutionalized adolescents have higher risk for developing mental health problems and social maladjustment than adolescents living with their biological families in the general population. Other studies report that adopted adolescents are more vulnerable than other groups and that they have more behavioural and emotional difficulties. With the aim to analyse the specific differences between the types of child protection (normative families, adoptive families, foster families, guardian grandparents and foster care centers), this study examines differences in positive development variables such as self-reported health, life satisfaction, health related quality of life (Kidscreen score), psychosomatic complaints and sense of coherence. Sample was above 10,000 Spanish adolescents aged 13 to 18 that took part in the 2010 edition of the Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC) study. A correction factor was applied in order to prevent potential inferences due to differing sample sizes. Statistical analysis included descriptive analysis with mean comparisons (ANOVAs) and effect sizes. Results showed that boys and girls with better self-reported health are from adoptive and foster families. In contrast, adolescents with guardian grandparents are those with the worst self-report health. Adolescents in foster families showed better life satisfaction (followed by adoptees), even above the normative adolescents. In contrast, adolescents with the poorest scores on life satisfaction are the ones living in foster care centers (followed by those living with guardian grandparents). Health related quality of life showed the same pattern: the highest score was found within adolescents in foster families (followed by normative and adoptees) and the lowest score corresponded to boys and girls with guardian grandparents. On the other hand, boys and girls living in foster families showed less psychosomatic complaints. In contrast, adolescents from foster care centers and guardian grandparents showed a worrying level of psychosomatic distress. Finally, the Sense of Coherence –from salutogenic model- was also evaluated. That is to say, on the one hand, the subject’s capacity to understand how their life is organized and how it is located within the world; on the other, the belief that they are capable of managing their life and, finally, feeling that their life is meaningful, in the sense that their life itself is oriented towards goals they want to reach. In this respect, adolescents in foster families showed a higher sense of coherence, especially compared to adolescents in foster care centers. In short, these results indicate high levels of positive development in adolescents in foster families, followed by adoptees. However, it also reveals worse levels of quality of life in those living with guardian grandparents and in foster care center.
Listening to adoptees: adoption from the adopted children point of view

Researchers are increasingly aware of the importance of listening to children’s views. When it comes to a sensitive topic like adoption, this becomes even more relevant, as it can strongly influence adoptees’ well-being.

The main purpose of the present study is to allow adoptees to speak and to express their views on the adoption process, by analysing children’s understanding of adoption at different stages. It is also the goal to analyse adoptees’ evaluation of their adoption experience. Fifty-eight children (adopted through the Portuguese National Welfare System), aged 5 to 15 years old, took part in this study. Data was collected through the Interview to Children and Adolescents about Adoption.

The results of this study allow us to characterise children’s understanding of adoption at different ages. By confronting the data regarding children’s understanding of adoption with the sequence of levels of adoption awareness development defined by Brodzinsky and colleagues, findings highlight the role of communication openness in facilitating this knowledge acquisition. Moreover, findings allow us to understand how adoptees evaluate their adoption experience, namely, in relation to the major difficulties experienced by them, such as the loss of their friends, the process of adaptation to the adoptive family and dealing with the feeling of having been rejected by their birth families.

The results of this study provide a new vision of the adoption process, namely, the child’s perspective, which allows adoption professionals and investigators to meet the child’s specific needs. Data shows the necessity to implement new professional techniques regarding this particular area, i.e. through the preparation of the child for adoption and the promotion of post-adoption services.

Identity construction in adolescent adoptees: what really matters? Presentation of a research project

Identity construction is widely recognised as an important development task that becomes particularly relevant during adolescence. This process consists of making an integrated coherent narrative that helps the adolescent make sense of the past, understand the self in the present and project himself or herself into the future. For the adolescents who have been adopted, this process can become more complex as it implies answering the question “Who am I as an adopted person?”: the development of adoptive identity.

The main goal of the following research project is to examine the pathways through which adoptive identity is formed. Mainly, there is the intention to examine the role of adolescent variables (emotional security, reflective functioning, the perception of the level of communication openness, the relevance of the adoption history and the engagement in the process of searching for their origins), parental variables (parental reflective functioning and parents’ perception of the level of communication openness), and variables that refer to the parent-child relationship (the family perception of
communication openness) in facilitating the formation of a developed adoptive identity and adoptees’ psychological adjustment.

The sample of this study will comprise one hundred adoptive families that have at least one adopted son/daughter aged between 13 and 18.

Data will be collected by interviewing parents and adolescents separately and by some self-report measures. In relation to adolescent direct measures, data will be collected through an adaptation of Grotevant’s Interview to Adopted Adolescents, the Family and Friends Interview, The Adoption Communication Openness Scale, the Adoption Dynamics Questionnaire, the Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment, the EOMEIS-2, the Self Perception Profile and SDQ. Moreover, data will be collected through parental measures, such as the Interview to Parents about Adoption, the Parent Development Interview and SDQ.

We consider that the current study will provide a better understanding of the process of adoptive identity formation and of the process variables that are likely to account for the high degree of variability in the psychological adjustment of adoptees. Furthermore, this study will contribute with data centred in the Portuguese reality, which is yet scarce in the international scenario.

Moreover, findings will inspire new adoption practices. This is considered to be particularly important bearing in mind the role of adoption in the Portuguese society and the need to develop professional practices that are grounded in research.

M. Freixa (University of Barcelona), F. Acero (Adoptive Families Association of China, AFAC), B. Boadas, S. Cristina (Blanquerna Foundation) & C. Negre (University of Barcelona): Needs of the adoptive parents of China in Spain

Over the life course, adoptees and their adoptive families have to deal with new and different aspects of the adoption story, identity and origins. Moreover, trans-racial adoptees have to integrate different cultural realities, ethnic and racial differences, and those aspects related to their integration to their new surroundings. These experiences may be difficult to cope with and can be a potential cause of distress.

Although literature has pointed out many difficulties related to adoption, this work aims to identify the orientation needs and specific areas of difficulty related to health, school, ethnic and family adjustment that may have adoptive families of China in Spain, in order to adequately address the peculiarities and problems of these children.

A Likert-type questionnaire was elaborated to obtain a list of all those relevant aspects and also to assess the resources already used by the families. The questionnaire was applied through AFAC to their associated adoptive families with children aged 3-16 years.

Results provide information of interest and utility to design and complement post-adoption services, as well as to generate new projects addressed to support the adoptive families. Likewise, this knowledge will also provide useful information to help prepare and support prospective adoptive families.
M. Freixa, C. Negre, J. Dalmau & A. Cruañas (University of Barcelona): *Study of renunciations and/or postponement of the adoption application*

There are numerous studies related with the preparation of the future adoptive parents, but often the professionals that prepare them wonder about why they postpone and/or renounce to their adoptive project so short a time after they initiated it.

For this reason, we evaluated the postponements, renunciations or file closings, and reopening carried out between the years 2000 and 2012 in the ICIF Teresa Gallifa (Barcelona), collaborator centre of the Catalan Institute for Fostering and Adoption (ICAA).

We analyzed differences between the group of applicants that closed their files and those that reopened them, taking into account the applicants’ profile, the reasons of the postponement and how much time passed between the application and the postponement, and between the postponement and the closing or reopening.

The results confirm the need of pre-adoption training and allow us to identify particularly sensitive issues for those families, so we can provide adequate support for them.

N. Fuentes-Peláez, P. Amorós (University of Barcelona), M.A. Balsells (University of Lleida), C. Pastor, M.C. Molina, A. Mateos (University of Barcelone) & P. Ponce (Rovira i Virgili University): *The experience of birth families during separation: implications for practice*

This paper explores the experiences and needs of birth families with children in the child welfare system during the initial phase of separation. The data presented here is part of a larger research project funded by the Ministry of Education of Spain, entitled "The biological family in the child welfare system: educational processes" (EDU2011-30144-C02-01 2012 – 2014).

The sample consists of 43 families from 4 regions of Spain (Catalonia, Balearic Islands, Cantabria and Galicia). All these families, at the time of data collection, were due to be reunited or were already reunited. The data was collected from 9 focus groups during 2011 by researchers from the GRISIJ team (Research Group on Socio-educational Interventions in Childhood and Youth). The research concludes that birth families have needs focused into three broad categories: 1) information, 2) separation coping strategies and 3) social support.

Previous research (Cossar & Neil, 2010), focusing on birth families whose children have been adopted, indicates that there are similarities in this phase with the families in our study. Regardless of the current situation of birth families, considering their views on the abandonment process and their feelings at the time of separation has a potential value in the development of post-adoption contact. Primarily it has clear practical implications, as it shows that as the result of this process the birth families have needs that go beyond the causes of the neglect and that require attention which they are not currently receiving. How to respond to these needs is a new challenge for professionals.
K. Garber & H. Grotevant (University of Massachusetts, Amherst): *An exploratory analysis of microaggressions experienced by adolescent adopted individuals*

This study is discovering, examining, and analyzing the types of microaggressions that occur to adolescent adoptees, as well as their emotional reactions to such instances. Furthermore, the relationship between specific types of microaggressions and adopted individuals’ perceptions and emotions regarding their own adoption are being assessed. While microaggressions have been used to describe the experiences of marginalized groups including people of color and sexual orientation and gender minorities (Sue et al., 2007; Sue, 2010; Sue, 2010; Nadal, Rivera, & Corpus, 2010; Constantine & Sue, 2007; Clark, Spanierman, Reed, Soble, & Cabana, 2011), they have not been used as a lens to analyze the experiences of adoptees in a society where the majority of individuals are non-adopted. The interviews and questionnaires of 156 White adolescent adopted individuals (males = 75, females = 81) in same-race families were analyzed using an exploratory sequential mixed methodology design of thematic analysis and a series of chi squares and t-tests. Results have revealed a variety of themes with varying degrees of intensity related to the ways in which adopted individuals are invalidated, negatively treated, and perceived as non-normative by a bio-normative culture. Preliminary themes of microaggressions towards adoptees include: (a) Questioning Authenticity, (b) Sensitivity, (c) Unacknowledged Identity Status, (d) Recurring Confusion or Ignorance Regarding Adoption, (e) Being the Spokesperson for Adoption, (f) Overly Intrusive Questions, (g) Negative Stereotypes about Birthparents, (h) Adoptees as Orphans, (i) Assumption of Bionormativity, (j) Negative Societal Portrayal of Adoption, (k) Adoptees as Non-Normative, (l) Public “Outing,” (m) In-House Divisions, (n) Using Adoption, and (o) Other.

I. García-Moya, M. Fernández-Borrero (University of Seville), F. Rivera (University of Huelva) & C. Moreno (University of Seville): *Quality of parent-child relationships in adopted adolescents*

Background & aims: Family relationships are fundamental for child and adolescent development. Previous research indicates that adoptive parents can provide a more positive family climate than non-adoptive parents (Bernedo, Fuentes, Fernández-Molina and Bersabé, 2007). Nevertheless, adoptees’ adjustment also depends on both the child’s pre-placement experiences and the age at which he or she was placed, with later-adopted children being more likely to show problem behaviours (Howe, 1997).

This study employed a composite factorial score consisting of four key family dimensions (care, ease of communication with parents, parental knowledge and satisfaction with family relationships) for the assessment of the quality of parent-child relationships in adopted adolescents. Specifically, the aims of the study were to assess the quality of parent-child relationships in adopted adolescents in comparison with a control group of non-adopted adolescents and to analyse the potential influence of the variables age at adoption and adoption length on the quality of adoptees’ relationships with their parents.
Method

Participants. Participants were selected as part of the 2010 edition of the Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC) study. The current study focused on the 68 adopted adolescents (51.5% boys, M age =14.08, SD = 2.18) that had answered the scales integrating the aforementioned factorial score in the assessment of quality of parent-child relationships. A representative sample of non-adopted adolescents was used as a comparison group.

Measures: For the assessment of quality of parent-child relationships, a factorial composite measure (including measures on care, ease of communication, parental knowledge and satisfaction with family relationships) was used, that was originally developed within the Spanish HBSC team using a representative sample of adolescents from biparental families. This measure has been considered a useful tool in global assessments of parent-child relationships as perceived by the adolescents (García-Moya, Moreno & Jiménez-Iglesias, in press) and showed good psychometric properties in the present study (CFI= .99, RMSEA=.02; α=.78). The variables age at adoption and adoption length were also analysed.

Statistical analysis: Mean comparisons (ANOVAs) and Cohen’s d effect size test were used for statistical analysis.

Main results and conclusions: Similar levels of perceived quality of parent-child relationships were found in adopted and non-adopted adolescents. Among adoptees, both adoption length and age at adoption seemed to have meaningful effects on quality of parent-child relationships, although their effects must be cautiously interpreted given the relationship between both variables and the limited size of the sample.

D. Godon & P. Ramsey (Mount Holyoke College): How do family practices relate to Korean transracial adoptees' sense of belonging and exclusion

Transracial adoptees may lack a sense of belonging to their adoptive family and community due to racial differences yet feel excluded from their birth group due to a lack of cultural knowledge. As a result, they may feel like outsiders in both communities. This study, which was part of a larger project, explored adoptive families’ ethnic and racial socialization and their communication about race. Specifically, we examined how these practices relate to Korean transracial adoptees’ (KTAs) sense of belonging and exclusion to both their birth (Korean) and adoptive (White European) groups.

The participants were 144 KTAs (114 female, 30 male), between the ages of 19 to 57 years old (M = 31.5, SD = 7.3). They were recruited from Internet sources and completed an on-line survey, in which they rated their sense of belonging and exclusion from Korean and White groups. They also completed the Ethnic and Racial Socialization of Transracial Adoptee Scale (ERSTR; Mohanty, 2010) and a modified version of Brodzinsky’s (2005) Adoption Communication Scale (ACS) that focused on parents’ willingness to talk about race.

Surprisingly, more parental emphasis on ethnic and racial socialization during childhood was related to increased feelings of exclusion from Koreans, r(108) = .25, p = .010. However, parents’ willingness to talk about their children’s concerns about racism
was related to lower feelings of exclusion from Whites, $r(108) = -0.30$, $p = .002$. Interestingly, none of these variables were related to belonging to either referent group.

This nuanced examination of family practices revealed some surprising patterns. In contrast to common advice for adoptive parents, these findings suggest that a strong parental emphasis on ethnic and racial socialization may not lead to a greater sense of belonging to Korean groups and may even be counterproductive. These activities may give KTAs false expectations that brief exposures to Korean culture will prepare them to join Korean groups. In contrast, parents’ openness to talking about their children’s concerns about race and racism may mitigate feelings of exclusion from Whites. Communication about race and culture may be more effective when adoptees raise these issues than when their parents encourage or even push them to participate in activities that may not be that meaningful for them. Also, White adoptive parents may be more effective in helping their children learn how to navigate White communities than teaching them about Korean culture.

B. González Luna (EducArte): Neuropsychological causes of learning disorders in a sample of adopted children

Internationally adopted children represent an important group in the Spanish school population. There is a significant prevalence of learning difficulties in this population.

We present a cross-sectional study conducted in Madrid in May and June 2012. 31 internationally adopted children were examined by testing various neuropsychological factors in relation to learning difficulties.

The time of institutionalization is statistically related to the probability of having altered Asymmetrical Tonic Cervical, Search and Moro reflexes, as well as crawling, gait, proprioception, long-term numerical and nominal memory, pursuit eye movements and functionality of the corpus callosum.

The probability of failing increases with the alteration of the functionality of the corpus callosum, long-term nominal and numerical memory, laterality and the presence of asymmetric tonic cervical reflex.

D. Gouveia & M. Henriques (University of Porto): Behavioral problems in adoptees adolescents: an idiographic approach

This study had as principal objective to explore in what measure the behavior problems in adopted adolescent is associates to adoption process, knowing in what personal context they emerge. Using a qualitative methodology of case study was privileged gaze of their own about the experience of adoption and the current problematic behavior. Were evaluated three adolescents adopted, living at home with the adoptive family and with serious behavior problems, signalized by clinicians. In order to obtain a global and integrated perspective about the functioning of the adolescent was considered a broad group of variables to develop an in-depth analysis of each case. For mapping the phenomenon were included the following dimensions: psychopathology, competences, personality, auto concept, loneliness, life satisfaction, attachment to parents, attachment to pairs, familial dynamic, opening in communication about adoption, search of origins and coherence of the narrative self. To data collection were used interviews and self-
report questionnaires. From the analysis of the data, there’s no clear evidence of an association between the behavior problems and the status of adopted child. More than difficulty with the adopted status, it seems that we are in front of adolescence crisis, where are characteristic conflicts with parents and the difficulty in thinking and orienting their life project by objectives. Linked with socio emotional difficulties, emerge family dynamics of low cohesion and adaptability rigid, styles common in dysfunctional families. Regarding communication about adoption and the search for origins, the results are not very conclusive, not seeming much resolved regarding this issue. Finally, they reveal very low structural cohesion of the self-narrative. Concluding, this exploratory study brought some important clues to the continuity of research in the field.

S. Greenhow (Durham University): Chatting online with my other mother: the emergence of ‘virtual contact’
This paper introduces a research study at Durham University, one of the first in the UK investigating the impact of technology on post-adoption contact and adoptive family relationships. Post-adoption contact is now a common feature of domestic adoption within the UK. To date this has been conceptualised as direct (face-to-face) and indirect (letterbox) contact or as mediated or unmediated contact. However, a new form of contact has emerged that challenges these categories. We have called this ‘virtual contact’. The term encompasses a range of post-adoption contact activities including communication through social networking sites, texting and instant messaging using mobile technologies and emailing between adopted children and birth relatives. While such a phenomenon has a feeling of inevitability given the ubiquity of virtual communication through social networking sites and other platforms, it also raises deep concerns for families and adoption practitioners. Seeking the views of all members of the adoption triangle (adoptive parents, adopted children and birth relatives) this study aims to create informed, inclusive policy and practice recommendations. The aim of this paper will be to explore data collected during the first stage of this research through an online survey of adoptive parents. This exploration will involve a discussion of the key themes addressed in the survey, including the relationship between several familial factors to the ways virtual contact is experienced within adoptive families. The key factors include, structural and communicative openness, parent-child relationships and satisfaction with adoptive family life. Links will be made between each theme, particularly focussing on the impact of ‘virtual contact’ on adoptive family life and the extent to which this occurs within families in the UK. The themes will be addressed through a display of textual and visual representations of statistics in poster format about the extent to which virtual contact occurs within our sample of adoptive families, predicative factors leading to virtual contact and the family relationships and systems of management that ensue. This is the first known empirical data into the emerging practice of virtual contact in the UK.
S. Guimarães & M. Barbosa-Ducharne (University of Porto): *Siblings’ relationship in the adoptive family: comparing siblings in adoptive families, conventional families and residential care*

Sibling relationship is certainly the more lasting life cycle relationship, assuming an undeniable contribution to human development. Research has focused on the study of the nature of this relationship between siblings who share a genetic heritage. But social evolution has led to new forms of family organization in which the approach of the concept "being a sibling" refers to a multiplicity of realities, regarding the nature of the bond, the life experience and the context in which the sibling relationship is lived, stressing the relevance of the study of the relationship between brothers/sisters whose life story is atypical, particularly of those living in an adoptive family.

This research aims to study the nature of the sibling relationship in the adoptive family by comparing it to siblings’ relationships lived in other contexts, such as the conventional family and residential care. One hundred and fifty six children and adolescents and their respective caregivers took part in this study. From the whole sample of children and adolescents aged between 4 and 16 years old (M = 10.62, SD = 3.02), 48 siblings (both biological and adopted) integrate adoptive families, 43 belong to conventional families and 65 live in residential care, 93 are male (59.6%) and 63 are female (40.4%). Data was collected through the Questionnaire of Sibling Relationships, the Self Perception Profile for Children, the Self Perception Profile for Adolescents, the Social Interactions between Siblings Interview and the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire.

The results show that the nature of the relationship between siblings in the three contexts of life is ambivalent, combining warmth and emotional closeness with conflict and rivalry. Furthermore, findings showed the similarity of the sibling relationship in adoptive and conventional families and pointed out the differences from siblings in residential care. Also the identification of the variables that account for the variance of the sibling relationship in the three contexts made it clear that a supportive sibling relationship requires more than a biological link.

This study permitted, not only to understand the nature of the sibling relationship in children with atypical life trajectories, but also stressed the need to develop professional practices in relation to the decision making of the life project of siblings as well as residential care practices that are grounded in research.

W. Hawke (Inter Country Adoption New Zealand, ICANZ): *Transfer of the child*

Article 19 of the Hague Convention on Intercountry Adoption requires that: The Central Authorities of both States shall ensure that this transfer (of the child to the receiving country) takes place in secure and appropriate circumstances and, if possible, in the company of the adoptive or prospective adoptive parents.

It is important that Central Authorities and Accredited Bodies in both sending and receiving countries consider if current practices fulfill this Article 19 requirement in ways that are in the best interest of the child.
In 2003, ISS Geneva published a report on their enquiry into countries views on whether the transfer of the child was required to be in the company of the adoptive or prospective adoptive parents.

ISS found that the majority of countries require, by legislation, policy or practice that the child be given directly to the adopting parents in the country of origin and travel to the receiving country with these adopting parents. Some countries permit an escort in exceptional circumstances.

There appears to be little disagreement that ideally the child should travel to the receiving country in the company of the adopting parents in all but very exceptional circumstances. What is not so clear, is what else constitutes “secure and appropriate circumstances” for the transfer.

For the purposes of this study, the “transfer” of the child is defined as the time from the first meeting between adopting parents and the child in the country of origin, until the child arrives at their home in the receiving country. Any undefined time period and activities before this actual transfer is considered where it impacts on the transfer.

This study follows comprised two parts:
1. Interviews with those involved in the transfer of the child in five sending countries and
2. Surveys of adoptive parents about their experience of the transfer of children from those five sending countries into their care in New Zealand.

The study sought to determine what the sending countries aim for in their practice, and what actually happened for the adopting families, along with their suggestions for improving practice.

G. Haworth, J. Way & K. Hoffman (Intercounty Adoption Centre of United Kingdom):

*Developing an adoption support programme: support needs, preferences and perspectives of waiting and established intercountry adoptive families*

The Intercountry Adoption Centre (IAC) is the only registered adoption agency in the UK which specialises in intercountry adoption and offers a wide range of services to prospective intercountry adopters and established families formed through intercountry adoption and to adoption professionals. Since the assessment service began in 2009, eighty-four families have been assessed and approved for adoption, of whom forty-six are currently waiting for placement and thirty-five are established adopters with children. For all approved families, support services are provided by the agency at no additional cost. These include a bi-annual newsletter, an annual Family Day event and workshops which address the potential challenges of adoptive parenting. However, to date, the take up of these services by families has been limited. This poster will present the findings from a study which aimed to determine the reasons why the agency’s waiting adoptive parents and established adoptive parents do not access support services through IAC. More specifically, the presentation will relate factors which influence service use, parents’ support preferences, and the support needs of families at different stages of the adoption process. In addition, it will highlight similarities and differences in attitudes and behaviours between first- and second-time adopters, as well as between relative and non-relative adoptions. The findings from this study have informed the
development of IAC’s adoption support programmes. Furthermore, the study adds to a limited body of research on post-adoption support provision and contributes to the sector’s understanding of the support needs of intercountry adopters both prior to and following placement.

W. Hawke (Inter Country Adoption New Zealand, ICANZ) & R. Scherman (Auckland University of Technology): *The voice of the birth relatives in international adoption*

Adoption preparation in New Zealand encourages adoptive families to practice “openness” in adoption to provide adopted persons with identifying information about themselves and their original families. Previous research by Dr Rhoda Scherman and Wendy Hawke has shown that many New Zealand intercountry adoptive families have searched for birth families overseas and made contact.

As a follow on to studies involving adoptive parents’ attitudes to openness in intercountry adoption, this study asks the question, how have the birth relatives reacted to contact with a child placed for international adoption, or with the adoptive parents?

There is a lot of literature around the experiences of birth relatives in domestic adoption, but the difficulties of working with birth relatives internationally, including language and cultural issues, makes this a challenging research area.

This is a small pilot study in which a very small number of birth relatives of children adopted internationally, predominantly from Russia have been interviewed. In this sensitive area it is important we hear the voice of birth relatives.

M. Henriques, E. Nicolas (University of Porto), M. Domingues (Campo Lindo Center, Social Security Institute) & C. Freitas (Porto Adoption Service, Social Security Institute): *The impact of children preparation for adoption program: an exploratory study*

The Children Preparation for Adoption Program – CPAP – (Henriques & Domingues, 2011) was developed based on a psychological practice conducted with children over several years and based on research regarding the needs of children placed in institutional care.

The intention of this program is to facilitate the integration of children into their adoptive family, giving them an opportunity to build a life narrative in which they integrate their past in a coherent way. It also seeks to allow children to prepare the process of mourning their biological family and to be actively involved in their life project. Thus, through structured sessions with specific goals and strategies, the CPAP aims to create a greater emotional availability, for both the child and the adoptive parents, so that they can build a life project together.

The impact of the program was assessed through case studies, resulting from the application of the CPAP with five children that were placed in institutional care. Data were collected at two points: shortly after the children’s integration into the adoptive family, and approximately two years later.

At the first point, an interview was carried out, designed to focus on the child's adjustment, the communication process in the new family regarding the child's past,
memories concerning the implementation of the program and the perception of its importance. Four versions of this interview were applied: one to the child, one to the adoptive parents, one to the professional from the adoption service and the last to the institutional caregiver closest to the child. The participants’ speech and the whole process of children’s preparation and integration in the adoptive family were analyzed. The results highlighted that the CPAP helps the children to (re)organize their autobiographical memories and to take possession of their life project, and it also seems to comfort the adoptive parents in the way that they embraced this project. In addition, it was verified that talking about the child’s life story, was not, apparently, a difficult task for these families, and the children appeared to be stable and happy.

At the second point, new data was collected from within the adoptive families’ day to day lives. A new version of the previously mentioned interview was applied (one to the parents and another one to the child) to explore the perception of the CPAP’s relevance, and its influence on the communication about the child’s past. Furthermore, other instruments were added: the Child Behavior Checklist 6-18 (Achenbach, 2001) to assess the child’s adjustment and the Emotions and Communication Questionnaire (Martínez, 2011) to investigate the emotional dynamics within the adoptive family. In order to explore the CPAP’s impact over time, the results of this second follow-up are being analyzed and they will be compared with those obtained from the previous assessment.

J. Jiménez-Morago, E. León, M. Román & J. Palacios (University of Seville): *Children at protection centers, in foster families and adoptees in Spain: profile of adversity and adjustment*

This study analyzes the adversity and adjustment experienced as well as the presence of problems in a sample group that included children at a protection center (n=50), a group of children in non-relative foster care (n=28), a group in foster care within their own extended family (n=54) and a group of adopted children (n=40). The study also includes a control group made up of families and children from a normative sample (n=58).

The participating children were between four and ten years of age, and together with their families, had participated in a variety of research programs undertaken by the University of Seville in recent years. To study the level of adversity experienced by these children, an initial adversity index was designed for the different variables; these included having suffered abuse, chronic illness, developmental delays, institutionalization or previous family fostering. To measure adjustment and the presence of problems, the Spanish version of Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) (Goodman, 1999) was applied. The initial data indicates that the children from the various groups experienced an extremely significant amount of adversity prior to placement. Moreover, our data points toward differences among the various groups, with the children fostered by relatives experiencing a significant lesser degree of adversity in comparison to the rest of the groups. In terms of adjustment and the presence of problems and difficulties, once again, our data shows that there are statistically significant differences among the various groups; in this case, there was a greater presence of problems and difficulties among those children in protective care or
in non-relative foster care. On the other hand, there was better adjustment among adopted children and the control group. When relating adversity and adjustment, our data firstly indicate that the group with more difficulties and in greater need of support was first those children in protective care centers, followed by children in non-relative foster care. Second, our data seem to indicate that, despite initial difficulties, adopted children show a good psychological adjustment. Finally, children fostered by relatives had a lesser level of adversity than the rest of the groups. However, in this latter case, their adjustment was worse than that of adopted children. In conclusion, a number of possible explanations for such differences have been proposed. The theoretical and practical implications of these results are also discussed.

J. Jiménez-Morago, E. León, M. Román & J. Palacios (University of Seville): Socio-demographic profile and family adaptation in foster and adoptive families

The focus of this poster lies in the descriptive analysis of socio-demographic characteristics of families and parents or foster carers, as well as the comparison of the general degree of adaptation reached by the various families studied. Five groups were compared in a sample of 230 families in Spain: one group of 58 normative families as a control group, 40 adoptive families, 50 children in protective centers, 28 in foster care families and 54 children fostered by their relatives. The contents explored come from interviews conducted in the home of the participants.

First of all, the data showed there were significant differences among the groups studied in terms of family structure. Thus, families in the control group showed a greater percentage of bi-parental families, as well as separated or divorced families; among the adoptive families, there were a greater percentage of single parent families while widows were the most common family structure among kinship foster families. There were also significant differences with regards to the number of people living in the home, the average being higher in kinship foster families and lowest in the adoptive families. The age of both the parents and carers was higher in kinship foster families and significantly lower in the families with the control group. In terms of the educational level of the father or foster father, the highest level was found in the adoptive families while the lower levels (none, primary or high school graduate) were found in kinship foster families; a similar result was found for the mothers or foster mothers. With regards to the job situation, it was noteworthy that the families from the adoptive and control group had the high employment percentage, with the extended foster families having a significantly higher percentage of unemployment, housekeepers, as well as retired or pensioners. As expected, our data shows a very different professional profile between some of the groups and others. In all the cases, this profile was significantly better in the control group and in adoptive families.

Finally, significant differences were seen between the different groups in the general level of child adaptation, as both foster family types had the highest averages, while the group of children in protective centers had the lowest average. This general adaptation does not appear to be statistically significantly related with the socio-demographic variables. Nor does it appear to be related to the sex or age of the child at the time of the study, although it was related with the age when the child entered at the
different protection placements and the time they had been lived there. The study concluded with an evaluation of the profiles observed, and the possible implications of these results were studied with regards to the intervention.

H.E. Kim (Kosin University): *Who are becoming adoptive parents in Korea?* Although the Korean government has implemented policies promoting domestic adoption largely as a means of curbing inter-country adoption, recent statistics show that there have been little to no changes in domestic adoption numbers. The ineffectiveness of these policies, then, gives rise to a demand for building support systems based on a more precise understanding of adoptive family development from an earlier stage. This study attempts to look into the real-life experiences of potential adoptive parents. The subjects were fifty couples involved in the adoption process through one of the four adoption agencies in Busan, Korea. Their responses to questions regarding background, marital satisfaction and expectations of parental stress were analyzed. For the data analysis, frequencies and Chi square ($\chi^2$) tests were used. Two thirds of the subjects were in their late thirties to early forties. Around half of the subjects had been married for five to nine years and they possessed educational levels equal to or higher than college. More than half of the subjects indicated that infertility was the main motivation for adoption. One quarter had biological children aged from three to twenty four years and nearly all the children were boys. A few couples were already adoptive parents. In these cases, all the adopted children were girls aged from one to four years. Most couples were satisfied with their marriage and family life. Almost all foresaw parental stress and levels of their expected parental stress were significantly different in terms of marriage duration and of the presence of an adopted child. Most parents needed parent education and preferred to get information on adoptive child development, effective adoptive parenting, and adoption laws and proceedings. The research findings, imply that developing proper social supports that reinforce adoptive family life may encourage domestic adoption. Suggestions for future studies on domestic adoptive families are also proposed.

M. Koskinen (University of Jyväskylä, Finland), M. Elovinio (University of Helsinki), H. Raaska (University of Turku and University Hospital of Helsinki), S. Mäkipää (University of Tampere), J. Sinkkonen (University of Turku and Save the Children Association) & H. Lapinleimu (University of Turku and Turku University Central Hospital): *Everyday racism and coping strategies among adult international adoptees in Finland* We examined the prevalence of experiences of racism and coping strategies among adult international adoptees in Finland. The physical appearance of some international adoptees may create a social stigma that renders adoptees especially vulnerable to experiences of racism. These experiences may jeopardize their identity and psychological well-being. It is also reasonable to assume that the coping strategies available to them and the ensuing stress responses also markedly affect their psychological well-being (Major & O’Brien, 2005). The material for this study was derived from a data set of the ongoing FINADO (FINish ADOption) study. The data
were collected using an extensive survey measuring the physical and psychological health and adjustment of international adoptees in Finland. The questionnaire was sent to international adoptees aged over 18, who had been adopted after 1985 by Finnish adoption agencies. Of the adoptees in the eligible sample, 213 returned the questionnaire (127 women and 86 men). The adoptees were aged 18 to 42 (mean age 23.4). Their countries of origin were Russia (23, 11%), India (19, 81%), Colombia (19, 34%), Thailand (11, 79%) and Ethiopia (10, 85%). The questionnaire concerned 1) experiences of everyday racism, 2) coping strategies in dealing with racism, 3) psychological distress (GHQ; Goldberg, 1972), 4) sense of coherence (SOC) (Antonovsky, 1987), 5) sleep disturbance, and 6) demographic information. The associations were tested using the general linear models (GLM). We found an association between gender and perceived racism, women reporting more racism experiences than men (p = 0.02). Of the different forms of racism, loss of privacy (p = 0.001) and insulting stares and comments (p = 0.02) were reported more often by women than men. In addition, participants adopted from Russia reported significantly less experiences of racism than participants adopted from other countries (p = 0.001). Moreover, the frequent use of avoidance coping was positively associated with racism-related psychological distress (p = 0.03).

H. Lapinleimu (University of Turku and Turku University Central Hospital), H. Raaska (University of Turku and Helsinki University Central Hospital), A.R. Heikkilä (University of Helsinki), J. Sinkkonen (University of Turku and Save the Children Association), J. Matomäki (Turku University Central Hospital), M. Eloavainio (University of Helsinki): The state of health prior and after adoption, and the use of medical therapies in internationally adopted children in Finland. The FinAdo study

Objective: The aim of the study was to test the differences between the health status information provided by (a) the donating country prior to adoption and (b) by the health professionals in Finland.

Background: Little is known about the potential discrepancies between the health evaluations done in birth countries and in the receiving countries.

Methods: A screening questionnaire developed for the Finnish Adoption (FinAdo) study was submitted to all the parents of adoptees that had arrived in Finland between the years 1985 and 2007. The response rate of the parents of children under the age of 18 years was 55.7% (1450/2602). Information about the original health reports, the health status at arrival and later on, and about the number and type of the therapies the children had received in Finland was collected. The health status in the birth country and later on was categorized as healthy, structural defect or developmental delay. The probability of the child receiving any therapy was modelled using the potential confounding factors, such as: age, age at arrival, sex, country of birth, socioeconomic status of the family, parents’ marital status.

Results: The parents of 1450 children (mean age of the adoptees at arrival 2.2 years (yrs), range 0.4-13.3 yrs, girls 56%) returned the questionnaires. Altogether 74% of these children came from China, Thailand, Russia and Columbia. The parents
reported that 72% of the children were healthy (1018/1418) and 28% (400) had some medical problems according to the information provided by the birth country. The situation varied greatly between different countries. Illnesses were found during the Finnish medical examination in 52% of the children who were reported to have medical problems in the donating country. Of the children who were reported to be healthy, 79% remained healthy at the arrival health check and after. Of all the children, 31.5% received some form of therapy: 5.3% psychotherapy, (mean length 8 months), 17.7% speech therapy (mean length 1.8 yrs), 5.8% physiotherapy (mean length 1.3 yrs), 9.1% occupational therapy, (mean length 1.7 yrs) and 7.1% of the children had some other type of therapy (mean length 1.8 yrs). The only background factor that explained the use of therapies was a developmental delay (p=0.0045), but not e.g. structural defects (p=0.88).

Conclusion: About half of the original medical problems reported by officials in the denoting country were confirmed by the receiving country, and almost 80% were shown to be healthy. Most of the therapies were provided for children with developmental delays.

F. Loizaga (University of Deusto) & R. Pico (Bizkaia Provincial Council): Safe emotional spaces versus truncated adoptions

This paper presents the attachment experiences of adopted adolescents when they have been returned to protection centers, reception centers or residential schools after living with their adoptive families for several years. Although these are normally considered to be ‘truncated adoptions’ or ‘failed adoptions’, we prefer to analyze them as a crisis in the attachment relationships. It is natural for adolescents to re-evaluate their history of relational processes. Those who are adopted need to integrate the unknown aspects of their past with the new emotional bonds developed in the adoptive family. Any teenager naturally rethinks relational processes tours throughout its existence. Those adolescents who are adopted should also integrate their 'black spaces' and the new links that have developed with their adoptive families. The study to be reported is based on a sample of 20 adopted teenagers placed in residential centers. The analysis centers upon the attachment and emotional processes that they have experienced and developed with regards to both their birth and adoptive families.

L. Marijs, M. Stoltenborgh, L. Alink & F. Juffer (University of Leiden): Video-feedback Intervention to promote Positive Parenting (VIPP) for adoptive and foster families: A case study

Adopted and foster children often have had negative and possibly traumatic experiences in their biological families or in institutional care, which often results in difficulties trusting new adults. This may have consequences for their subsequent attachment relationships with new parents and it may lead to later developmental and behavioral problems (Juffer & Van IJzendoorn, 2005). As a consequence of their less fortunate histories, adopted and foster children’s signals may be distorted, subtle or difficult to interpret, which makes it harder for their adoptive and foster parents to respond to the signals of their children in a sensitive way. A meta-analysis revealed that adopted and
foster children indeed show more insecure disorganized attachment as compared to normative children (Van den Dries, Juffer, Van IJzendoorn, Bakermans-Kranenburg, 2009). To become securely attached to their new parents, it is of great importance that adopted and foster children are provided with a secure base that will offer them safety, comfort, and protection.

In the current study we are starting to test the effectiveness of an intervention program aiming at improving sensitivity and sensitive discipline skills of adoptive and foster parents. The evidence-based intervention program, VIPP-SD (Video-feedback Intervention to promote Positive Parenting – Sensitive Discipline; Juffer, Bakermans-Kranenburg, & Van IJzendoorn, 2008), has been adapted for use in adoptive and foster families. We have made these adaptations by using recent knowledge about adopted and foster children’s development and integrated this knowledge in the original VIPP-SD protocol. Recognizing signals specific to adopted and foster children and responding to these signals in an adequate and prompt way, and at the same time improving the stress regulation of adoptive and foster parents, have been the main adaptations of the present intervention program.

We will present results from the first case study. A mother and her foster child are followed extensively during six intervention home visits. To assess changes in maternal and child behavior, we will administer questionnaires and measure the quality of foster parent-child-interactions during a pre- and a posttest observation.

E. Mendes, I. Cavadas, M. Henriques & M. Sousa (University of Porto): Adoptive fatherhood: involvement, parental satisfaction and satisfaction with life

In the literature about parenting, the father figure is gaining relevance due to the growing responsibilities assumed in children’s care and education (Lima 2000). Consequently, the research about father involvement has increased, showing positive effects for the children’s development (Beitel & Parke, 1998) and also an association with parental satisfaction. Furthermore, parental satisfaction generates positive feelings, contributing to higher levels of life satisfaction (Bárcia & Veríssimo, 2008). The study aims to describe father involvement and the paternal satisfaction, as well as to analyze the association between these dimensions and the sociodemographic variables of the father and the children, contributing to form a comprehensive view in a field in which the research is still scarce. The involvement was explored assuming the suggestion by Lamb, Pleck, Charnov and Levine (1957) regarding three dimensions of involvement: interaction, accessibility and responsibility. This study was part of an ongoing project about adoption, in which fathers collaborated. The participants included 14 fathers, aged between 35 and 46 and 14 children, aged between 17 and 53 months; children who were evaluated at different periods: 6 and 24 months after adoption. The father’s involvement was assessed using the Diary Time Interaction/Accessibility Interview (McBride & Mills, 1993; Lima, 2000), in which fathers described their routines with their child, during the week and the weekend. To evaluate the parental satisfaction, participants filled in the Parental Satisfaction Scale (Halverson & Duke, 1991; Bárcia & Veríssimo, 2008). Finally, satisfaction with life was measured by the Satisfaction with Life Scale (Diner, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985; Neto, Barros & Barros, 1990). The results
show that fathers’ involvement levels with their children are higher during the weekend. The analyses of the different forms of involvement show that fathers spend more time interacting with their children and reveal lower scores in the accessibility dimension. In terms of parental satisfaction and life satisfaction, fathers revealed high levels on both scales, although neither of these variables was significantly correlated with the involvement. Concerning the sociodemographic data and the adoption process, the study was able to show relevance when it comes to the number of children, that is, involvement levels are higher when there is more than one child in the family, while it also underlined a co-relation between higher involvement levels and less adoption time. Overall, the results show convergence with studies in biological samples (e.g.: Pleck, 1997; Lima, 2000), pointing to similarities that were reflected in the routines described by fathers. The data also shows the presence of the emergent father profile, which is highly involved, favouring child development (Dessen & Lewis, 1998).

A.G. Miliotti (Ce.S.A.): Abandonment in intercountry adoptions: legend and reality
There is almost a universal belief that “To be adopted means that first you have to be abandoned”. However my research from countless testimonies from adoptees around the world affirms that the concept of “abandonment” in international adoption is more myth than reality.

In the vast majority of cases, adopted children are orphans due to war, AIDS and disease. Very many of these young people are separated from their natural families due to legal reasons, or passed to orphanages and medical institutions because of the failure of the local social care system.

In consequence we need to rethink our understanding of the causes of displaced children. The concept of “abandonment” is inappropriate, inaccurate and most of all damaging to the self esteem of the adoptees.

The research, by Anna G. Miliotti, is published in the book ”We need a country. Adoption and search of origin”, Anna Genni Miliotti, Franco Angeli Publisher, Milano, Italy, 2010.

C. Moreno-Maldonado, C. Moreno, M. Peñarrubia (University of Seville): How do mothers and teacher perceive the social skills of adopted children? A longitudinal analysis during childhood
Social skills during childhood have a close ties with many aspects relevant to both current and future development, as these skills have a very significant impact on the relationships that children establish with the socializing agents close at hand, both within the scope of the family as well as school or peer groups.

This work provides information about the characteristics of social skills in adopted children using mothers and teacher as informants about these skills. Therefore, the main objective of this work is to analyze the similarities and differences between the two perspectives: that of mothers and teachers. Given that it is a longitudinal study, the analysis is performed at two different points in time.

This research has been carried out on a sample group with some 100 children that were divided into three groups. One group included children who had been adopted
during their first three years of life (international adoption), another was a group of Spanish children who had been institutionalized and the third group was the control group, composed of Spanish children who had always lived with their biological families. Moreover, it is a longitudinal study in two phases. Phase one (T1) was performed when the children were between 4 and 8 years old, while phase two (T2) was undertaken when the children were between 8 and 12 years of age.

An analysis of the information provided by the mothers (or caretakers in the case of institutionalized children) and teachers who responded to the following instruments is provided in this work.

- Social Skills Rating System (SSRS; Gresham & Elliott, 1990) for T1 and its equivalent Social Skills Improvement System-Rating Scales (SSIS-RS; Gresham & Elliott, 2008) for T2.
- Strength and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ, Goodman, 1997), used for T1 and T2.

The data analysis revealed that adopted children had not developed well in the four years between T1 and T2, as the slight differences found at T1 between the children and the control group had increased. Thus, while the control group experienced a degree of improvement in certain social skills by T2 and the control group tended to stabilize, adopted children were significantly poorer in some of the items analyzed. Also, important coincidences were found between the perspectives of the mothers and teachers, although the analysis of each one showed peculiarities that are worth taking into consideration.

A. Muñoz (University of Huelva), J. Jiménez-Morago & E. León (University of Seville): Communication on placement, visits and contacts in kinship care

Research on communication around the foster care and history of children is rare both nationally and internationally, in clear contrast with other protective measures such as adoption. In this paper, we will focus on some basic aspects of communication on placement in relation with the contacts and visits that many of these foster children have with their parents. The sample consisted of 189 families and children, aged between 4 and 17 years old, in the province of Seville, in Spain, and fostered by their relatives.

Our data shows that most caretakers had spoken with their children about placement and their family situation and also that these children have more frequent contact with their mothers (48%) than with their fathers (39%). The data also indicates, as expected, that children who have contact with their parents have a better knowledge about their family situation and their previous history, as these children also receive information from their parents or have become aware of their situation without being told anything during these visits and contacts. No significant differences were observed between children with and without contact, with regards to whether they have ever asked about their past history, whether they speak openly with friends in care or the age at which the child knew about his/her previous history. As for the name foster children gave their caretakers, those who maintain contacts tend to refer more to their caretaker by the kinship uniting them (e.g. grandparent, aunt), while children who have no contact with their parents more often refer to their caretaker as "dad" and "mom." There are also
significant differences in the frequency with which families talk about the placement and the family situation. Thus, children with contacts usually do this every few months, while those who do not maintain contact did it only once.

The results of this study allow us to analyze some of the main communication aspects with regards to placement within the context of visits and contacts these children and families have with the parents of the children, emphasizing the lack of resources and the difficulties these families face when talking about fostering. This work also shows the urgent need to provide in-depth support and training strategies for families when it comes to discussing the placement and their family history with foster children.

M. Natsuaki (University of California, Riverside), J. Neiderhiser (University of Pennsylvania State), D. Shaw (University of Pittsburgh), D. Reiss (Yale University) & L. Leve (Oregon Social Learning Center): Siblings reared apart: different parenting practices between birth and adoptive parents’ homes

Adoption is a natural intervention that aims to promote healthy child development. It is unknown, however, whether children raised in an adoptive home have different experiences than children reared by their birth parents. Extending an ongoing prospective adoption project, Early Growth and Development Study (EGDS; Leve et al. 2013), we compared the rearing environments of adoptees to those of their biological siblings who remained in the home of origin and were reared by their biological mothers. In this sibling-reared-apart design, experiences of siblings who remained in their families of origin serve as a quasi-reference group that can inform us as to developmental outcomes and rearing experiences if the adoptee not been adopted.

Method:

Sample: The EGDS includes families linked through adoption, each of which includes an adoptee, a birth parent, and adoptive parents. The current siblings-reared-apart study is based on data from 118 families whose birth mother is currently raising at least one child who: 1) is a half or full biological sibling of the EGDS adoptee; and 2) is age-comparable to the EGDS adoptee.

Measures: The KidVid Analog Parenting Measure (DeGarmo et al., in press) was used to assess parental disciplinary practices. Birth mothers and adoptive parents individually watched video clips on a laptop. The video clips involved scenes from everyday encounters between a child and his/her parent. For instance, the narrator in the video states, “You thought your son was getting dressed. You come into his room and this is what you see”. Next, the child in the video says, “I am too tired”. The parent was then asked to describe the course of actions they would take given this situation. The content of the parents’ responses were coded into 28 types of disciplinary practices. The frequency of each code was then aggregated into four categories of parenting practices: harsh parenting (e.g., yell, scold, spank/slap), limit setting (e.g., give time-out); guidance (e.g., commands, discussion); and ineffective parenting (e.g., do nothing).

Results and Discussion: A series of paired t-tests showed that adoptive mothers (M = 5.76) were significantly more likely than biological mothers (M = 4.31) to use guidance as a choice of disciplinary practice. Adoptive mothers (M = 0.59) and fathers
(M = 0.46) were less likely to use harsh parenting than biological mothers (M = 0.89). Adoptive and birth homes did not differ in terms of limit setting and ineffective parenting.

Results suggest that the environment in adoptive homes often includes more positive and fewer negative parenting responses than the homes of biological siblings who are raised by birth mothers. These findings suggest that adoption can provide a unique opportunity to bring positive changes in the children’s rearing environment, which could promote their healthy development.

C. Negre, M. Freixa & M. Forns (University of Barcelone): Adopted women and motherhood: personality and search of origin

How women deal with their own maternity is a scarcely analyzed subject, with little research about it, especially in Spain (Negre, Forns, & Freixa, 2007). This article analyzes the maternity experience of a group of 24 adopted mothers, it analyzes their personality characteristics according to the condition of the family origin search, and it contrasts this data with non-adopted mothers (n = 31) of similar characteristics. The instruments used are a semi-structured interview about the maternity experience and the Millon Index of Personality Styles (1990).

The results point out that adopted mothers experience maternity with some differential aspects in relation to non-adopted mothers. No personality profile differences have been found between both groups, although some differences have been found between adopted women who have searched for their origin and the ones who have not searched for it.

I. Ochoa de Alda, O. Ormaechea, A.R. Setuain, M.J. Gómez, L. Iparraguirre & C. Marqués (Basque Association for Systemic and Dynamic Psychotherapies, AVAPSI): Personality and Affective Variables of Adoptive Parents: A pilot Study

Introduction: Adoption implies a marked discontinuity between earlier and later experiences in life, which causes remarkable changes and stressful situation within the family system. There is enough empirical evidence showing that adoption would bring significant stress to adoptive parents that affects family subsystems (i.e. marital system). However, most research with adoptive parents has addressed the comparison between adoptive and non-adoptive parents, instead of assessing their personal adjustment in light of the new situation. The study of characteristics and needs of their adoptive parents is one aspect often neglected hitherto. Therefore, in our study we will focus on the need of identifying personality and emotional variables that could help adoptive parents to adjust positively within adoption.

This study was supported by a financing of the Spanish Government (code: PSI2012-35471)

Aims:

1) To analyze personality and emotional variables in adoptive parents, and 2) To identify which variables could be related with children’s adjustment.
Methodology: Personality, attachment, parental stress and alexithymia were evaluated in a sample of 40 adoptive parents. Children and adolescents fill in different questionnaires to assess their psychological adjustment.

Sample: Every year around 20 families that use the SAFAYA therapy service (Supporting Service for Adoptive and Foster Parents), that is the team from Asociación Navarra Nuevo Futuro (ANNF) responsible to manage the Navarra’s Goverment service; and another 100 participants attend the workshops. Currently, 40 families have been used the therapy service. In total, these families take care of 80 children, (50% adolescents). In addition, 180 people have attended the workshops.

Results: After two years collecting data, we have drawn some preliminar results in which difficulties related to family cohesion and communication are identified. Higher scores in parental stress, alexithymia, and insecurity attachment are related with a poorer adjustment in both children and adolescents. Our results show the importance of having an specific professional support service available to help expressing emotional family issues, promoting children wellbeing, and to strengthening family bonds.

G. Pagé (University of Quebec in Outaouais), A. M. Piché (University of Quebec in Montreal), M.A. Poirier (University of Montreal) & G. Turcotte (Youth Centre of Montreal, University Institute): Birth mothers' experience of compulsory adoption

In Quebec, Canada, about 300 children are adopted from care annually. The majority of these adoptions take place through the Mixed-bank, a foster-to-adopt program. This program allows a child deemed at high risk for abandonment to be placed with a family who wishes to adopt him or her before he or she is legally eligible for adoption. The clinical approach adopted by child welfare services in Quebec provides for two parallel life plans for the child: the first focuses on maintaining or returning the child to his or her birth family (preferential life plan), while the second considers adoption of the child as an alternative life plan where reunification is impossible. According to Charlton et al. (1998), the most intrusive intervention that the state can have in the life of families is when adoption takes place against the wishes of the birth parents. Adoption in Quebec exists only in its plenary form, meaning that the adoption judgment severs definitively the original filiation and the child ceases to belong to his or her birth family. The social and legal process leading to child adoption is a difficult and trying experience for birth parents (Jackson, 2000; Smeeton et al., 2010). In this context, it is essential to understand this process, in particular, from the point of view of an all-too-often forgotten actor: the birth mother. Indeed, despite the few studies identified, we must recognize that birth parents are the least understood and least well served members of the adoptive triad, compared to adoptees and adoptive parents (O'Leary & Baden, 2005). To date, in Quebec, no published studies have focused specifically on the reality of mothers of children adopted through the Mixed bank program. Although this program has some similarities with adoption practices elsewhere in the world (such as concurrent planning and foster-to-adopt programs), some of its specificities call into question the potential benefits of international work with birth mothers. The objectives of the presentation are to 1) discuss the theoretical and practical issues involved in research with birth mothers whose children have been adopted and 2) present the
preliminary results of a research conducted with mothers who have undergone this experience. The results presented will focus on the perspective of mothers regarding, among other things, how they are informed of the expectations of them and of available services, the consequences if they fail to take action, how they are involved in decisions regarding them or their child, and their need for support and assistance during and after any measure involving the placement and adoption of their child.

J. Palacios, E. León, M. Román & M.G. Peñarrubia (University of Seville): *Family dynamics in adoptive families: a comparative study*

The main focus of this poster lies in the analysis of some key components of the family dynamics and the relation of these to variables of both the children and the adults involved. Two groups were compared in a sample of 64 families in Spain: one group of 32 adoptive parents and another group of 32 non-adoptive parents, as the control group. The contents explored include the family cohesion and adaptability, assessed with "Family Adaptability and Cohesion Evaluation Scales II" (FACES II) (Olson, Portner and Lavee, 1985) and parental stress, assessed with “Parenting Stress Index SF” (PSI-SF) (Abidin, 1995). Data was collected after six and half years, on average, in their homes.

The results demonstrate the absence of significant differences between the adoptive and non-adoptive families in terms of both parental stress and cohesion and adaptability. To better understand the internal distribution of the scores obtained, three levels of parental stress, cohesion and family adaptability were differentiated, using the percentages of 25 and 75. Thus, among the families placed within the high stress level (those scoring equal to or greater than 75 percent) significant differences were found when comparing between adoptive and non-adoptive families, these latter scoring significantly lower on stress levels.

Moreover, the possible relationships between the instruments used in the research to evaluate the dynamics and function of the adoptive families involved were studied. The results demonstrate how the level of parental stress correlates with the degree of adaptability shown by the families; some contents of the representation of their adopted children and of the relationships between them, assessed with “Parenting Development Interview” (PDI) (Henderson, Steele and Hillman, 2007) and some contents of parent-child interactions, analyzed using a “Co-construction task” (Steele et al., 2005, 2007). Family cohesion correlates highly with the adaptability and with some contents of parent-child interactions.

Some significant relationships were also found between the parental stress, family cohesion and adaptability, and socio-demographic variables both of the parents and the children included in the sample (e.g., age of the child adopted on arrival, mother’s educational level).

The results show the complex interplay between, the family dynamics and relationships, and the significant connection between all these family factors and the parents and children’s characteristics, in internationally adopted families.
Background and aims: It has been suggested that international adoptees have more self-soothing symptoms (hitting/ banging head, rocking and masturbation) after adoption than other children. These symptoms have been associated with developmental and emotional problems as well (Symons et al., 2005). We studied the prevalence of self-soothing symptoms and their potential associations with later developmental and emotional problems among internationally adopted children in Finland.

Methods: The data of this study is from the on-going Finnish Adoption (FinAdo 1) Survey Study. The questionnaire was sent to parents of all international adoptees aged 5 to 15 years in Finland. The background factors measured were age, adoption age, number and type of placement before adoption, adoptive family’s SES. The self-soothing symptoms at the time of adoption were measured using a parental questionnaire and a child’s developmental problems using a validated screening “Five to Fifteen” –scale (FTF; Kadesjö et al., 2004) including eight domains (motor development, executive function, perception, memory, learning, language skills, social skills, emotional problems). The associations were analysed using logistic regression analyses.

The sample consists of 854 children (girls 53 %). Children diagnosed with intellectual disability, autism, cerebral palsy, deafness or blindness (n=42) were excluded. Children came from 14 countries, 56% from orphanages.

Results: Of the participating parents, 17% (137/812) reported some, and 13% (106/812) persistent or a lot of child’s stereotypic self-soothing symptoms at the time of adoption. The self-soothing symptoms were associated with later problems in all the domains of FTF, the odds rations varying from 1.41 to 2.47. The associations were robust to adjustments for background factors.

Conclusion: Those internationally adopted children who perform stereotypic self-soothing symptoms at the time of adoption have an increased risk for later developmental and emotional problems.
In this mixed-method study, 102 adoptive parents (predominately European Americans) responded to on-line survey questions about one of their adopted children’s strengths and vulnerabilities and about their own views of the adoption experience. The adoptees described in the survey averaged 18 years of age at the time of the study, were evenly divided between females and males, and represented many types of adoption (i.e., private/foster care, international/ domestic and transracial/in-race). A majority had been diagnosed with a range of learning disabilities (LD) and close to half with serious emotional and/or behavioral problems (EBP).

Parents’ responses to an open-ended question about their overall experience as adoptive parents varied from strongly negative (e.g., “heartbreaking”) to extremely positive (e.g., “a miracle” “perfect”). Most were mixed, encompassing admiration for their child’s growth and resilience along with despair about persistent problems and lack of effective services (e.g., “a roller coaster”). Parents of children with EBP used more negative terms than other parents, including those with LD children.

Thirty survey respondents participated in phone interviews and talked about their experiences in more depth. Using a grounded-theory approach, the authors analyzed the interviews and identified the following dimensions of parents’ feelings about raising their children: emotional distance/closeness, resentment/compassion, resignation/hope, crisis orientation/ resilience, inadequacy/confidence, and support/no support. All parents reported challenges and fluctuations as their children grew up, but most parents whose children did not have EBP primarily used terms that fit the positive ends of the continua. In contrast, those whose children had EBP spoke in more negative terms, especially when talking about the adolescent years. Many parents were critical about the lack of adoption-sensitive services, but those whose children had EBP were particularly frustrated.

This nuanced examination of adoptive parents’ experiences may encourage more forthright conversations among parents and practitioners, especially when children suffer from EBP. These findings also show the need for better preparation of pre-adoptive parents and more effective post-placement support.

M. Román, J. Palacios, C. Moreno & E. León (University of Seville): Comprehension and recognition of emotions in internationally adopted children

The theory of mind in adopted children has been researched very little, both in cognitive and its affective terms. To deepen into this domain, the understanding and recognition of emotions in children has been analyzed after the children had spent a significant amount of time with their adoptive families (3 and 7 years following adoption). The sample included 40 children adopted in Spain from the Russian Federation and 58 non-adopted children. On average, the adopted children were 3 years old at the time of adoption. All children were between 4 to 8 years old at the moment of the first assessment and between 8 to 13 years old at the second one. To analyze the emotion understanding the Test of Emotion Comprehension (TEC; Pons & Harris, 2000) was used when the children were an average of 6 years old. This consisted of a picture book with simple cartoon scenarios, representing facial expressions and stories regarding emotions. The children’s version of the Reading the Mind in the Eyes Test (Baron-
Cohen et al., 2001) was used to assess emotional recognition when children were an average of 10 years old. This is a test of recognition of mental state through 28 photographs of the eye region of the face. The results of the first evaluation (at 6 years old) revealed the existence of significant differences in the understanding of emotions between the two groups, with the control group scoring higher than the adoptive group, even once the effect of age was controlled. Preliminary data from the second assessment (at 10 years of age) about recognition of emotions showed significant differences between groups (adoptees scored lower than control children) which disappeared when the effect of age was controlled. The results obtained by the children in their understanding (age 6) and recognition (age 10) of emotions were significantly related to one another. Finally, the connection between emotional aspects of the theory of mind and other developmental domains, such as psychological development and social skills, was analyzed.

A.M. Rosser (University of Alicante) & A. Berástegui (Pontificia Comillas University of Madrid): Behavior problems in adopted adolescents

The adoption of children in Spain has witnessed unprecedented growth, especially following the inception of international adoption in the 1990s. Therefore, it is only now that the impact of adoption on adoptees who are reaching adolescence and young adulthood can really be evaluated.

The objectives of this study were to determine the existence, severity and type of behavioural problems presented by a sample of adopted adolescents as well as the differences between variables such as gender, age and origin of adoption.

The study was conducted with a sample of 70 adolescents adopted in Spain and abroad, aged from 10 to 18 years old (M = 14.18, SD = 2.5 years), 52.7% of which were females and 47.3% males. The mean length of time the adoptees had lived with their families was 9.7 years (SD = 2.7).

Families completed a self-report questionnaire, providing personal data and the child’s previous history, as well as the Children Behaviour Checklist List (CBCL) (Achenbach, 1991; Achenbach & Rescorla, 2001). After performing a descriptive analysis and calculating frequencies and percentages, a comparison of means was carried out using non-parametric tests (Kruskal-Wallis test) and possible correlations between variables were explored.

The results indicated that about 75% of the subjects fell within the normal range, but between 4% and 7% of the subjects were situated in the upper limit of the normal range and between 16% and 22% of the subjects were classified in the clinical range. A greater proportion of subjects in the clinical range were found to show externalising behaviour (23.2%) rather than internalising behaviour (16.2%). Considerable comorbidity was also observed.

A relationship was found between the incidence of behavioural problems and other variables such as 1) gender, with a higher incidence of behavioural problems in males, 2) age of adoption, with more externalising syndrome problems in the subjects who were older at the time of the adoption, and 3) country of origin, with more
problems in the subjects coming from Eastern Europe and Latin America, and less problems in those coming from Asia.

In conclusion, although most of the subjects assessed scored within the normal range on the CBCL and did not generally present a greater degree of disturbance than other adolescents, another group was identified that fell within the clinical range and which required special attention from professionals and researchers; higher scores were obtained for externalising syndrome. In addition, differences were observed for certain variables that should help to identify those cases where monitoring of and support for families’ needs to be enhanced in order to enable them to deal with these problems and help the adoptees overcome their difficulties.

A.M. Rosser (University of Alicante) & A. Berástegui (Pontificia Comillas University of Madrid): *Relationship between behavior problems in adopted adolescents and family adaptation*

Adolescence is often considered a turbulent period in which teenagers can display a tendency to engage in risky behaviours and parent-child conflict increases. In the case of adopted adolescents, the additional challenges of adoption and life history circumstances (neglect, abandonment, abuse, separation, etc.) are coupled to the conflicts inherent to this developmental period and can generate more behavioural problems.

Research suggests that certain behaviours on the part of the adopted child, such as aggressiveness, antisocial behaviour, hyperactivity or disorganised attachment, present an obstacle to adaptation for the family system, especially in adolescence. These behaviours thus become major stressors which occur in the family adaptation to adoption process. It is important to analyse not only whether behavioural problems render adaptation more difficult in adoptive families, but also the extent to which family adaptation may influence the psychosocial adaptation of adopted children.

The objectives of this study were, firstly, to determine the existence, severity and type of behavioural problems in a heterogeneous sample of adopted adolescents and pre-adolescents, and secondly, to investigate the possible relationships between the existence of behavioural problems in the adoptees, stress perceived by the families and the degree of family adaptation.

The study was conducted with a sample of 70 adolescents and pre-adolescents aged between 10 and 18 years old (M = 14.18, SD = 2.5 years), 52.7% of which were females and 47.3% males. 11% were adopted from within Spain and the rest from abroad, and the mean length of time the adoptees had lived with their families was 9.7 years (SD = 2.7).

The behaviour of the adolescents was evaluated by means of the Children Behaviour Checklist List (CBCL). Concurrently, the families completed a set of scales to evaluate the degree of family adaptation.

The results indicated that about 75% of the subjects fell within the normal range, but between 4% and 7% of the subjects were situated in the upper limit of the normal range and between 16% and 22% of the subjects were classified in the clinical range. A
greater proportion of subjects in the clinical range were found to show externalising behaviour rather than internalising behaviour.

The results also confirmed the existence of a relationship between behavioural problems and the degree of family adaptation perceived by the parents. Likewise, family adaptation exerted an influence on the degree of stress perceived by parents and, in turn, this stress interacted with the adoptee’s behavioural problems.

These findings support the idea that successful adaptation does not mean that there has been no crisis but rather that the family has been able to solve it in a satisfactory and positive manner for all its members.

M.D. Salas, I.M. Bernedo, M.J. Fuentes & M.A. García-Martín (University of Malaga): Variables involved in children’s adaptation to family foster care: testing a structural equation model

Foster care aims to ensure that children live in a family environment, being adapted and socially integrated. Behaviour problems and impulsivity/lack of attention among foster children have been widely studied in relation to their adaptation problems. The purpose of the present study was to identify the factors involved in the emergence of the main adaptation problems (i.e. behaviour problems and impulsivity/lack of attention) among foster children. The analysis included several characteristic variables of foster children (i.e. age at the start of the foster placement and personal self-concept) and foster families (burden due to fostering, preparation and support received from social workers and parenting style). Participants were 104 (56 boys and 48 girls) foster children and their respective foster families. Access to foster families and information concerning the foster placements analyzed was provided by the Child Protection Services of the Andalusia regional government.

Different instruments were used to measure the variables involved: Data collection sheet, Questionnaire about the preparation and support received, Affection and Communication Scale, Rules—Demands Scale, Zarit Burden Interview, Child Behaviour Checklist, Conners’ Parent Rating Scale-Revised and Self-Concept Questionnaire. A structural equation model was designed and tested in order to identify an explanatory model and a causal structure among the most relevant variables analyzed. The statistical package AMOS 18 was used and the model parameters were estimated by means of the maximum likelihood (ML) method. The results showed that the resulting model offers a good global explanation of how the variables analyzed are related to one another and how they affect children’s adaptation to foster care. Also the model showed a satisfactory structural fit and therefore provides a reasonably good explanatory power for a better understanding of children’s adjustment problems. The data reveals the relevant role played by the expression of affection by foster carers in the potential emergence of children’s adaptation problems. This expression has both a direct effect on the child’s adaptation and an indirect effect through other key factors such as the child’s self-concept and also burden experienced by the carers. These results may be useful in terms of identifying those potential foster carers whose characteristics make them best suited to the tasks involved in fostering process. This also should be taken into account to highlight the importance of promoting good emotional
relationships through the preparation and support that social workers can offer to foster carers.

I. Sánchez-Queija, M. Fernández-Borrero, F. Rivera & C. Moreno (University of Seville): Peer group and school setting in Spanish adolescents living in adoptive families, foster families, with guardian grandparents and in foster care centers

Family, peer group and school are the main developmental contexts for adolescents. However, research on adoptive families, foster families and guardian grandparents has especially been focused on the quality of the family context, whereas few studies have explored the role of the peer group and the school in these adolescents’ lives. This research tries to provide a general view of peer relationships and school environment, as perceived by adolescents living in a child protection context. Specifically, adolescents were compared regarding different variables: quality of friendships, type of activities with friends, school engagement and quality of classmate and teacher relationships. Sample consisted of adolescents aged 11 to 18 from adoptive families, foster families, living with guardian grandparents and in foster care centers, who had taken part in the 2010 edition of the Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC) study. A correction factor was applied in order to prevent potential inferences due to differing sample sizes. Statistical analysis included descriptive analysis with mean comparisons and effect size tests.

Results showed that adolescents from the aforementioned types of families were very similar in the dimensions under study. Nevertheless, some differences were found in the case of adolescents living in foster care centers and with guardian grandparents. ANOVA results showed that adolescents living in foster care centers reported significantly poorer quality of their relationship with friends than the remaining groups. In addition, they stated that most friends in their peer group friends have used drugs to get high. Besides, these institutionalized adolescents’ report that most of their friends did not get along with their parents.

Regarding school setting, adolescents living in foster families showed better school engagement and more sense of belonging to school than adolescents with guardian grandparents. As for relationships with classmates, adolescents living in foster care centers had poorer relationships with their classmates than the other examined groups.

Therefore, adopted adolescents, non-adopted adolescents and adolescents living in foster families seemed to be very similar in both peer relationships and school experiences. In contrast, adolescents living in foster care centers reported less positive experiences regarding school and friendships.


The main goal of any adoption is to successfully integrate the children into their families. In addition to family integration, a key indicator of a child’s development and adaptation is their social integration and their peer-group functioning.
The purpose of the study was to analyse social status in a sample of adopted and non-adopted children and adolescents. The sample was composed of 70 adopted children, 140 classmates, and 100 children in residential care. The children ranged from 7 to 16 years of age. All adopted children were adopted before they turned six years old and 76% before the age of one.

Data about personal and social functioning as well as academic achievement were collected from multiple sources. Sociometric data were gathered by personal interviews at school with all classmates of the adopted child involved, and with all classmates of each child in residential care. More than 3500 children and adolescents were interviewed. Each child had to name the three classmates they liked most and the three classmates disliked most. With these scores, each child was assigned to one of five sociometric status categories: popular, average, neglected, controversial, and rejected. Furthermore, the children’s teachers completed additional information relating to their adjustment in multiple areas (school performance, scholar behaviour and motivation, and behaviour problems). Adoptees, institutionalised children and classmates also completed self-reports on personal and social adjustment.

The results were analysed by studying the sociometric status according to the membership group (adopted and residential care children and classmates), in addition to other sociometric data (gender and age). The results show little difference in the peer-group performance between adopted children and their classmates. Children in residential care have a greater social impact on the group (generally more negative). The data indicate that the degree of acceptance among peers is related to other adjustment measures such as the manifestation of problems. Finally, we want to highlight that the results indicate a suitable adaptation of the adopted children within their peer-group.

S. Small (St. Andrew's Children's Society): Building bridges in managing attachment difficulties in school: adopted and fostered children

St. Andrew’s Children’s Society has been placing children with adoptive families for over 90 years and has provided foster carer services for nearly 20 of those years. This has meant that we have consistently heard from the families we work with that their child often struggles to manage within the school setting and indeed some schools have found the child’s behaviour difficult to manage in the classroom. There is no doubt that one of the areas that adoptive parents and foster carers struggle with is that interface between themselves and their children and school. Furthermore, local authorities and the Scottish Government are well aware that children who are looked after or who have been in the past, are less likely to fulfil their educational potential.

In 2009/10 St. Andrew’s Children’s Society commissioned Archie MacLulluch, Researcher and Educational Psychologist, to consult with 25 of our adoptive and foster care families from 8 Scottish local authority areas. His task was to find out directly from them what has been the experiences of the education system for them and their children. While this research confirmed for us what we already knew, it also led us to realise that we needed to do more to support our families in this area. Just as importantly, we needed to help professionals in educational and social work settings understand better the challenges that children who have had early trauma in their lives will have in
relationships with others, in managing their own feelings and behaviours and in being emotionally available to access the educational opportunities offered to them. In 2012 as a result of this research we produced a handbook and accompanying training materials.

We hope that the wisdom of so many people in Scotland who work in this area and have contributed to ‘Building Bridges in Managing Attachment Difficulties’ will assist anyone who works with looked after and accommodated children and adopted children to create the optimum environment for these children to achieve their full potential and so be healthy contributors to society when they become adults.

J. Soares, M. Barbosa-Ducharne (University of Porto) & J. Palacios (University of Seville): Predictors of social competence in school-age adopted children.

Presentation of a research project

The arrival at elementary school represents a new challenge to children’s social interaction abilities and new social skills are needed. Social competence for school age children is an important pre-requisite for psychological adjustment and school achievement. Adoption is a privileged context for studying social competence in middle childhood. Most adopted children share a common past of adversity which can endanger their social-emotional development. Yet, once placed in a new family with a different “emotional literacy” and different parent-child interactions, children can recover from past adversity and catch-up on social competence.

This research project aims to identify the predictors of social competence in school age adopted children. To accomplish this purpose, several variables were considered: 1) variables related to the child, such as temperament, emotional security, reflective functioning, emotional regulation and coping strategies, 2) variables related to parents such as parental reflective functioning and coping with children’s negative emotions, 3) variables related to parent-child interaction, such as adoption communication openness, 4) family variables such as out-of-the-home family openness about adoption, and 5) other variables, such as the child’s teacher’s beliefs about adoption and adopted children. The child’s social competence is evaluated following different informants, namely, the child, the parents, the peers and the teacher.

One hundred Portuguese families who adopted children from the National Welfare System will take part in the study. Data will refer to children who are presently 9 or 10 years old and will be collected by separately interviewing parents and children. Self-reported questionnaires will be administered to parents and teachers and a sociometric technique will be used with the child’s classmates.

This study will bring new insights to international research on social competence. It is also expected that findings will inspire political decisions on professional adoption practices and will contribute to changing community beliefs and attitudes related to adoption.
J. Soares, M. Moreira & M. Barbosa-Ducharme (University of Porto): Social competence of school-age adopted children: Relations with parents’ responses to children’s expression of negative emotions

Research has shown the relevance of studying parents’ responses to children’s expression of negative emotions and the impact that these reactions have on the child’s social emotional adjustment. It is within the family that the child begins to express needs, desires and emotions. Thus the family is the context where the first socialization of emotions happens. Therefore, the way parents reply to the child’s negative emotions influences the child’s ability to cope with his/her emotions as well as the emotions of others. Parents who show support to their children’s negative emotions expression promote the development of adaptive coping strategies, emotional regulation and, consequently social emotional development.

The purpose of this study is to analyze the effect of parents coping with children’s negative emotions on the social competence of adopted children. There are several reasons for studying these variables in this population: 1) adopted children have a past of adversity and they have grown up without a family or within a family who was unable to respond to their needs and promote the emotional socialization; 2) their peers (other institutionalized children) were the first agents of socialization, not the parents; 3) they show many gaps in emotional knowledge development and emotions regulation is difficult; 4) with the adoption these children are integrated into a new family and establish new attachments.

Eighty parents (40 fathers and 40 mothers) from 40 families with 9 or 10 year-old children participated in this study. Data was collected during home visits. Parents completed the SSIS-RS (Social Skills Improvement System) to evaluate the child’s social competence and answered the CCNES (Coping with Children’s Negative Emotions Scale) to assess parents' reactions to the negative emotions of children.

Findings show a significant association between social competence of adopted children and parental supportive coping strategies with negative emotions. These findings contribute to the understanding of the processes underlying social competence development of children with a history of adversity.

E. Solórzano y M. Pacheco (Ramon Llull University of Barcelone): Intervention with adoptive families through resilience

We explain the basis of a family intervention program for adoption, conceived to strengthen children’s resilience of and to improve attachment processes and family relationships. It is important to foster resilience in adopted children since all adopted children experienced abandonment and perhaps other traumatic events in their early childhood, as well as a large amount of deficiencies.

Many authors emphasize the need to (re)construct the narrative of life after a traumatic experience and also the relevance of the context closest to the child, and especially family, in doing this (Barudy, 2005; Barudy and Dantagnan, 2010). Adoptive parents can be seen as tutors of resilience (Cyrulnik, 2002).

In addition, we rely on various models of intervention and study of resilience in children with severe deprivation in Romanian orphanages (Rutter, 2001) and also in the
Resilience Processes in Development of children at risk (Karapetian and Johnson, 2005). We designed our intervention program following a modular structure based on the five components of resilience: Self-esteem, autonomy, creativity, humor and empathy.

M. Sousa, M. Henriques, (University of Porto), M. Gonçalves (University of Minho), J. Baptista (University of Porto), I. Soares (University of Minho), I. Cavadas & E. Mendes (University of Porto): Development of adopted children: the role of pre-adoption experiences and the quality of mother-child interaction

Children growing up in institutions are often confronted with adverse experiences that can compromise their physical, mental and emotional development. Many studies have shown that some children continue to present significant developmental and attachment problems after adoption (Chisholm, 1998). Nevertheless, many others have shown a remarkable recovery related to the entry of these children into a supportive and enriching family environment (Palacios, Román & Camacho, 2010). Even though questions remain considering its extent and timing after placement and the impact of pre-adoption experiences. Focusing on this critical issue, the current study aimed to analyze the developmental trajectory of adopted children in the first two years of placement, as well as the influence of pre-adoption experiences and the quality of mother-child interaction on this trajectory. The participants were 23 Portuguese children, adopted between 3 and 25 months of age, and their adoptive mothers. The protocol was administered 5 months (Time 1) and 30 months (Time 2) after adoption and it included measures to assess physical growth, mental development and maternal sensitivity and cooperation. Two contrasting groups were created, considering children’s deficits in physical and mental development at T1. Regarding inter-groups comparison at T1 and T2, we found that children with fewer deficits had better results than children with more deficits on weight and height at T1 and on height at T2. Additionally, children with fewer deficits had better results on the cognitive and motor domains at T1 and on the cognitive, language and motor domains at T2. These children also had mothers significantly more cooperative at T1 and mothers significantly more sensitive and cooperative at T2. On the other hand, children with more deficits had lived longer in a hospital before admission to the institution, had lower percentiles in birth weight, height and head circumference and had a lower length of gestation. Concerning intra-groups comparison, children with fewer deficits had a slight improvement on language development, whereas children with more deficits had a better result on weight percentile. Children with fewer deficits had mothers classified, on average, as sensitive and cooperative at T1 and T2, while children with more deficits had mothers classified, on average, as insensitive and interfering at T1 and T2. Results suggest that after two years in an adoptive family, children maintain their development level, which indicates the persistence of problems in those with more deficits. The pre-adoption experiences seem to have an important influence on the developmental trajectory of these children. Moreover, results concerning maternal sensitivity and cooperation highlight the transactional character of mother-child interaction and the children’s development process.
E. Ward, E. Neil & M. Beek (University of East Anglia): Do structural and communicative openness affect adolescent outcomes in UK domestic adoption?
The poster presentation discusses whether developmental outcomes for adopted young people in adolescence are related to the actual contact young people have had with their birth families (structural openness), or to the openness young people have experienced within their adoptive family around thinking and talking about adoption (communicative openness).

The poster reports quantitative findings investigating adoption openness and development from the third stage of the ‘Contact after Adoption’ project, a UK based longitudinal study of open adoption outcomes. The research has followed a sample of adopted children, and their adoptive parents and birth relatives, over a 16 year period since the start of the adoptive placements. The children, who were aged 4 years or under when they were adopted, are currently in adolescence. This stage of the study revisits the sample to examine if either type of adoption openness had any impact on the young people.

By the third stage of the research, structural openness experienced by the young people had varied from regular maintained contact to none or occasional contact, and incorporated a wide range of communication methods including; letter/email exchange, social networking, telephone and face to face meetings. Structural openness was measured using researcher ratings of contact type and frequency. Communicative openness was explored via in-depth interviews with the adoptive parents and was rated numerically using a qualitative coding system (Neil, 2007).

A range of developmental outcomes were investigated using psychological measures completed by the young people. These included; life satisfaction (Cantril, 1965), self-esteem (Tafarodi and Swann, 1995), the General Health Questionnaire (Goldberg, 1972), parenting attachment (Armsden and Greenberg, 1987), and communicative openness (Brodzinsky, 2006). In addition, the young people’s emotional and behavioural development was measured using the Child or Adult Behaviour Checklist (Achenbach, 1991) completed by their adoptive parents.

In the second stage of the study undertaken in 2003, when the sample (n62) was in middle childhood, no relationship between structural or communicative openness and CBCL scores was found (Neil, 2007). In the current third stage, where the sample is in adolescence, a statistical analysis will be conducted on the data to investigate if structural or communicative openness is predictive of the outcomes measured. The results are presented in the poster.

A. Whitesel, J. Ganiban (George Washington University), L. Leve (Oregon Social Learning Center), D. Shaw (University of Pittsburgh), M. Natsuaki (University of California Riverside), D. Reiss (Yale University) & J. Neiderhiser (University of Pennsylvania State): Birth parents & post adoption contact: an examination of actual contact, satisfaction with contact and its impact on post adoption adjustment

Post adoption contact between birth and adoptive families has been a focus of adoption research over the past decade as changes in the type and frequency of contact have
occurred. Patterns of contact and communication between birth and adoptive families have continued to evolve, with a trend towards more information sharing and direct contact between the parties. Generally, research has shown positive outcomes for adoption constellation members when greater openness is present (Ge et al. 2008). Much of this research, however, has focused on outcomes for adopted children. The long term effects of openness on birth parents’ adjustment post adoption are unknown. The Early Growth and Development Study is a longitudinal study of birth and adoptive families completing a domestic, infant adoption. The sample includes 554 birth mothers and 173 birth fathers who were interviewed over a period of 5-10 years. Openness was examined at multiple waves: 4-6 (T1), 18- (T2), and 30-months (T3) post placement. At T1 birth parents were asked to describe the amount of contact they have with the adoptive families (openness contact), and at T1, T2, and T3 their satisfaction with their level of contact was assessed (openness satisfaction). Birth parents’ adjustment was measured using self-report measures of depression and general life satisfaction scores (GLS) at T1, T2, and T3. On average, birth parents reported moderate levels of contact with adoptive families, with direct contact in person, by phone or email a few times per year, and high satisfaction with this amount of contact. Preliminary analysis based on data from T1 and T2 indicated that levels of depression and GLS were moderately stable for both birth mothers and fathers (r’s .42 to .65). Openness satisfaction, however, increased over time (p < .001). Regression models were used to test if changes in openness satisfaction predicted changes in depression and GLS from T1 to T2. For birth mothers, the levels of actual contact at T1 did not predict depression scores over time. However, changes in their openness satisfaction partially explained changes in depression from T1 to T2, with higher satisfaction predicting lower levels of depression. Similarly, birth mothers’ openness satisfaction at T1 predicted changes in GLS at T2. For birth fathers, the level of contact between birth and adoptive families did not predict depression or GLS. In contrast, openness satisfaction predicted change in depression over time, but not GLS. Overall findings suggest that while contact between birth and adoptive families is relatively open, the perceived level of satisfaction with contact contributes more to birth parents’ post adoption adjustment than does the amount of actual contact with adoptive families. Further analysis will include testing whether these effects remain consistent at 30 months post adoption.
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