



Adjustment of international adoptees: Implications for practice and a future research agenda

Jayashree Mohanty*, Christina Newhill

School of Social Work, 2326 Cathedral of Learning, University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh, PA 15260, United States

Received 27 January 2005; received in revised form 17 April 2005; accepted 24 April 2005

Available online 5 July 2005

Abstract

Studies suggest that international (intercountry) adolescent adoptees have lower self-esteem and are at higher risk for developing severe mental health problems and social maladjustment than children of the same age living with their biological families in the general population. Although most U.S. studies report positive outcomes for international adoption, studies also report that many international adoptees are confused about their racial and/or ethnic identity and face difficulties in handling bias and discrimination. International adoptees may have a better adjustment if their adoptive parents are sensitive and appropriately responsive to issues related to their adopted child's race, ethnicity, and culture. This paper reviews the state of our current knowledge about how and why some international adoptees adjust better than others and suggests theoretically grounded avenues for future research. © 2005 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

Keywords: Social maladjustment; International adoptees; Intercountry adoption

1. Introduction

Recently, many American families have grown through international adoption. In 1991, the number of international adoptions by Americans was 8481. By 2003, the number of adoptions had more than doubled to 21,616 (U.S. Department of State, 2005). While China is the dominant relinquishing country for international adoption to North America, other major sending countries are Russia, Guatemala, Korea, Kazakhstan, Ukraine, and

* Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: jam89@pitt.edu (J. Mohanty), newhill@pitt.edu (C. Newhill).

India. The [Hague Convention on the Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect to Intercountry Adoption in 1993](#) recognizes that for full and harmonious personality development, a child should grow up in a family environment with an atmosphere of happiness, love and understanding (Article 15, No. 1). The Convention acknowledges that intercountry adoption may offer the opportunity for a child to be placed with a permanent family when a suitable family cannot be found in his or her country of origin. According to the Hague Convention, the eligibility criteria to adopt internationally should include the central authority of the country of origin's judgment of the ability of an adoptive parent to undertake facilitating the child's identity development (Article 15, No. 1) including "his or her ethnic, religious and cultural background" (Article, 16, No. 1b). Thus, the presence of a loving home with caretakers who are sensitive and responsive to the child's needs related to his/her racial/ethnic identity is critical to ensure the child's optimal emotional and social adjustment as s/he moves from childhood through adolescence to adulthood.

2. Literature review

2.1. *Adjustment and international adoption*

2.1.1. *U.S. studies*

In the United States, studies addressing transracial adoption have primarily focused on transracially adopted African–American children, and few have focused on international adoption ([McRoy, Zurcher, Lauderdale, & Anderson, 1982](#); [Simon & Altstein, 1992](#)). Studies addressing intercountry adoptees generally show positive adjustment of these adoptees when they are young, less is known about how they fare in their new country as they grow up ([Feigelman & Silverman, 1984](#); [Kim, 1977](#)). In addition, as compared to other Western countries, little research attention has been paid to the nature of the mental health status of intercountry adoptees in the United States. [Feigelman and Silverman \(1984\)](#), explored the long-term social adjustment of Colombian, Korean, and African–American transracial adoptees as compared with in-racially adopted Caucasians. Data were gathered in two phases. In 1975, the first phase in the study, 1100 adoptive families were surveyed with 737 of the families (67%) returning questionnaires. In the second phase six years later, out of the 737 original respondent families, 372 (50%) participated in the follow-up survey. Two-thirds of the adoptees were between seven and twelve years of age at the time of the 1981 follow-up study. Results showed better social adjustment as measured by the parents' overall evaluation of the adoption, and the frequency of emotional and growth problems for the internationally adopted children as compared to the African American transracially adopted children or the Caucasian children adopted domestically.

Another longitudinal study by [Simon and Altstein \(1992\)](#) assessed adoptees' relationships with their siblings and parents, as well as their school performance, friendship patterns, self-esteem, social activities, and future ambitions. The children were 3–8 years of age at the time of the first wave of the study (1971). The majority (77%) of the adopted children in the sample were African–American; others were Korean, Vietnamese, and Native American. The study reported that there were no differences between the scores of the adopted children and the children living with their biological families, and described

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/347374>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/347374>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)