THE TRANSITION TO ADOPTIVE PARENTHOOD PROJECT

We are so happy you are participating in our research. Please keep us informed of how you are doing.

Recent Adoption-Related Research

As reported by Donaldson Adoption Institute (February, 2013):

INTERVIEWS SHOW BENEFITS, ISSUES OF POST-ADOPTION SIBLING CONTACT

Based on interviews with 51 adoptive parents, 4 foster parents (parenting siblings of adopted children) and 39 birth relatives, researchers in England investigated the complexity of sibling relationships as shaped by contact or severance of contact after adoption. Overall, 93 percent of adopted children had siblings living elsewhere, and about half had direct contact with them, typically only once or twice a year. Some adoptive parents had concerns about how sibling representations of birth family would coincide with the adoptive family narrative. For children, infrequent contact had both benefits and challenges; researchers recommended that contact plans be renegotiated as children grow older and their needs change, such as when they develop close sibling relationships and want more contact. To read an abstract, click HERE.

As reported by Donaldson Adoption Institute (March, 2013):

ANALYSIS EXPLORES REASONS UNDERLYING RACE-BASED ADOPTION DECISIONS

"Race-Conscious Adoption Choices, Multiraciality, and Color-Blind Racial Ideology," by K. Sweeney, found that one-third of those who adopted transracially were open to any race or multiracial child, but not one who was Black. Their reasons ranged from perceiving that a Black child would have more struggles with identity, to being uncomfortable with hair care. Themes underlying parents' decision to adopt a child of any race included: prioritizing health over race, shorter wait times, financial constraints, and perceptions of greater need for families to adopt Black children.

Newsletter #28, Spring 2013

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Recent Adoption-Related Research

As reported by Donaldson Adoption Institute (March, 2013):

STUDY FINDS 20 YEARS LATER, PARENTS ENDORSE OPENNESS IN THEIR ADOPTIONS

"Open Adoption: Adoptive Parents' Reactions Two Decades Later," by Deborah Siegel in the January issue of Social Work (Volume 58, Issue 1), reported on the open adoption experiences of 22 parents when their children (adopted domestically as infants) were young adults. This longitudinal, qualitative study found that the level of openness fluctuated over time, and at the last wave of data collection, all but one parent reported unambivalent, positive feelings about openness, saying that it had not been a major issue in their lives. Benefits reported included: their children's ability to access information about themselves, knowing about genetic vulnerabilities, comfort of knowing about the birthparents' well-being, and ability to answer child's questions about their birthparents. Parents also described challenges they had faced, how they handled them, and advice they would offer others embarking on open adoption. Read the Institute's "Openness in Adoption: From Secrecy and Stigma to Knowledge and Connections."
Recent Adoption-Related Research

As reported by the Donaldson Adoption Institute (January, 2013):

INSTITUTE 'UNTANGLING THE WEB' REPORT: INTERNET IS TRANSFORMING ADOPTION
The Donaldson Adoption Institute in mid-December issued the first-ever extensive examination of the positive and negative impacts of the Internet and social media on adoption practice, policy and the lives of those involved, "Untangling the Web: The Internet's Transformative Impact on Adoption," by Policy and Research Director Jeanne Howard. The growing "commodification" of adoption, increasing ease of searching, probable end of secrecy in adoption, and use of the web to support those involved in adoptions are some of the historic changes noted in the report, the first in a series on the topic. Some of the recommendations include the need for policy and law enforcement officials to review adoption websites for fraudulent, illegal and unethical practices, and for preparation of those involved to address the realities of social media. To read the report, click HERE.

DATA SHOW MORE USE OF POST-ADOPTION SERVICES IN TRANSRACIAL ADOPTIONS Utilizing data from the National Survey of Adoptive Parents, researchers investigated the use of post-adoption services, finding that parents who adopted transracially (compared to same-race White and Black adoptions) are about twice as likely to meet with someone at an adoption agency to discuss post-adoption services or to participate in a support group; however, there were no significant differences in their use of mental health or other counseling services. Another noteworthy finding was that in 70 percent of Black adoptions, families also had biological children, as compared with 52-54 percent in transracial or White adoptions. Click HERE to read an abstract.

YOUTH ADOPTED AFTER AGE 2 SHOW GREATER ATTACHMENT INSECURITY Researchers in Chile compared the attachment styles of 25 adopted and 25 non-adopted adolescents, finding that those who were adopted had a higher rate of insecure attachment (68% vs. 28%), particularly the "insecure-avoidant" style (generally unresponsive to the parent). Youth adopted after 24 months of age showed greater insecurity than those adopted prior to age 2. The authors recommended public policies that allow longer periods of follow-up and more time and support for adoptive parents and children after adoption. To read an abstract, click HERE.

International Adoption Updates

As reported by the Donaldson Adoption Institute (January, 2013):

RUSSIA HALTS ADOPTIONS BY AMERICANS, BUT ALLOWS SOME CASES TO PROCEED Responding to Russia's ban on adoptions by Americans, which went into force Jan. 1, the U.S. State Department on Jan. 24 issued an Alert, "Russian Supreme Court Letter on Implementation of Federal Law No. 272-FZ," which stated "that for adoption cases in which court decisions involving U.S. citizen parents were made before Jan. 1, 2013, (including those that entered into force after Jan. 1, 2013, following the 30-day waiting period), the children should be transferred to the custody of their adoptive parents." Federal Law No. 272-FZ prohibits the adoption of Russian children by U.S. citizens and adoption service providers from assisting U.S. citizens in such adoptions, as well as mandating the termination of the U.S.-Russia Adoption Agreement. There were 748 U.S. adoptions from Russia in 2012, down from a high of 5,862 in 2004. Read a COMMENTARY on the issue by the Adoption Institute's Executive Director, Adam Pertman.

KOREAN LAW GIVES PREFERENCE TO DOMESTIC OVER INTERCOUNTRY ADOPTION In a Jan. 25 Notice, "Korea Begins Implementing Special Adoption Act", the State Department notes that the Republic of Korea's Special Adoption Act, which gives priority to domestic adoptions and aims to decrease intercountry adoption, is likely to result in "significant changes from previous intercountry adoption procedures and requirements," though the government has not provided details. Family Courts must approve each intercountry adoption; the Ministry of Health and Welfare stated that "adoptions that were in process but not completed by August 5, 2012, will be processed under the new law." While the government is accepting new applications, "prospective adoptive parents should not expect rapid processing of these cases" until new processes are established.
As reported by the Donaldson Adoption Institute (March, 2013): 

UT LEGISLATURE APPROVES ADOPTION REFORMS, BUT NOT FOR ‘SECOND PARENTS’

Five bills to reform adoption policy passed the Utah legislature this month; HB214, which would have permitted second-parent adoption, did not. SB232 provides that “implied consent” is not prior consent and thus grounds for a person to be excused from providing notice of an adoption proceeding, stipulates “consent to an adoption may be implied by: a father failing to provide a birth mother with financial or emotional support” for six months prior to birth, and allows adoption petitions to be filed before a child’s birth. SB282 requires the biological mother or child to have resided in the state for at least 30 consecutive days for an unmarried father to have notice that Utah law applies to him. SB183 “requires the Office of Licensing to implement ethical rules prohibiting an adoption agency or an agency employee from misrepresenting facts or information.” SB155 allows post-adoption contact agreements among prospective adoptive parents, birth parents or birth relatives of prospective adoptive children in state foster care. SB31 provides a refundable adoption tax credit of $1,000 for families adopting a child (since Jan. 1, 2013) over 5 years of age, "has a physical, emotional, or mental disability," or is a member of a sibling group placed together.

187 LEGAL INFANT ABANDONMENTS REPORTED IN FLORIDA UNDER ‘SAFE HAVENS’

According to a source in the March 5 article in the South Florida Sun-Sentinel, "Babies Left Behind By Parents Travel Different Routes to Adoption," by Wayne K. Roustan, Florida has had 187 "safe haven" infant abandonments since the law legalizing abandonment was passed in 2000. A Broward County Judge was quoted in the story as saying, "I would hesitate to use the words 'hot commodity,' but certainly because of publicity I would say the public is more aware of the availability of the child that doesn't have parents and maybe people would think [they] don't have to go through that much red tape.” According to the DCF Tallahassee office, "There are 750 children awaiting adoptions in Florida; most are in elementary and high school or are groups of siblings." The North American Council on Adoptable Children reports that "In 2010, 5,011 foster children in Florida were waiting to be adopted." 

As reported by the Donaldson Adoption Institute (February and March, 2013): 

ADOPTION ATTORNEYS’ GROUP LOBBIES FOR NATIONAL PUTATIVE FATHER REGISTRY

According to a March 17 Washington Post article, "Family law attorneys lobby for improvements to adoption process," by Catherine Ho, the American Academy of Adoption Attorneys (AAAA) is seeking reintroduction of a bill from the last Congress that would set up a national putative father registry. Mark McDermott, chair of AAAA’s legislative committee, was quoted as saying, ”The idea is registries in states ought to talk to each other. … It would eliminate the problem of going from state to state." The article reported that 34 states have registries with different processes.

INTERNAL REVENUE SERVICE UPDATES ADOPTION TAX CREDIT INFORMATION

The Internal Revenue Service in March updated its adoption tax credit information, Adoption Benefits FAQs. The IRS offers answers to eight frequent questions related to claiming this tax credit, such as: What is new for the adoption credit, what are qualified adoption expenses, and what is the income exclusion for employer-provided adoption benefits? Read about the Save the Adoption Tax Credit coalition, of which the Institute is a part.

JUDGE RULES MONTANA RANCH FOR ‘TROUBLED’ CHILDREN MUST BE LICENSED

A state judge has held that The Ranch For Kids, a facility in Eureka, MT, for “troubled” children adopted internationally, is not an exempt church and must be licensed by the state Private Alternative Adolescent Residential or Outdoor Programs board, as reported in a Feb. 6 Associated Press article, "Judge rules against troubled adopted kids' ranch." The Department of Labor and Industry’s attorney said, "It's not our intention to shut them down. However, they haven't been operating with a license the last 2 ½ years. At this juncture, we will work with them if they work with us." Over 20 children adopted internationally live at the ranch; the AP article said that many of them have "troubles that make it difficult for them to live at home due to fetal alcohol spectrum disorder or behavior issues that stem from trauma or difficult conditions in orphanages."
Feature Book: *Instant Mom* by Nia Vardalos (actress)

Here is an excerpt from the recently published book “Instant Mom,” by Nia Vardalos. To read the whole excerpt, click HERE.

The Home Study worker makes notes about us I cannot see, no matter how hard I bend over pretending to wipe the counter. She then asks Ian and me what we see in our future as a family. We reply that we see ourselves with a child. She asks us to be more specific. I want to be matched and say we are open to any sex, any age, any ethnicity. The Home Study worker waits, head down, listening. She is patient. Ian then says quietly... he sees us with a little girl. I am surprised at this revelation. This is the first time he's admitted he has visualized someone too. I then loosen up and tell the worker about the girl I see, the girl I dream about. The worker smiles and makes a note of it, and I peek to see if she's checked a box that says “crazy.” We are worried we won't be matched with the available waiting children, and we say again and again, we are open to any sex, any age, any ethnicity. We mean it. We want to be parents. We want to scream: we know there is a child out there that we could be good parents to. Just match us, dammit. But we just smile hard, really hard, at her as the kitchen clock ominously ticks.

It's been several months since Ian and I have been cleared as a foster home—and over nine years of trying to be parents—and we're still waiting for that elusive match.

Yet, impossibly, I am optimistic. I feel the phone will ring. One day, it does. It's a nice man I've met who works to place foster kids. He tells me there is a little girl. She is almost three years old. She'd been relinquished to foster care by a young couple whose relationship did not last the birth. She is presently legally freed for adoption. The man says he has contacted our social workers and they all want to know if Ian and I would like to meet the little girl. I nod my head, not realizing he can't see me. I'm not nodding yes to the meeting. I'm nodding yes because I know this is it. I know this is the match.

About the author:

*Nia Vardalos is the Academy Award and Golden Globe nominated actress and writer of My Big Fat Greek Wedding. An alumnus of The Second City comedy theater, she also starred in and wrote Connie and Carla and I Hate Valentine's Day, starred in My Life In Ruins, and co-wrote Larry Crowne with Tom Hanks. Born and raised in Canada, Vardalos now resides in LA with her husband, their daughter, and many pets, and is currently working on balancing her acting career with motherhood and adoption advocacy.*

Winter Newsletter Poll Responses

In the Winter 2012 newsletter, we asked you about your most and least favorite movies or television shows that feature adoption. Here are some of your answers:

**Dislikes:**

- “*Meet the Robinsons*”
  
  “The whole premise is built on kids in an orphanage getting adopted or not based on how worthy the adults feel they are. It's well-intentioned, but cringe-worthy.”

- “*Despicable Me*”
  
  “Kids are adopted only as a tool for an evil guy to get what he wants, and then he ends up actually loving them. Redeeming in the end, but really yucky adoption images and stereotypes.”

- “*Once upon a Time*”
  
  “I enjoy the TV show… but I don't like how adoption is featured. The ‘evil queen’ is the adoptive mother, and the protagonist is the birthmother of the boy who is at the heart of the storyline. The birthmother often saves the boy from his terrible evil birthmother. I realize the show is based on fairy tales so the adoptive mother is much like Cinderella’s evil stepmother, but the underlying message is that it's ok for the birthmother to come in later on and be a parent to an adopted child.”

**Likes:**

- “*Modern Family*”
  
  “We loved Modern Family's take on adoption last season, even though it ended sadly. Interviewing birth moms, highs, lows, awkwardness, family reactions -- it was all there!”

Thanks for your responses! Be sure to check out our new poll below!

New Poll!

**What is your favorite outdoor family activity in the summer and why?**

Please email responses to Abbie (agoldberg@clarku.edu) or Liz Weber (graduate student; eweber@clarku.edu). We will report the results in the Fall newsletter. And, if you have ideas for future polls, send them along!
**Tips for Summer Fun**

**Summer Safety for You & Your Children**  
(from WebMD.com)

When the last school bell of the school year rings, children race outside and parents reach for the first aid kit. Summer activities often bring scrapes and bruises -- or worse. Here are simple things you can do to ensure that your children's summer fun involves minimal risk.

**Head to the Helmet**

Take a close look at last year’s helmet to see if you should get a new one. Helmets break down with age and use. "Pay attention to how many crashes a helmet takes," says Beth Johns-Thomas, director of summer programs at the Fenn School, Concord, Mass. After a number of small crashes or one large one, replace your child’s helmet with a new one.

**Make Time for Warm-up**

Athletic injuries can bring summer fun to a grinding halt. "It’s important for kids to warm up properly and not just jump right into play," says Moss. A series of warm-ups and gentle stretches can get children’s muscles ready for action.

**Run a Sports Equipment Safety Check**

Helmets aren’t the only thing. All sports equipment should be well maintained and the right size for your child. This may sound like a no-brainer but your child’s growth can be hard to keep up with. Run a size check on all of your child’s equipment. Does his bike still fit? Has he outgrown his athletic padding?

**Screen Kids From Sunburn**

The sun is at its peak between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. Especially during these hours, children risk getting burned if they spend long periods in the sun. Clothes, shade, and sunscreen are all good ways to protect your child’s skin.

**Summer Recipes**

Warm weather is right around the corner. Try making these yummy summer treats from healthdecide.com with your kids when the weather gets hot!

**Rainbow Snow Cones**: To make rainbow snow cones, simply blend up ice in a high powered blender until it resembles snow. By juicing your own fruits and vegetables, and putting the juice into squeeze bottles, you can squirt the flavors and colors onto your healthy snow cone.

**Homemade Ice Cream**: There are a million ways to make delicious homemade ice cream, but our favorite is by blending up frozen bananas and adding a drop of vanilla extract and milk. You would never know there wasn’t sugar in this ice cream. Once your bananas are frozen, this treat only takes a minute to make.

**Smoothies**: Fruit smoothies are a kid favorite because they taste like a milk shake, except without the fat and sugar. Fruit smoothies can be as simple as blending up fruit and juice, or you can add some extra nutrition by adding leafy greens like spinach. We generally use 1 cup of juice or water to 2 cups of frozen fruit.

**Fruit filled popsicles**: Making a fruit filled popsicle is easy. Fill a popsicle mold with chopped fruit, and pour juice, yogurt or water over the top to freeze. The final product not only looks pretty, but kids can’t wait to sink their teeth into it. This simple treat takes 1-3 minutes to assemble. The hard part is waiting several hours for the finished product.

**Frozen Banana Bites**: Any fruit dipped in chocolate and then frozen is a delicacy. All we do is chop our bananas into 1 inch bite size pieces and freeze on wax paper. After frozen, then dip bananas into melted chocolate and return to the freezer. After about 1-2 hours, your frozen banana bites will be ready.

**Sundae Bar**: Freeze some plain or vanilla yogurt, and make a rainbow sundae bar using a variety of colorful, seasonal fruits. Kids enjoy assembling their own and with so much fun fruit to choose from, they might even choose them all.

http://healthdecide.orcahealth.com/2012/06/26/6-healthy-summer-snacks-to-stay-cool/
TAPP Team Updates

ABBIE’S NEW APPOINTMENT

In January, Abbie was invited to be the Williams Institute’s Visiting Scholar for 2013. The Williams Institute is a national think tank at the University of California—Los Angeles that produces legal research, public policy analysis, judicial training, and leadership development related to public policy, sexual orientation and gender identity law. This prestigious appointment involves visiting UCLA a few times per year to give talks, presentations, and write policy briefs. Congratulations Abbie! Click HERE to learn more about previous visiting scholars at the Williams Institute.

ABBIE PRESENTS AT LUTHERAN SOCIAL SERVICES ADOPTION CONFERENCE

In February, Abbie gave an invited talk at the New England Lutheran Social Services’ adoption conference on the topic of contemporary families, and more specifically, adoptive families. She discussed findings from TAPP, including how parents navigate the transition to adoptive parenthood, and provided recommendations to practitioners about how best to support prospective and newly adoptive parents.

ABBIE AND HER STUDENTS PRESENT AT THE NEW WORLDS OF ADOPTION CONFERENCE

In April, Abbie, April and Liz attended the annual New Worlds of Adoption Conference at the University of Massachusetts in Amherst, MA. This is an annual conference attended by adoption researchers, practitioners and adoptive parents. If you live in the western MA area and are interested in attending next year’s conference, check out their website HERE.

April, Liz and Abbie presented two posters: “Consequences of a gay adoption ban: Perspectives of gay and lesbian parents in Florida” and “Parent-child conversations about legal inequalities in same-sex adoptive families.”

Here is a summary of some presentations:

April and Liz attended a presentation by Ruth McRoy, titled “Openness in Adoptions from Foster Care: Implications for Children and Families”. Dr. McRoy explained that there is a lack of research that focuses on birth family contact for children adopted via child welfare. She presented findings from the AdoptUSKids study and highlighted that over half of her sample had continued contact with their birth family members after adoption. She noted that adoptive parents often reported that they supported birth family contact because it provides the children with a link to their heritage and because the children often requested the contact. Dr. McRoy also discussed the need for more parent training surrounding post-adoption contact with birth families.

Abbie attended a presentation by two lawyers from NY, titled “Does Biological Family Involvement Impact of Destabilize Adoptive Placements from Foster Care?” The lawyers spoke about their work with families who have disrupted and also have involvement in the foster cares system. They presented findings from a small-scale study of adoptive families (mostly kinship adoptions, facilitated by the state) that had disrupted. They found that 75% of the cases that disrupted did so because of death or infirmity by the adoptive parent (usually the mother). (These were usually grandmothers who had adopted the child, i.e., “kinship adoptions”). In another 25%, they disrupted due to abuse/neglect. They also found that in some kinship adoptions, the child’s behavioral difficulties was a factor in the disruption. They emphasized the need for comprehensive post-adoptive services to facilitated permanency in these families.

Happy Spring! Please send us your updates. If you have any questionnaires lying around, please send them back! We are thinking of you all.

-Abbie & the Transition to Adoptive Parenthood Project team
(Lori, April, & Liz)

PS: We’re on Facebook! Even if you don’t have a page of your own, you can check out the TAPP Facebook page: click here.