

Current Research that You Should Know About But Don't Have Time to Read

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Some Opening Questions

- I. When was the last time you read an article that reported on research on adoption?
 - a. Within the past month
 - b. Within the past three months
 - c. Sometime over the past year (I think)
 - d. Are you kidding?

2. If you have read an article about adoption research, how would you rate the most recent article you read?

- a. Fascinating, couldn't put it down!
- b. Learned something that was important
- c. Tried to slog through it but lost my way
- d. Didn't make it past the first couple of paragraphs -- didn't want to be bored to death

3. When someone says, "hey, read this – it's research," you are most likely to say:

- a. Give it to me – can't wait to read it!
- b. Hmm, okay
- c. Did you say "research"?
- d. Get that thing away from me!

Some Common Reactions to Research

- Too many articles to read!
- The articles are too long!
- It is hard to figure out what the results really are!
- Not sure how any of this applies to real life!

Research 101: Types of Research

- *Quantitative*: statistical tests/percentages and rates/hard numbers
- *Qualitative*: analyses of what people say – interviews and focus groups; often used when the knowledge base about an area is not well developed; can add to our understanding of the issue and help firm up the questions that can be researched using quantitative methods

Research 101: Different Research Methods

- *Experiment:* Participants randomly assigned to different groups being studied. Groups are treated differently in one or a few very specific ways and the behavior resulting from this treatment difference is measured.
- *Longitudinal study:* A longitudinal study follows a group composed of the same people across a period of the life span. The behavior of these individuals is observed and/or measured at several intervals over time in an attempt to study the changes in their behavior.
- *Survey:* A survey is a structured list of questions presented to people. Surveys may be written or oral, face to face or over the phone. It is possible to cheaply survey large numbers of people, but the data quality may be lower than some other methods because people do not always answer questions accurately.

More Research Methods

- *Interview:* An interview may be highly structured or it may involve less structured narrative. It usually involves people responding orally to questions or talking about their thoughts on a topic. When a group of people are interviewed, it is often called a *focus group*.
- *Case study:* A case study involves extensive observations of a few individuals. Data collection may include watching behavior interviews and record searching. Case studies may be retrospective and/or prospective. Usually case studies are employed where the behavior or situation is so rare that other methods, involving larger groups of participants, are not possible.
- *Crunching existing data*

Why Research is Important

- Adds new information – broadens our understanding
- Offers new insights
- Validates what we already know – the difference between “anecdotal” and “empirical”

The Latest and Greatest Recent Adoption Research

- Who is adopted?
- What do older youth think about adoption?
- What do we know about adopted children with special health care needs?
- What are we learning about birth parents' views on open adoption?
- Do photolisting services help connect children with adoptive families?
- What is most helpful to adoptive parents in developing high levels of cultural competence?

Who is adopted?

- A 2008 study looked at rates of adoption for infants investigated for child maltreatment and their adoption status 5 to 6 years later
- The study followed 962 children who were infants when they first became involved in an investigation for child abuse and neglect. The caregivers of these children participated in the study at the 5 to 6 year follow up. It focuses on those children who were eligible for adoption (were placed out of the home and not reunified) and it looked at where they were and how they were doing 5 to 6 years after the child maltreatment report. It draws on data from an existing data base: National Survey of Child and Adolescent Well Being.
- What type of research is this?

True or False

- There were no significant differences between children who were adopted and children who were not adopted based on gender, race, or special health care needs.

True or False

- Very few of the children were placed with their adoptive families between birth and 6 months of age.

True or False

- A third of the adopted children had problems with meeting their daily living needs (dressing, toileting, helping himself or herself when thirsty, blowing his or her nose, putting toys and clothes away, using a telephone, using coins).

True or False

- The original caregivers of these children had high rates of drug abuse, mental health problems, and poor parenting skills.

True or False

- Most of the adopted parents were younger – in their 20s.

What do older youth think about adoption?

- In this study conducted by the Urban Institute (with findings issued in 2008), the researchers convened five focus groups with 34 foster youth ages 11 through 19 in Washington, DC and New York City. In the focus groups, teens were asked about permanency, adoption and recruitment activities.
- What type of research is this?

I. Which of the following did youth NOT say about permanency?

- a. It means a place to stay until you age out of the system.
- b. It is about a commitment from other people.
- c. Staying in one place.
- d. Long term foster care gives me permanency.

2. What did many youth say was the best permanency option?

- a. Reunification
- b. Living with relatives
- c. Adoption
- d. Independent living

3. Which of following were reasons that youth, despite have an adoption goal, were not adopted?

- a. Concerns about being adopted
- b. Feeling that they were "too old" to be adopted
- c. Parents' reluctance to give up parental rights
- d. All of the above

- Don't really know what to expect
- Will lose almost all contact with friends and siblings
- Change of location and school
- Less freedom than in a group home – currently have some power and freedom
- You are "stuck" in an adoptive home – will be unable to leave a home you don't like
- Adoptive parents who do it 'just to look good'

• People think that teens in foster care are “bad” or there must be “something wrong” with them, especially if they had been in multiple placements.

• The media portrays foster youth negatively – doing drugs and stealing cars.

• People would rather adopt younger children.

• Teens are “set in their ways” and adults think that you won’t listen to them.

4. How many of the 34 youth had participated in adoption recruitment activities?

a. Most

b. Many

c. Some

d. None

• Implications Identified by the researchers:

- Foster care experiences influence adoption perspectives.
- Youth have concerns and fears about adoption.
- Youth expect autonomy and want to feel empowered.

What do we know about adopted children with special health care needs?

- This study was conducted by the US Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation. The researchers looked at data from the National Survey of Children with Special Health Care Needs and used the data to answer a number of questions about adopted children and to compare children by adoption type: foster care adoptions, international adoptions, and domestic infant adoption (private adoptions). The findings were released in 2008.
- The researchers defined "special health care needs" as "have or at risk of a physical, developmental, behavioral, or emotional condition that requires health or related services of a type or amount beyond that required by children generally."
- What kind of research is this?

1. Which special health care need was found most often among the adopted children?

- a. Autism
- b. Emotional problems
- c. ADD/ADHD
- d. Allergies

2. In which of the three groups of adopted children was the percentage of children with special health care needs the highest?

- a. International adoption
- b. Foster care adoption
- c. Private domestic adoption

3. The percentage of families who adopted children with special health care needs who had to pay more than \$1000 out of pocket for health care was greatest for:

- a. International adoption
- b. Foster care adoption
- c. Private domestic adoption

4. The percentage of families who adopted children with special health care needs whose family had to cut back or stop work to care for the child was greatest for:

- a. International adoption
- b. Foster care adoption
- c. Private domestic adoption

5. The percentage of adopted children who received Special Education services was greatest for:

- a. International adoption
- b. Foster care adoption
- c. Private domestic adoption

6. The percentage of families who adopted children with special health care needs who stated that they needed family mental health care was greatest for:

- a. International adoption
- b. Foster care adoption
- c. Private domestic adoption

What are we learning about birth parents' views on open adoption?

- A study conducted by Dr. Ruth McRoy and Dr. Hal Grotevant (and colleagues) explored the attitudes of 125 birth mothers about their roles in their birth children's lives over 12 years after placement.
- What kind of research is this?

i. What percentage of the birth mothers expressed some interest in searching?

- a. 10%
- b. 25%
- c. 45%
- d. 65%

2. How many birth mothers expressed negative feelings about a birth child initiating a search from them?

- a. None
- b. 15%
- c. 50%
- d. 80%

Do photolisting services help connect children with adoptive families?

- The federally funded AdoptUsKids photolisting service has been in operation for more than five years. Researchers recently examined the impact of photolisting children on their being placed with adoptive families. The key question: Are photolisted children being matched with adoptive families?

1. Which of the following were found to be placed faster (as a group) when photolisted?

- a. Boys or girls?

b. Large sibling groups (3 or more) or single children/two-child sibling groups?

African American children or white children?

2. During the time that the researchers monitored the status of the photolisted children (October 2002 through May 2006), what percentage of these children were placed with adoptive families?
a. 10%
b. 20%
c. 40%
d. 60%

3. The researchers looked at how many children who were waiting/freed for adoption were photolisted in states with larger numbers of children waiting/freed for adoption (that is, more than 2500). New York was one of these states. What percentage of New York children who were waiting/freed for adoption were photolisted on AdoptUsKids?

- a. .5%
- b. 1.5%
- c. 7.5%
- d. 10.5%

What is most helpful to adoptive parents in developing high levels of cultural competence?

- Researchers explored the factors linked with 912 adoptive parents' levels of cultural competence on a standardized measure. All had adopted from Korea or China.

I. What is the strongest predictor of adoptive parents' level of cultural competence?

- a. Post adoption contact with adoption professionals
- b. Absence of birth children in the home
- c. Current participation in support groups
- d. Family income over \$75,000
