

News

**Stereotype of foreign adoptees challenged; Children not more emotionally hurt, researchers find
Youngsters do well, catch up to non-adopted peers**

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CHICAGO -- A surprising new study disputes the notion that children adopted from other countries tend to be badly damaged emotionally because of the hardships they had to endure.

The analysis of more than 50 years of international data found these youngsters are only slightly more likely than non-adopted children to have behavioural problems such as aggressiveness and anxiety. And they actually seem to have fewer problems than children adopted within their own countries.

"Our findings may help them fight the stereotype that is often associated with international adoption," said researchers Femmie Juffer and Marinus van IJzendoorn of Leiden University in the Netherlands.

They pooled results from 137 studies on adoptions by parents living in the United States, Canada, Europe, Australia, New Zealand and Israel.

In the study, adopted children in general had more behaviour problems than non-adopted youngsters, regardless of where the adoption took place, a not- surprising result since both groups often suffer deprivation and come from broken families.

But with backgrounds that often include abandonment, orphanages and civil strife, foreign adoptees are sometimes thought of as difficult children, an image the study does not support, the researchers said.

International adoption is an increasing phenomenon involving more than 40,000 children a year moving among more than 100 countries, the researchers said. Canada has about 2,000 international adoptions per year.

"Before adoption, most international adoptees experience insufficient medical care, malnutrition, maternal separation, and neglect and abuse in orphanages," the researchers said. But to their surprise, they found that these children do well and are largely able to catch up with their non-adopted counterparts.

The study, in today's Journal of the American Medical Association, suggests internationally adopted children may be better adjusted because their parents are highly motivated.

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