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How (not) to talk about adoption:

On communicative vigilance in Spain

ABSTRACT

Transnational adoption is very difficult to talk about in Spain. For this reason, speakers use “communicative vigilance” to emphasize the appropriate ways to speak and particularly not to speak about it. Part of the difficulty, we demonstrate, is that adoption talk must mediate two contradictory understandings of talk and kinship: (1) a referentialist one in which adoption’s undesirability must be first acknowledged and then masked and (2) a performative one in which talk can create a new world where transnational adoption is equivalent to and as valuable as traditional ways of creating families. Our findings have implications for both language-socialization studies and kinship studies. [*adoption, kinship, parenting, language socialization, language ideologies, silence, Spain*]

A mother in a Catalan city approached an adoption psychologist for advice on how to tell her adopted ten-year-old daughter “that she’s not a Romanian princess.”¹ The psychologist gave the mother several suggestions. A few weeks later, the defeated mother returned, asking the psychologist, “Could you just tell her yourself?”

In another incident, a seven-year-old girl adopted from China sat down for a follow-up interview with a psychologist. “Do you know that I’m adopted?” she asked the psychologist. “Yes,” the psychologist replied. “Well, don’t tell my mom!” pleaded the girl.

These two anecdotes, taken from Diana Marre’s conversations with adoption professionals, turn stereotypes of institutional talk on their heads—a psychologist talks for a client, a daughter protects her mother. In the first anecdote, we see that parents worry over how to shield adopted children from talk of their being adopted, since adoption is assumed to be inherently traumatic. A common way of doing so is to avoid adoption talk or frame adoption in a certain way, for example, by telling an adopted daughter that she is a Romanian princess. For the mother in the anecdote, dropping this pretense and talking to her daughter about being adopted proves so difficult that she asks a professional to do it for her. In the second anecdote, we likewise see the importance of protecting a loved one from hurtful adoption talk. The adopted child conspires with the psychologist to keep the adoption a secret from her mother, revealing that she believes herself to be protecting the grown-ups.

These vignettes furthermore highlight a phenomenon we have noticed during our separate ethnographic research projects on adoption in Spain: People involved in adoption broach the subject with extreme caution, often emphasizing what one should *not* say. In examining how people in Spain talk about adoption, we analyze what we call “communicative

vigilance”—careful speech and careful silence that exclude certain topics from talk.² Through talk and silence, what we call “adoption practitioners” (adopters, adoptees, and adoption professionals) both produce and describe their experiences. They display awareness that adoption is seen as a “second-best” choice for creating a family (Howell 2009:162)—different from and not as good as other ways—and avoid talk that would reveal this awareness. Finally, they produce talk that suggests that adoption is in fact “as good” as other forms of reproduction.

We focus on three situations in which talking about adoption is difficult and in which speakers are socialized into communicative vigilance with respect to it: (1) encounters between adoptive parents and researchers, (2) screening interviews between prospective adopters and adoption professionals, and (3) encounters between adoptive parents and their adopted children.³ We describe the contours of appropriate talk and silence in these three situations, how people learn to talk competently, and what happens if they do not. Adoption talk, we show, is deeply implicated in language ideologies (Woolard 1998) relating to the nature of personhood and the family in Spain. More broadly, we contribute to theoretical conceptualizations of language socialization and the production of kinship, illuminating links between the socialization of adults and that of children and showing that appropriate talk both creates and reflects kin ties.

We began our projects separately and came together to write this article when we noticed broad similarities in our findings. Susan E. Frekko’s research addresses adoption talk and how adopted children become Catalan. Jessaca B. Leinaweaver’s research focuses on Peruvian immigrants to Madrid and families from Madrid who adopt in Peru. Marre’s research examines assisted reproduction in Catalonia, comparing assisted reproductive technologies, international adoption, and surrogacy.⁴

Through our analysis of communicative vigilance around adoption, we demonstrate that adoption practitioners emphasize appropriate ways to speak and not to speak about adoption.⁵ We identify two significant theoretical implications of this finding. First, encounters in which adults instruct other adults how not to speak are particularly rich sites for contributing to the study of language socialization, offering bridges between the study of children and adults and the study of formal institutions and families, and accounting for the importance of producing appropriate speech and silences. Second, talk about adoption is an excellent way to identify underlying beliefs about “the family” in Spain. In everyday contexts around the world, people often take for granted or do not examine the “naturalness” of their family relations (e.g., Urban 1996:81). Because the constructedness of family relations is so often tacit and difficult to access, advancing the anthropological study of kinship depends on finding key sites where people,

in their everyday lives, articulate and debate the “nature” of family. We discuss these contributions below, then present three data sections on research encounters, the adoption screening process, and family settings.

Truth and performativity in language socialization

Transnational adoption in Spain offers a novel example of language socialization. Prospective adopters, adoptive parents, and researchers are all socialized into appropriate ways of talking, and not talking, about adoption. What counts as appropriate depends on “language ideologies”—ideas about how speech is or should be used and how these ideas articulate with social structures (Schieffelin et al. 1998). Language ideologies may differ from context to context or, as we will see, coexist in a single context. In either case, the transmission of implicit language ideologies is a key aspect of this kind of socialization.

Most research on language socialization focuses on children. As Paul Garrett and Patricia Baquedano-López explain, it “examines how young children and other novices, through interactions with older and/or more experienced persons, acquire the knowledge and practices that are necessary for them to function as, and be regarded as, competent members of their communities” (2002:341). Many language-socialization studies have paid particular attention to the intertwining of linguistic and communicative competence—how children acquire linguistic structures and norms for appropriate use in ways that are mutually dependent and culturally specific (Meek 2007; Ochs 1988; Ochs and Schieffelin 2001; Schieffelin 1990). In contrast, our study contributes to emerging conversations about adults’ acquisition and use of specialized registers and associated norms of appropriateness within a language already familiar to them (Carr 2010; Jacobs-Huey 2006; Mertz 1996; Philips 1988).

Our analysis follows Lawrence A. Hirschfeld (2002) in emphasizing speakers’ agency in acquiring the register of adoption talk in Spain—a specialized jargon accompanied by few explicit “dos and don’ts” and an implicit, generalized attitude of communicative vigilance. Hirschfeld demonstrates that novices learn to distinguish relevant from irrelevant information, sorting through a flow of clashing messages to “acquire the wherewithal to participate in the cultures they inhabit” (2002:612). In addition, many become such competent adoption talkers that they can “flip the script,” as E. Summerson Carr (2010) calls it—telling institutional gatekeepers what they want to hear instead of reporting on their “real” inner states. This behavior can undermine service providers’ expertise, which depends on their ability to distinguish a “flipped script” from a “followed” one. It simultaneously provides “flippers” with the opportunity to receive desired resources without

necessarily possessing the requisite inner states. Carr (2010) is describing a language ideology—held by both social workers and clients—in which inner states are believed to exist and can be truthfully or falsely described in speech. Taking this multidirectional viewpoint makes it possible to see adults as both subjects and objects of socialization within families as well as in formal institutions.

Don Kulick and Bambi B. Schieffelin describe language socialization as a dynamic process in which transmission is not a given; rather, practices can be “acquired differently from what was intended, or not acquired at all” (2004:352). In Spain, as in the West more generally, people often believe that speech can and should reflect “reality”—be it internal states or the material world. This belief aligns positivism (the idea that there is a preexisting reality) with referentialism (a view of language in which speech describes a reality that is understood as preexisting). At the same time, adoption socialization involves a belief that talking about things appropriately can bring about desired states. This belief aligns constructivism (the idea that reality is produced as ideas and experiences shape one another) with a performative view of language (in which speech is understood to effect a reality).

The tension between a positivist-referentialist view and a constructivist-performative one, as two ways of understanding reality and its relationship to language, is illustrated in a guidebook (Berástegui Pedro-Viejo et al. 2006) about transnational adoption commissioned and distributed by the government of the Madrid region to prospective adopters in that region.⁶ The guide implicitly suggests that prospective adopters embrace a point of view that is positivist at times and constructivist at times and that they correspondingly use language referentially or performatively. We analyze the guide as a piece of ethnographic data that, along with our other data, illuminates how ideologies of adoption and talk circulate in Spain.⁷

The Madrid guidebook claims that adoptive and other families are equivalent: “In the moment of the adoption, the adoptive family becomes a family like any other” (Berástegui Pedro-Viejo et al. 2006:59). That this point is made at all, however, suggests that this equivalence is not self-evident in Spain. The guide then describes the challenges that adopted children and their families face, offering numerous examples of how adoptive families differ from “biological” ones. Indeed, the guide is replete with language about how adoptive difference is an unfortunate reality that parents must confront. The challenges include adopted children’s need to “mourn” their abandonment, the fact that the children come with “baggage,” and the certainty that children of color will eventually “begin to feel that they are treated differently because of their physical appearance” (2006:73–75).⁸

These statements belie the claim that adoptive families are just like any other. Moreover, they exemplify a positivist

ontology that supports a referentialist language ideology, suggesting that “adoptive families” and “adopted children” are given realities (rather than social constructions). Reflecting this ideology, the guidebook encourages parents to use referential, tell-it-like-it-is speech to acknowledge and describe the disadvantages of adoption. Some of the guidebook’s commands in the example below follow this line of thinking:

SOME ISSUES TO KEEP IN MIND WHEN TALKING TO THE CHILD ABOUT HIS OR HER ORIGINS

Don’t lie to the child.

Take advantage of his or her questions.

Give him/her information in the most positive way and only the information that he or she is ready to receive.

Give him or her information in a way that he or she can understand.

Be calm. Make him or her feel that it is something that can be asked about and can be talked about.

Make it clear to him or her that we will always be his or her parents. [Berástegui Pedro-Viejo et al. 2006:73]⁹

Referentialist statements such as “Don’t lie to the child” presume that there exists a (positive) world of facts about the child’s adoption to which speech merely refers. Similarly, in the sentence “Give him or her information in a way that he or she can understand,” the “information” is presumed to already exist; the parent must merely package it in an age-appropriate discursive form. When this positivist-referentialist lens is applied in the context of would-be adopters’ learning communicative vigilance, as we describe it below, these speakers are in a sense being socialized into the use of untrue or insincere speech (Keane 2002) that obfuscates the undesirability of adoption in Spain.

Referentialism is not, however, the only language ideology in play. Other directives in the example above offer a performative-transformative view of language, one compatible with social constructivism. For example, instructions to speak calmly, to give the child information in a positive way, and to reassure the child that the adoption is permanent are all forms of language use that performatively produce the desired social reality. Using the appropriate language is understood to bring about a transformation in experiences and views of adoption. In this performative framework, adoption practitioners use talk to construct a new social world in which transnational adoption is equivalent to and as valuable as traditional ways of creating families. In its performative mode, adoption talk exemplifies a kind of socialization that pertains not to reproduction but to transformation (i.e., people are socialized to talk in ways that can transform rather than reproduce

ideas about the family in Spain). Thus the performative language ideology coexists, however contradictorily, with its referentialist counterpart in the adoption-talk register. This coexistence in turn reflects the coexistence of positivist and constructivist ontologies of the family in Spain.¹⁰

Adoption and silence in Spain: Past and present

Until 2008, Spain had an extremely high adoption rate, accompanied by a birth rate that continues to be among the world's lowest (Marre 2011).¹¹ These idiosyncrasies indicate that people in Spain carefully plan their families, making Spain a good place for encountering speech about what families are and how they are made.

In the mid-1990s, both adopted children and labor migrants began arriving in Spain, often from the same countries (such as Peru, China, and Morocco) (Leinaweaver 2011, 2013a; Marre 2009a). By the peak year of 2004, Spain's annual number of transnationally adopted children was second only to that of the United States, with its far larger population (Selman 2006, 2009). Before the country's rate of transnational adoption rapidly increased, Spain had a lengthy history of informal child circulation and secret adoption that began during the Civil War (1936–39) and continued well into the postwar era. The troubled history of adoption in Spain is pertinent to understanding the importance of both talk and silence.

During the dictatorship of Francisco Franco (1939–75), many parents were imprisoned, exiled, or killed. Thousands of their children were secretly placed for adoption with pro-Franco families (Falange Española 1949; Garzón 2008:73; Marre 2014), a practice that took advantage of established pathways for distributing the children of poor, uneducated families and that sometimes occurred in close alliance with members of the Catholic Church (cf. Villalta 2012 on a parallel experience in Argentina). Over time, the ideological underpinnings of illicit child circulation shifted to moral anxieties, particularly over unwed mothers (Marre 2009b, 2014; cf. Mandell 2007 for the United States). Following Franco's death in 1975 and the legalization of contraception (1978) and abortion under limited circumstances (1985), the theft and appropriation of infants appears to have persisted, based now on an economic logic that continued to resonate with moral anxieties over "inappropriate" forms of reproduction (Marre 2009b, 2011, 2014). A law aimed at preventing illegal adoptions went into effect in 1987, and transnational adoption began thereafter, perhaps in part because circulating children through domestic means was increasingly difficult.

Those who benefited from these appropriations of children—adoptive parents, professionals, and bureaucrats—clearly had reasons for remaining silent about what was going on.¹² Many biological mothers, too, feared that speaking up would bring reprisals and stigma-

tization because they were single, poor, or young or had numerous children. Some of the few who reported child theft were institutionalized in mental hospitals. Others were unaware of the kidnapping, having been told that their babies died at birth. This deception contributed to the invisibility that "inappropriate mothers" were asked to maintain in Spain. The circulated children remained silent because they were unaware, afraid, ashamed, or reluctant to hurt the people they considered their parents (Marre 2009b, 2014). Furthermore, in many cases this appropriation was not considered a crime but rather a form of assistance for single or impoverished mothers to free them from children who were presumed to be, and sometimes were, unwanted. Hence, while adoption had become "visible and vocal" (Volkman 2003:29) in much of the West, transnational adoption in Spain filled a slot formerly occupied by a form of child appropriation that was shrouded in silence (Marre 2009b, 2014).

Spain's adoption practices have been shaped as much by this history as by international norms that were later codified, especially in the 1989 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the 1993 Hague Convention on Intercountry Adoption (although see Marre and San Román 2012 on how adoptions in Spain sometimes sidestep the Hague Convention's regulations). In accordance with these conventions, Spain employs an extended pre- and postadoption procedure that charges psychologists, social workers, and lawyers with honoring the "best interests of the child" (Marre and San Román 2012). The preadoption procedure consists of a suitability screening (a process that has been criticized for its disciplining stance; see, e.g., Charro and Jociles 2007; Howell and Marre 2006; Marre and Bestard 2004). The screening begins when prospective parents file an application with their regional adoption authority, choosing a country and justifying their choice.¹³ Most move through the process with the support of a private adoption agency.¹⁴ Many prospective parents participate in online forums or join associations (often organized according to the child's country of origin) where they learn from other adoptive families (Marre 2004). Prospective parents are deemed eligible to adopt after obtaining a suitability certificate, the official document that enables them to adopt. During this process, which we further discuss below, adoptive families are asked and encouraged—and sometimes compelled—to acquire knowledge and practices necessary for them to perform and be regarded as competent parents. Moreover, a range of characteristics, including a prospective adopter's advanced age, single status, or preference for a child of a certain skin color, puts adoption applications at risk. Some characteristics can result in automatic rejection (e.g., if the couple is receiving fertility treatments while pursuing adoption), and others (such as the desire to adopt a child with special needs) may require extra work to convince evaluators that prospective parents

are suitable. In any case, it is clear to applicants that the burden is on them to act—and in particular, to talk—like a certain kind of potential parent in order to achieve the suitability certificate.

Through such practices and others, speech (and avoidance of speech) produces kinship.¹⁵ The constructivist notion that people produce relatedness—through verbal and nonverbal action—is, however, inimical to the positivist way that people in Spain and many other parts of the West understand kinship. Indeed, people in North America and western Europe rarely perceive kinship as something they discursively produce; rather, it is strongly felt to be a naturally-occurring thing that people can fortify, or challenge, with nonverbal actions. For example, folk kinship theory among white and middle-class people in the United States, as documented by David M. Schneider (1980), operates according to a binary of substance (or biogenetic relatedness/“nature”) and code (including both behavior and law/“culture”). This framework presupposes an underlying biological truth on top of which people construct systems of relationships that are in theory comparable across cultures. Such a framework and others like it are part of the material out of which family relations are not only received but also actively produced, according to contemporary anthropological kinship studies (Carsten 2000, 2011; Franklin and McKinnon 2001; Holy 1996). Scholars of relatedness invoke practice and belonging, defining kinship as “the process of claiming people as belonging to a group that sees itself as connected in a fundamental way” (Gailey 2000:15).

Adoption in particular challenges the primacy of biology in how kin relations are understood and complicates the central link between parent and child (Howell 2009; Modell 1994, 2002; Terrell and Modell 1994; Yngvesson 2009). The practice of incorporating adopted children as both family members and citizens relates directly to their separation from their birth parents and birth nations in a “kind of ‘serial monogamy’ of national/familial kinship” (Dorow 2006:209). This “clean-break model”—which refers to the child’s “complete integration ... into the adoptive family and the severance of ties with the biological family” (Duncan 1993:51)—informed the 1993 Hague Convention (Yngvesson 2010:19).

Given how adoption challenges conventional biologized notions of kinship, talk or silence about adoption reveals broader truths about kinship, including nonadoptive kinship, in Spain. In particular, such talk and silence demonstrate what people in Spain think a strong family consists of. They are also important ways that parents, children, professionals, and even social researchers can gain credibility, showing their commitment to local ideologies of family. To support these claims, below, we describe language socialization in three situations. We begin with the encounters that first made us aware of these issues: our own

research encounters with participants. We then address the adoption screening process and family settings.

How not to talk about adoption in research encounters

In anthropological studies of adoption, researchers and interviewees interact as novices and experts, respectively. The interviewee oversees the linguistic socialization of the researcher, though interviewees, of course, have themselves been socialized into the new register of adoption talk only recently.

As researcher-novices, we identified few specific rules about what to say and what not to say. Indeed, the examples we have collected include “rules” that sometimes contradict one another. As Katarina Wegar notes, “The language of adoption is continually transformed,” and there is a “lack of consensus concerning proper terms” (2006:14). Certain terms, such as “abandonment,” may be taboo in one family and openly used in another. We thus found that people are socialized not into a system of consistent rules but into a more general norm: Adoption talk requires vigilance. One consequence of this norm is that speakers—including researchers—internalize a sense that adoption is so fraught and confusing that no one knows how to talk about it appropriately.

Early in her research in Madrid, Leinaweaver had two encounters in which interviewees tried to socialize her into appropriate ways of talking about adoption. One adoption professional gave her advice on how to conduct interviews with adoptive parents. Later, an adoptive parent she interviewed criticized the way she had phrased a question. Frekko also had an encounter with an interviewee who criticized the way she framed a question. These three moments demonstrate important aspects of how adoption research itself is spoken about as well as how people talk and think about adoption in Spain.

In 2009, Leinaweaver met with the director of adoptions in Madrid’s child welfare department. The director asked Leinaweaver what kinds of questions she anticipated posing to adoptive parents and children. She responded that she wanted to know to what degree adopted children originating from Peru “feel Peruvian” and whether their parents or other members of Spanish society view them as Peruvian. The director asked what she would do if the parents got angry, giving the example of parents of children adopted from China who state firmly that their children “are not Chinese but Spanish, as Spanish as Don Quixote.” He added that parents of Peruvian adoptees worry that their children might join Latin American gangs and work hard to prevent them from identifying with such groups. For that reason, he said, questions about being Peruvian could upset parents because they hint at the similarity that the children share with gang members. He concluded by

suggesting that Leinaweaver speak cautiously with adoptive families, asking, for example, how it feels to be “of Peruvian origin” rather than whether they “feel Peruvian.”

The adoption director implied that adoptive parents had been socialized into a particular way of speaking about their children and that researchers speaking with them should develop communicative vigilance to avoid using phrases that would counter the parents’ ideas about how adoption should be discussed. This strategy would work if there were a single consistent model shared across adoptive families in Spain, but as we show below, there is no such model. Therefore, each caution that researchers are given demonstrates a particular arena of anxiety around adoption talk. In this case, to state that the adopted children “are Peruvian” would suggest that they might not be completely Spanish and would reify their difference from their Spanish parents and extended family. More worryingly, the director felt, a statement about a child’s “Peruvian” nature could imply a connection to a stigmatized Latino identity.¹⁶ By encouraging Leinaweaver to avoid identity labels such as “Peruvian,” which would force parents to discuss the issue of an adopted child’s difference, the director demonstrated that the label “Peruvian” indexes aspects of adoption that some people prefer to silence.

Later, Leinaweaver interviewed Marcia, an adoptive mother, in a Madrid café.¹⁷ During the interview, Leinaweaver began to form a question about when Marcia’s daughter *llegó a casa* (came home).¹⁸ Marcia confronted Leinaweaver, saying—as Leinaweaver recorded in notes taken after the interview—something like “You have a problem saying ‘adopted.’ I noticed you dancing around it before. Why can’t you just say the word?” Leinaweaver wrote in her field notes, “Perhaps in retrospect it was due to what the director was saying about being careful with language.” She responded to Marcia that she also has several adopted family members, hoping to gain credibility as someone sympathetic to adoption. Marcia immediately apologized, explaining that she had been called racist for emphasizing the fact of difference and that she had just demanded that Leinaweaver do the same thing: use language that identified her daughter as different.

Through her accusation and subsequent apology, Marcia was socializing Leinaweaver into the language of adoption. The content of her communication was different from that of the adoption director, who had suggested that Leinaweaver avoid any talk that could be stigmatizing. Marcia, by contrast, insisted that Leinaweaver address “second-best” stigma head-on rather than euphemize and hence dismiss what Marcia experienced as a simple and obvious fact of difference (it is also particularly instructive that directly addressing “difference” led to Marcia’s being called “racist”; see Leinaweaver 2014b). But in both cases, what we see is not a clear-cut rule for use in interviews with all adoptive parents but a sense that adoption talk requires

vigilance. This language ideology is entwined with the conflicted professional discourses about adoption in Spain and transnationally that, as noted below, insist that parents recognize adoptive difference and rehearse it regularly with their children while remaining silent on other aspects of adoption.

A third example of socialization into communicative vigilance comes from Frekko’s research on transnational adoption in Catalonia. She was interested in comparing the experiences of parents who had used private adoption agencies with those of parents who had not, and she asked an interviewee how much her adoption had cost. The extremely negative response she received demonstrated that the interviewee interpreted the question as in line with the discourse of “buying” a child. The interviewee rejected the premise of the question by explicitly equating adoption with giving birth in a private hospital. She told Frekko that her biological son’s birth in a private hospital was also expensive (she chose not to use the national health system), yet no one ever asked her about how much it cost. In other words, she rejected Frekko’s question on the grounds that biological and adoptive ways of creating a family are comparable (in this case economically) and that one should minimize difference. Other people Frekko spoke to volunteered information about the cost without Frekko’s prompting them or answered her questions about the matter easily, which demonstrated to Frekko not that money talk should be avoided but that adoption talk requires vigilance.

Ultimately, the interviewees socialized Leinaweaver and Frekko to anticipate and avoid potentially upsetting speech. In these cases, as in the narratives of suitability in the interviews Frekko collected (see next section), talk is not meant to reflect the inner feelings of the person. Instead, communicative vigilance in part signals an *awareness* of appropriate ways of talking, which are in turn understood to reflect the speaker’s assimilation of community norms. As adoption practitioners work to socialize the researchers who study them into appropriate forms of talk, they engage in an ongoing project that ratifies the decision to adopt a child.

How not to talk about adoption in screening interviews

In Spain, many people’s first encounter with norms for talking about adoption occurs when they apply to adopt. Prospective adoptive parents must go through a bureaucratic process to show that they are “idóneos” (in Spanish) or “idonis” (in Catalan)—that is, “suitable.” Suitability screening acts both as a force of socialization and, as parents put it, a “filter” designed to protect children. The screening process involves participating in a series of workshops, being interviewed by a psychologist, having one’s

home visited by a social worker, and having one's income, health, and police records reviewed. In short, the suitability screening process both encourages (i.e., socializes people into) and evaluates certain psychological, physiological, and material states.¹⁹

The psychological aspect of suitability screening focuses on motives. In Spain, the single appropriate reason for wanting to adopt is a personal desire to have a child (Jociles Rubio and Charro Lobato 2008; Leinaweaver 2013a:104–105). If adoption is framed as a “second-best” choice behind having a biological child (Howell 2009:162), the most unproblematic applicants are those with diagnosed fertility problems. Those who apply for other reasons must therefore perform extra work to prove that their motives are appropriate, and some applicants' reasons, such as humanitarianism, are deemed inappropriate. As María Isabel Jociles Rubio and Cristina Charro Lobato show, adoption workers in Spain implicitly and even explicitly coach applicants to “exclude [certain motives for adopting] from their speech, and in this way, supposedly, also from their feelings and their reality” (2008:115).²⁰ Language socialization in such contexts is understood as transforming parents' motives rather than simply providing them with appropriate scripts. Madrid's guide to transnational adoption likewise implies that using appropriate self-talk brings about an internal transformation:

The first thing to do to be able to adopt and have the adoption be a success is to say good-bye: good-bye to the child I always thought I would have, good-bye to the pregnancy, good-bye to the birth, good-bye to being the first thing my child sees, good-bye to recognizing in my newborn the best in myself, in my partner, or in my family. Good-bye, ultimately, to being parents like other parents to a child like other children, to a child that looks like me. [Berástegui Pedro-Viejo et al. 2006:18]²¹

This script does a few things: It neatly bundles a set of assumptions about desire and family in Spain. It imputes to would-be parents the desire for a biological child (the “best” option), motivations for that desire (“I want a child who saw me first,” etc.), and grief over lacking a biological child. Finally, it prescribes a mourning process, including acts of self-talk to transform the imputed grief over the metaphorical death of the desired “best” child to acceptance of a “second-best” child. In the imperative to “say good-bye,” the prescribed communicative vigilance allows parents to speak to themselves in ways that presume that they hold “normal” desires and motives, as well as the ability to transform them into desires and motives that are compatible with adoption.

To become eligible for parenthood, adoption applicants must indicate that they have been successfully socialized by using certain kinds of speech and silence. To

demonstrate this, we use the case of Frekko's participants David and Clara. This couple was initially rejected, even though the vast majority of applicants receive the suitability certificate on their first try—in 2011, more than 98 percent of applicants did so in the Catalonia region (DGSFI 2014), where David and Clara lived. Although they were eventually declared suitable, David and Clara's case demonstrates that an adoption application can be rejected because the applicants failed to talk appropriately.

In describing her screening sessions, Clara showed that she had been successfully socialized on the point of motives. She reported that the administration is wary of “altruistic people who are going to save a kid in Africa.” She continued:

“They get that out of your head quickly, and that seems right to me. . . . You're not going to do anyone a favor. You want to be a parent and you are going to satisfy a personal desire, taking advantage of the fact that there is a child—” “Who needs what you can give him,” interjected her husband, David.²² Here we see that “selfish” reasons are suitable, while altruistic (i.e., “selfless”) ones are not.²³ Clara's speech concords with this understanding of appropriate reasons for adopting; she successfully assimilated this idea and the accompanying speech. But this is not why her application was rejected.

Clara and David explained that their application was rejected because they were open about continuing artificial insemination while also beginning the adoption process, which they knew was long. While fertility problems are desirable from the perspective of suitability screening, pursuing fertility treatment while applying for adoption is grounds for automatic rejection because it implies that the couple has not “said good-bye.” As Jociles Rubio and Charro Lobato (2008) found, adoption workers frame the lack of biological children (whether intentional or resulting from fertility problems) as a “loss” that parents must mourn before adopting. Parents who denied feeling such a loss were corrected—not having a biological child is inherently a loss that must be overcome (Jociles Rubio and Charro Lobato 2008:121). The metaphor of mourning implies a death—the death of the (idea of the) “best” child, who will be replaced by a “second-best” child through adoption.

For Clara and David, failing to use language that signaled their “mourning,” and thereby their acceptance of the “second-best” option, turned out to be a mistake. “With complete naïveté,” Clara reported, “we explained [that we were pursuing artificial insemination]. And then they told us, ‘Do the biological route first. When that's done, if you get pregnant, congratulations. If not, if you want to continue with an adoption, come back.’”²⁴ Clearly, Clara and David's socialization into appropriate adoption talk was incomplete at the time of their first application. Had they known not to talk about their fertility treatments, they would likely have been found suitable.

For evidence about what Clara and David's socialization should have involved, we look to online advice forums that informally prepare applicants for participating successfully in the screening process, offering them explicit instructions for what to say and not to say (Jociles Rubio and Charro Lobato 2008). For example, Leinaweaver collected the following example in an online forum on Peruvian adoptions to Spain in 2011:

[The psychologist] tries to get as much information from you to see if you've finished mourning, that is, if you've gotten over the fact that you couldn't have kids (I don't know if that's the case for you)—an adopted child isn't a substitute for a biological one, it's Your child. . . . My husband and I talked a lot before the interviews and we were really sure about what we wanted to get across to them, our desire to create a family, and all the love we had to give to our child, and thank God it all went well.²⁵

As this message shows, prospective parents participating in such forums encounter appropriate discourses about issues such as "mourning" and the "desire to create a family." Both these avenues of socialization—adoption screening sessions and online communities—help many parents display the communicative vigilance necessary to allow them to be deemed suitable. Clara and David did not encounter information about how not to talk about fertility treatments, which resulted in their application being rejected.

Clara and David were exasperated at what David called the "paternalism" of the adoption professionals' rules, which obliged them to wait a year until artificial insemination ultimately failed. At this point, they reapplied. Now they were able to say that they had exhausted the medical treatments, and their saying so would be taken as evidence that they had "said good-bye." Yet they could have quietly continued to pursue fertility treatments while producing the speech they knew was expected. David pointed this out in our interview. "A lot of people know [that one cannot report ongoing fertility treatments while trying to adopt]," he said. "They're not as naive as us, and what they do is not say it."²⁶ That is, they display communicative vigilance, the result of successful socialization, by not reporting their fertility treatment. In doing so, they follow a version of Carr's (2010) "flipped script," which includes both telling caseworkers what they want to hear and, in this case, avoiding telling them what they do not want to hear.

While none of Frekko's consultants reported pursuing fertility treatments during the adoption process, one prospective adopter, Mila, unexpectedly became pregnant. Mila and her husband had already met their soon-to-be adopted daughter and decided to keep quiet about the pregnancy and continue with the adoption. The country

they adopted from restricted adoptions to couples without biological children, so the visibly pregnant wife stayed home when her husband traveled to finalize the adoption and bring their daughter home. We do not wish to imply that this couple "lied" or should have done something different. Rather, we point out that what is evaluated in the screening process is communicative vigilance (in this case, knowing that it is inappropriate to report a pregnancy) rather than material states (that is, there is no medical exam to determine whether a female applicant is pregnant). In short, the suitability process ensures only that a couple's speech is appropriate and uses their speech as an index of the other states that interest the administration. Successful socialization into appropriate ways of talking about adoption allows applicants to produce "suitable" discourse and become parents. The suitability process is both a socialization tool and a filter keeping out those who fail to achieve communicative vigilance, at least until they can achieve it.

As both a socialization tool and a filter, suitability screening points to the struggle in Spain over what a family is and how people create and talk about nontraditional families. This is reflected in two contradictory approaches to language. On the one hand, the screening process employs a positivist-referentialist approach to adoption language: Because the biological family is taken for granted as a superior form, prospective adopters must use talk to acknowledge this assumption and show that they accept their inability to achieve the "superior" family form. Otherwise, adoption talk depicts prospective adopters as living in a state of "denial"—a term from addiction recovery discourse used to describe a situation in which speech and "inner states" are unintentionally in disagreement (Carr 2010). This condition supposedly threatens the success of the adoption, while it simultaneously troubles notions of what a family is.

On the other hand, suitability screenings involve a constructivist-performative approach to language, in which saying something makes it so (Austin 1975). In this mode, prescriptions about adoption talk can be viewed as optimistic attempts to transform society—acknowledging inequality between forms of families as a way of battling stigma and ultimately transforming the family in Spain.

How not to talk about adoption in family settings

Prescriptions for how parents and others are to talk to adoptees have changed over time, and the silences of the past are implicated in the discursive patterns of the present. Fifty years ago, the prevalent model in North America called for the adoptive family to act and be treated "as if" it were a biological one (Modell 1994). Such secrecy, according to the influential findings of the sociologist David Kirk (1964), harms adoptive families. Kirk recommended

that adoptive parents acknowledge, rather than deny, difference—and thereby conform to a Western language ideology of “transparency”—and this recommendation is reflected in adoption legislation throughout Europe and North America. While practices vary from country to country, general trends favor the disclosure of information to adoptees about their adoption (see, e.g., European Parliament 2008:125).

Such prescriptions, however, do not necessarily govern language-socialization practices. For example, the extent to which adoptive families in Spain follow prescriptions for transparency depends on how visible their children's adopted status is, as a function of phenotypic difference (Berástegui Pedro-Viejo and Jódar Anchía 2013; Jacobson 2008; Marre 2007; San Román 2013b; Seligmann 2009). Children's age also affects parents' adoption talk, with certain topics introduced earlier, others later (Berástegui Pedro-Viejo and Jódar Anchía 2013). The last topics to be covered are phenotypic differences and the reasons why the children were separated from their biological parents, and not all parents address them. Clearly, children too are socialized into communicative vigilance around adoption, involving both talk and avoidance of talk.

The ideological nature of “transparency” becomes evident when we consider that the preference for it extends to some topics and not others. In the case of adoptees' ascendancy relationships, for example, administrative personnel are obliged to maintain strict secrecy and to prevent contact between birth families and adoptive families. This practice has been mandated by every Spanish adoption law starting with the First Additional Provision of Law 21/1987 through the 2010 Catalan Civil Code.²⁷ This can be traced back even further, at least to 1958, when illegitimacy, orphaning, and adoption were shrouded in secrecy by Article 21 of the Civil Registry Law (Leinaweaver 2014a).

The imperative of transparency thus applies to the fact of adoption, but not to the specifics of the child's background, especially the identity of the birth mother or other birth relatives. Similar prescriptions for anonymity apply in Spain between donors and recipients of genetic material, including blood, gametes, and organs (Bergmann 2011; Marre 2011). Speech commonly used in legislation, procedures, practices, and everyday adoptive talk draws on depersonalized, generalized concepts such as a child's “origins” or “country of origin” (Leinaweaver 2013a:127; Marre 2007, 2009a, 2009b; Marre and Bestard 2009; San Román 2013a). These phrases are also used euphemistically to refer to phenotypic difference between a parent and a transnationally adopted child.

In sum, adoptive families are encouraged to talk to their children about the fact of their adoption in accordance with international protocol. Yet professionals in Spain counter this approach by adhering to Spanish law and norms about secrecy. Furthermore, we have found that many adoptive

parents resist talking openly about adoption with their children. In one telling example, at the end of 2008, the Catalan government presented the draft of a new Catalan Civil Code on Personhood and Family, which sought equal rights for biological and adopted children by guaranteeing adopted children's right to know that they are adopted before reaching the age of 12. The subsequent wave of questioning by adoptive families confirmed how difficult it is for them to talk about adoption and how private the issue is still considered (Marre and San Román 2012). Thus, even though many people in Spain believe that adoption should be openly discussed, the mandated secrecy about birth families limits many discussions about adoption to stories of travel, souvenirs, songs, and cuisine (Berástegui Pedro-Viejo and Jódar Anchía 2013; Marre 2009a).

One of the most common themes Marre found on two e-mail lists was how parents should talk with their children about adoption. Unavoidably, this issue is entwined with a related one: how to contest the prevalent ideology of selective transparency. Marre also found cases of families that closely followed a psychologist's instructions (whether explicit or implicit), perhaps also using those guidelines as an excuse not to talk with their children about something painful. In one interview, Marre asked the mother of a 12-year-old girl, adopted from eastern Europe, if the girl wanted to know the specifics of her background and adoption, which were contained in a dossier the mother had. The mother replied that her daughter had indeed expressed curiosity about these issues but that she was following the psychologist's advice, putting her daughter off by explaining that she would have the right to this information when she turned 18.

Much of Marre's ethnographic data confirms how difficult it is for adoptive families, especially mothers, to talk to their children about their birth mother. One mother explained,

I also think there are a lot of parents who, since they don't know how to address the issue, they just don't do it. At work there's a woman with a 14-year-old daughter who has a friend adopted from an Eastern country who is obsessed ... with her history, her country of origin, her biological mother. ... She asks her friends for money so she can save up and go meet her biological mother. ... Her parents have talked to the other families at the school to tell them that neither they nor their children should encourage this kind of talk.²⁸

This example also demonstrates the language socialization of an adopted child (how she should and should not talk about her adoption). In addition to the issue of how and when to talk about the birth mother, adoptive parents also struggle over how to name her, often resorting to discursive resources such as “biological mother,” “the lady that had you in her belly,” or even just “the lady.”

A couple participating in Frekko's study opted to use her visit to the family as a way of encouraging a conversation with their adolescent children about their adoptions. They chose to conduct the parental interview (normally done out of the children's earshot) in front of their eldest son (age 14). They stopped the interview briefly for the father to take the boy to scouts. When the interview resumed, the mother told Frekko that she had explained things about the adoptions that he had not heard previously and that she thought it was a good opportunity for him to reflect on his adoption. The father reported that during the five-minute car ride to scouts, the boy had already begun asking questions about the information he had overheard.

Although many adoptive parents resist talking openly about adoption or find it difficult even when they think it is a good idea, the empirical data also confirm the opposite story: that there are families who, contesting the dominant secrecy narratives, decide to talk to their children about the birth mother and other members of the birth family. This decision places them in conflict with most postadoption professionals. In an example from Marre's data, a mother stated the following:

When I was talking to the adoption psychologist, I brought up the topic of my daughters' biological family and told her I didn't know whether to stay in touch with them or what. She told me that she thought it would be very strange for the child, that she wouldn't understand, that adoption breaks the ties with the biological family, that why should we get sucked into looking for something we shouldn't, and so on and so forth. I didn't know what to say because I always thought this was something that would be good for my daughter.²⁹

For many professionals, to talk to adoptive children about their birth mother leads to confusion about who is the "real" mother. In another example from Marre's e-mail list data, writing about the postadoption follow-ups that professionals undertake with adopted children, a mother stated,

Up to now the reports have been about how she's doing in school, what she likes to play, whether she has her vaccinations, and so on. But since, according to them, we have been so thoughtless as to travel to her country to visit her family, this was going to catch up with us at some point. There's a part of the report called "General Development" that says ... they don't know what repercussions the trip to her country of origin will have on the minor, [so] they're offering us the option of receiving postadoption services. ... Of course we don't know the consequences of the trip, but we did it because she asked us for it and it seemed like an important enough reason to take seriously. She wasn't asking to go to Euro Disney. She asked us if she could meet her mother, and we tried, [but the professionals told us

that this was going to mess her up because she wouldn't know who her parents really were.³⁰

In some cases the professionals' recommendations for how not to talk about the birth mother are even more drastic. At a conference attended by Marre in Alicante, an adoptive mother asked how she should talk about the birth mother to her daughter, who was adopted from China. She was told that the best thing would be to tell the girl that her birth mother had died, because this would commence a straightforward period of "mourning," as well as, of course, postpone the discussion indefinitely. Here we have another suggestion that someone mourn an imagined loss, a metaphorical death—in this case, the child is encouraged to mourn a biological mother whom she does not remember and who is in fact likely alive.

Disagreements about what is "best" for adopted children, about what is to be hidden and what is to be revealed and when, result in tensions among professionals and parents that reveal themselves in our research encounters. Despite the contradictions, the ideology of selective transparency, which prescribes talk about the fact of adoption and proscribes talk about birth mothers, comes to be taken for granted as "obviously" serving adoptees' best interests. Following Alfred Schütz (1962), we argue that each family is motivated to learn not to talk about birth mothers and that most families comply because their actions could otherwise be censured or misunderstood.

Conclusion: Sensitive subjects

Although adoption involves a minority of families in Spain, it can tell us a great deal about family making in Spain because it is a site where people articulate ideas about what makes a solid, thriving family. Paradoxically, part of what appears to make a solid family is a form of communicative vigilance that often requires *not* articulating certain things. We find that in related but distinct arenas of the adoption world, adults instruct one another in communicative vigilance, which they come to understand as crucial within an always-shifting register of adoption talk. This finding has implications for the role of children in an argument about adult language socialization, the work that silence achieves in producing communicative vigilance, and how adoptive families and adoption professionals produce a contested kinship through a proliferation of talk about how to talk (or not to talk) about adoption in Spain.

In the examples of adoption talk we have assembled, adoptive parents and prospective parents play a central role. Their socialization is particularly important because they go on to manage the socialization of their adopted children. In this sense, studying the socialization of adoptive parents is a bridge between studying adult novices

and child novices (historically the protagonists of language-socialization studies). Further research is needed on how children learn to talk about adoption and on what sources provide this training, besides their newly socialized adoptive parents.³¹

This indirect form of language socialization allows us to see how institutions and families interact. In our studies, we observed the language socialization of adults as they interact with and are supervised by powerful institutions. These adults in turn oversee the language socialization of their children in a family context that remains under the gaze of institutions and professionals. In Spain, professionals have played a central role in local adoption practice, including adoption talk, and their importance makes sense in a broader context of hierarchy that is also seen in everyday interactions with physicians, psychologists, and other authority figures in Spain (San Román 2013a).

When successfully socialized, adoption practitioners display awareness of a language ideology according to which talk about adoption is important, essential, fraught, and sometimes forbidden. The speech taboos we encountered were often surprising and inconsistent across settings and speakers. The lack of clear rules about what to say and what not to say is evidence that the subject itself is a delicate and contested one. Rather than following clear rules, these speakers are all demonstrating communicative vigilance.

Although the stakes feel high, over 96 percent of applicants across Spain are awarded “suitable” status (DGSFI 2014). This percentage shows that learning to talk appropriately in screening interviews leads the applicants quite directly to achieving their goal. This advances their own family projects as well as the state’s.³² Why, then, is there so much emphasis on a socialization process that is apparently easy? The high acceptance rate is evidence that the screening process is in large part about socializing parents and transforming adoption practice. Indeed, many parents do want to transform the way they think about kinship and to both transmit their new thinking to their children and feel confident and satisfied in their choice to adopt. Accordingly, appropriate forms of talk directed by parents to children are meant to encourage the children’s emotional well-being, as well as to strengthen parent-child relationships. And when some of those parents later go on to talk with researchers (and other curious strangers) about adoption, they encounter opportunities to demonstrate their own successful socialization and to teach others how not to talk, and by extension how not to think and feel, about adoption. In all these cases, communicative vigilance does not need to reflect an imagined inner state but rather to display a social awareness.

The vigilance with which speakers must address the topic of adoption in Spain points to the challenge that adoption poses to the Spanish family, itself the ideological foundation of the nation. Biology, as an ideology of

blood, can remain central to conceptions of family only if adoption is defined as “second best” and acknowledged as such through referential speech that bluntly describes loss, mourning, and baggage. The need to ensure adoption’s secondary status is also why phenotypic difference must be treated with care—an ideology of the family based on blood means that “racially” distinct children are also “second best.” Though it can be impolite to point to racial stratification in Spain, it can also be impolite to erase difference.

Silences around specific anxieties of adoption tell us that kinship in Spain is not supposed to be understandable as an economic transaction (cf. Zelizer 1985) and that parents’ phenotypes are supposed to match their children’s (Bergmann 2011). They also tell us that adoption can count as a form of family if people can counteract antikinship pressures through successful language socialization. Meanwhile, instances of contested talk tell us that the language ideologies about adoption circulating among professionals in Spain and internationally are contradictory. One common contradiction among professionals is that children must know that they are adopted but must not engage in talk that could undermine the absolute and permanent nature of their ties to their adoptive parents (cf. Howell 2009).

No wonder parents work so hard to get adoption talk right with their children and with researchers, strangers, and gatekeeping professionals—its very form both reproduces kinship and signals that they have made kinship happen. The stakes are highest in the conversations—heavily mediated by professionals—that parents have with their children about “adoption,” where “adoption” refers only to specific authorized topics and rigorously silences those matters that are deemed unsuitable for children. Reported conversations between parents and children exhibit a communicative vigilance that includes the strategic and motivated avoidance of particular topics coupled with an emphasis on less threatening ones (such as the child’s “origins”; Marre 2007). This is important kin work; parents want to do what is best for their child and, crucially, for the family relations on which their child depends.

Although avoiding particular themes in adoption talk is a focus of language socialization around adoption in Spain, we have also documented a proliferation of talk around exactly how to avoid those topics and how by contrast to address adoption appropriately. In this regard, Spanish adoption is “confidential, secret, and, at the same time, a matter of vociferous public debate,” as Judith S. Modell has written about U.S. adoption (2002:178; see also Foucault 1978 for a parallel discussion of debate and secrecy on the topic of sex).

The speech and silences that characterize this communicative vigilance produce kinship by constituting persons as parents (or children or professionals). For example, on one level, the screening process ensures that prospective parents are suited to be parents. But on another level, it

produces suitable parents. Talk makes kinship—teaching applicants how to talk, and not talk, like adoptive parents is a key piece of making them into adoptive parents. Language socialization in such contexts is understood as transforming parents' motives rather than simply providing them with appropriate scripts. And in turn, part of what parents do with their communicative vigilance about adoption is create an adoption-positive world, one that is welcoming to their children and to themselves. Although language socialization is understood to be transformative in this way, we also have evidence that it may not necessarily be linked to transformations in one's thinking. Generating appropriate speech—rather than reimagining kinship—is what satisfies the professional gatekeepers who permit and monitor adoptive family relations.

We understand the “silences” we encountered embedded in adoption talk as a crucial expression of parents' communicative vigilance. As we have shown, this communicative vigilance aligns with a recent history of talk and avoidance of talk about child appropriation in Spain.³³ It also produces what look like contradictions to unsocialized researchers or acquaintances who do not yet know that the “rule” is not “Don't talk about *x*,” but rather “Talk or avoid talk with deliberate care.” We have found that the sharing of vigilance around talk is more important than the actual content of the talk. Looking at the ways adoption silences are encouraged, critiqued, and circulated taught us in turn about how adult language socialization unfolds when children are the indirect objects of that socialization, what the ends of vigilance are, and how kinship is made through everyday practices. Such practices must necessarily include communicative vigilance, careful talk, and—especially—careful silence.

Notes

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1. Data for this article were collected in Catalan and Spanish and appear here in translation by the authors. When the originals are recordings or written documents, we provide the original text in the endnotes. When the data are reconstructed from field notes, we do not provide the originals.

2. We thank an anonymous reviewer for the term *communicative vigilance*. Kathryn Elissa Goldfarb describes a similar way of talking in Japan, which extends to a number of nonadoptive kinship relations, as “careful” or “self-censoring” (2012:73). By “silence,” we indicate the absence of certain topics from talk about adoption, not the absence of speech altogether. For anthropological treatments of the latter, see Basso 2011, Gal 2013b, and Mendoza-Denton 2001.

3. In the case of screening interviews and family encounters, our data consist of narratives collected in interviews and focus groups rather than in-person observation. In the case of research encounters, our data come from firsthand experience. Because we are examining language ideologies, it will be important in future research to examine both language and metalanguage (talk and “talk about talk”) in all three situations so that we can explore any discrepancies between explicit ideologies and implicit practice.

4. The regions of Madrid and Catalonia have the largest number of transnationally adopted people in Spain. While Madrid is a focal point of the Spanish state, many Catalans aspire to separate from Spain and establish Catalonia as a sovereign state within the European Union, and Barcelona is a key locus for Catalonia's surging independence movement. Bureaucratic speech takes place in Spanish in Madrid and mostly in Catalan in Catalonia. Despite these differences, we found overwhelming similarities in how adoption is carried out and ideologized in the two regions. Because of these shared patterns, we refer to adoption in “Spain,” which we use in the (current) administrative and geographic sense. We acknowledge that it is a loaded term and that many of our Catalan participants do not identify as “Spanish.”

5. We also fill a gap in adoption research, where language use has been little studied (though see Fogle 2008, 2013, on language socialization among families adopting school-age children from Russia).

6. Because adoption is decentralized in Spain, it is unlikely that the guide has circulated widely outside the Madrid region. Nonetheless, its themes are common to adoption discourse throughout Spain and are reflected in our Catalan data.

7. The perceived inadequacies of prescriptive materials on adoption in Spain recently prompted some families to ask Marre's research group, AFIN, to develop a new guide that would teach them how to speak about difficult issues. The guide has been published (see Grupo AFIN 2004).

8. Quotes from the guide mentioned in this paragraph are as follows: “En el momento en el que se constituye la adopción, la familia adoptiva se convierte en una familia como las otras” (59); “familias biológicas” (72), “duelo” (73), “mochila” (20), and “empiezan a sentir que son tratados como diferentes por su aspecto físico” (74).

9. ALGUNAS CUESTIONES A TENER EN CUENTA PARA HABLAR CON EL HIJO DE SUS ORÍGENES

No mentir al niño.

Aprovechar sus preguntas.

Darle la información del modo más positivo y solo la que esté preparado para recibir.

Darle la información de modo que pueda entenderla.

Mostrarnos tranquilos. Hacerle sentir que es algo sobre lo que se puede preguntar y de lo que se puede hablar.

Dejarle siempre claro que somos sus padres para siempre.

10. We thank an anonymous reviewer for articulating this alignment.

11. Spain's total fertility rate has declined dramatically, from 2.8 children per woman in the mid-1970s to 1.32 children per woman in 2012 (INE 2014), when the European average was 1.58 (Eurostat 2009). Meanwhile, women's mean age at first childbirth has increased from 28.5 in the mid-1970s to 31.5 in 2012 (INE 2014). Marre (2009b, 2011) and Alvarez et al. (2013) have attributed Spain's low birth rate in part to a form of "structural infertility" in Spain: Gender inequality in the workplace and lack of state support for families lead people to delay having children, resulting in concomitant age-related fertility problems.

12. An advocacy group for stolen children and their biological families points out that many families "benefiting from" the appropriations were also victims. Many thought they were legally adopting a child who had been voluntarily placed for adoption (Luque 2013).

13. In Spain, 23 different regional entities have jurisdiction over adoption.

14. International Adoption Collaborating Entity (ECAI by its Spanish acronym). Law 1/1996, article 25, *BOE* 15:1231.

15. The important role of language in producing kinship has been identified since the early days of anthropology, when collecting kinship terms and elucidating systems of relationships were paramount in the discipline (e.g., Kroeber 1996). More recently, linguistic anthropologists have documented how speaking and kinship are intertwined (Agha 2007; Danziger 2001).

16. There is an empirical reality behind these fears. Some Latin American adoptees have joined gangs, and many families with children from Latin America fear that their children could be detained or arrested because authorities presume they are affiliated with them (Leinaweaver 2013a; Marre 2009a). In both cases, children are not only subject to negative moral evaluations but also distinguished from their adoptive families, who are not included in the label "Peruvian."

17. Research participants' names are pseudonyms.

18. The expression "coming home" is common in U.S. adoption language, and Leinaweaver has examples of other adoptive parents in Spain using similar expressions such as "ha llegado a la familia" (he or she has arrived to the family). Marre has collected examples of postadoption e-mail lists with titles such as "At home" or "Finally home." See also Leinaweaver et al. n.d.

19. See Noordegraaf et al. 2008 on the tension between helper and gatekeeper roles among adoption social workers in the Netherlands.

20. "Otras motivaciones que los técnicos tratan de que los adoptantes excluyan de su discurso y, de este modo, -se supone también de sus sentimientos y de su realidad."

21. "Lo primero que hay que hacer para poder adoptar y que la adopción funcione es decir adiós: adiós al hijo que siempre imaginé que tendría, adiós al embarazo, adiós al parto, adiós a ser lo primero que verá mi bebé, adiós a reconocer en el recién nacido lo mejor de mí mismo, de mi pareja o de mi familia. Adiós, en definitiva, a ser padres como los demás, de un hijo como los hijos de los demás, de un niño que se parezca a mí."

22. Clara: "Les persones altruistes que van a salvar un nenet de l'Àfrica ... diguéssim. Això t'ho treuen del cap ràpidament (Frekko riu), la qual cosa em sembla molt bé ... O sigui, tu no vas a fer cap favor a ningú, tu te ... vols ser pare I ... i vas a satisfer una il·lusió personal, diguéssim, aprofitant que hi ha un nen—" David: "Que necessita el que tu li pots donar."

23. Two intertwined assumptions seem to underlie the proscription of humanitarian motives: On the one hand, it implies that the bonds of adoption are so precarious or contrary to the nature of

"real kinship" that only self-oriented motivations can sustain them. On the other hand, a "humanitarian" adoption would upset the traditional understanding of a child as a sort of "gift." If the parents are gift givers (entitled to gratitude) instead of gift receivers (who owe gratitude), this too would threaten to weaken the bonds of kinship (Leinaweaver 2013a:104, 2013b).

24. "I amb tota la ingenuïtat ho vam explicar. I llavors ens van dir: 'Ah, no, això no es pot fer.' I llavors ens van dir: 'Primer feu la via biològica; quan s'hagi acabat, si te ... us heu embarassat, doncs, felicitats, i, si no, i voleu continuar amb una adopció, torneu a venir.'"

25. "Trata de sacarte toda la información posible para saber si has h[e]cho tu duelo, es decir, si has superado el [h]echo de que no hayas podido tener hijos (no se si este es tu caso) un hijo adoptivo no es un sustituto a uno biológico, es Tu hijo. ... Mi marido y yo hablamos mucho antes de las entrevistas y teníamos muy claro lo que queríamos transmitirles a las dos, nuestro deseo de crear una familia y todo el amor que teníamos para dar a nuestro hijo, y gracias a Dios todo fue bien."

26. "Això molta gent ho sap, no va ... no és tan ingènua com nosaltres i el que van ... el que fan és no dir-ho."

27. Disposición Adicional Primera, *BOE* no. 275:34162; Law 25/2010, articles 235–237, DOGC no. 5686:61235.

28. "Yo también pienso que hay muchos padres que, como no saben cómo enfocar el asunto, directamente no lo enfocan. En mi trabajo hay una mujer que tiene una hija de 14 años. Esta niña tiene una amiga adoptada en un país del Este. ... Está obsesionada ... con su historia, su país de origen, su madre biológica. ... Les pide dinero a las amigas para ahorrar para ir a conocer a la madre biológica. ... Los padres han hablado con las otras familias del cole para decirles que ni ellos ni las hijas le den alas a este tipo de conversación."

29. "Hablando con la psicóloga de nuestras adopciones, yo saqué el tema de la familia biológica de mis hijas y le comenté que no sabía muy bien si mantener un contacto con ellas o qué? Ella me comentó que le parecía algo aberrante para el niño, que no lo entendía, que la adopción rompía lazos con la familia biológica, que por qué nosotros nos empeñábamos en buscar algo que no debíamos y un sinfín de cosas más. Yo me quedé petrificada pues siempre pensé que era algo bueno para mi hija."

30. "Hasta ahora los informes hablaban de cómo va la niña en el cole, a qué le gusta jugar, tiene las vacunas puestas, etc., etc. Pero cómo según ellos hemos sido unos inconscientes de viajar al país a visitar a su familia, esto nos tenía que pasar factura de alguna manera. Hay un punto que se llama evolución general en el que dicen ... y además se desconoce la repercusión que va a tener en la menor el viaje a su país de origen, [por lo que] se ofrece a la familia la posibilidad de acudir al servicio de postadopción. ... Ciertamente que no sabemos las consecuencias del viaje, pero lo hicimos porque ella nos lo pidiera nos pareció una razón de peso como para tenerla en cuenta. No nos estaba pidiendo ir a Eurodisney, nos pidió conocer a su madre y lo intentamos, [pero los profesionales nos dijeron] que la niña llevaría una empanada tremenda porque no sabría realmente quiénes eran sus padres."

31. In Spain, several organizations have developed curricular materials for elementary schools to teach about adoption in a context where several students are adopted transnationally. See San Román 2011.

32. The state is committed to producing families; Judith S. Modell writes that "adoption has always, incidentally or intentionally, served the state's purposes" (2002:163; see also Ginsburg and Rapp 2009a). Ostensibly the state is also committed to protecting minors. The reality that few applicants fail to achieve the necessary communicative vigilance raises the cynical question of whether appropriate talk about adoption is a mere "performance" that enables the

state to demonstrate that it has done its duty in protecting minors without impeding its principal aim in this case, which is to facilitate adoption.

33. There is indeed a “pact of silence” about the Civil War and Franco period more generally; it is said that this silence permitted Spain’s transition from dictatorship to democracy to take place nonviolently and that the silence is still operative, allowing opposing sides in contemporary Spain to peacefully coexist (Marre 2014).

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