

# “All teenagers have problems, whether they’re adopted or not”: Discourses on adolescence and adoption among parents of transnationally adopted teens

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## Abstract

Adopted children’s arrival at adolescence is an object of interest and concern among researchers, professionals, and politicians. In this article, I offer an analysis of parental talk among 24 families about their concerns related to their transnationally adopted teens. The majority of the adoptive parents reported having concerns about their children, which they attributed to their children’s entry into adolescence and their children’s inherent personality traits. In this article, I focus on the first of these attributions, which places the “blame” on adolescence. I do this from a perspective integrating a theoretical view from social anthropology that analyzes social discourses and a more applied view from social work that explores how these discourses influence family practices. The results of this analysis can guide family and professional practices and public policies on adoption.

## Keywords

Adoption, adolescence, social discourses, adoptive parents

## Introduction

Adoption is a well-studied topic, but there are few interdisciplinary studies that apply a wide-ranging perspective. Most adoption studies are carried out according

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to the particular interests of specific disciplines, which results in a partial view of adoption. With this article, I contribute to interdisciplinary dialog between social anthropology and social work. Integrating their two disciplinary perspectives allows me to offer a broader view of adoptive families. Anthropologists studying adoption have focused on cross-cultural comparisons of kinship formation in the absence of biological links (Howell, 2006; Logan, 2013; Marre and Bestard, 2009; Modell, 2002; Yngvesson, 2010). In social work, adoption research tends to have an applied and/or evaluative approach and to focus on clinical interventions (Hart and Luckock, 2004, 2006; Luckock and Broadhurst, 2013), post-adoption programs, and services (Mandeep et al., 2007; Ryan et al., 2009; Smith, 2010; Smith and Donaldson Adoption Institute Staff, 2014) and contact with birth families (Jones and Hackett, 2011; MacDonald and McSherry, 2011; Neil et al., 2004; Young and Neil, 2004).

In addition to participating in interdisciplinary conversations, this article also treats adoption as a dynamic process in the construction of kinship and family relations. According to research conducted with this approach, adoption outcomes have more to do with the quality of family relationships than with the existence of risk factors in the pre-adoption history of the child (Nilsson et al., 2011; Palacios and Brodzinsky, 2010). This perspective places family practices at the centre of analysis (Morgan, 2011) and interprets them as the result of the agency of parents and children, and also the influence of dominant social discourses about kinship (Carsten, 2004; Jones and Hackett, 2011; Leon, 2002; Modell, 2002; Wegar, 2000) and about adolescence (Lesko, 2012). These influences shape the perceptions that adoptive parents have of teens and their relationships with them.

This dual perspective, which is both interdisciplinary and dynamic, has guided my analysis of parents' talk about their concerns regarding their adopted adolescent children. I ask the following questions: How do adoptive parents talk about these concerns? How do they account for the troubling reactions and behaviors of their children? My analysis shows that a majority of the parents interviewed reported some concerns about their children. They attribute the reactions and behaviors of their children to adolescence and to their children's inherent nature. In this article, I centre my analysis on this first attribution (adolescence). Surprisingly, when parents hypothesize about the causes for their children's troubling behavior, the parents do not draw on the dominant social discourse that portrays adoption as a risk or threat to family adaptation. Instead, they use the dominant social discourse about adolescence as a problematic developmental stage. I argue that their use of this discourse about adolescence is related to their desire to be "normal." They face social stigma about adoptive families that originates in the hegemony of the biological model of kinship (Wegar, 2000).

The results of this analysis can guide family and professional practices and public policies, at a time when children adopted at the peak of the transnational adoptions in Spain are reaching adolescence. The large number of transnational

adoptions in Spain and the increase in transnational adoption in the past two decades also explain the interest of this research at the international level; Spain is a good place for thinking about adolescence and adoption because of its high numbers of adoptees entering adolescence. I analyzed the influence of social discourses on the perception that parents have of themselves, their children, and their family relationships.

## **Social discourses about adoptive kinship**

Although transnational adoption began in Spain later than in other Western countries, its development was very rapid. This process began in the late 1980s, when adoption was recognized as a child protection measure and therefore came under government regulation, via laws 21/1987 and 1/1996 and the ratification of the 1995 Hague Convention on Intercountry Adoption. It reached its peak in 2004; with 5541 adopted children that year, it stood as the second country worldwide in number of transnational adoptions (Selman, 2009). In line with international trends (with the exception of Italy; Selman, 2012), this type of adoption has been decreasing in Spain. In 2013, the number of children adopted transnationally in Spain was 1191 (INE, 2015). Trends in transnational adoption in Spain are related to changes in adoption culture (Berástegui, 2010; Marre, 2011) that transformed the model of a traditional-closed adoption, based on confidentiality, secrecy, and anonymity (Hoksbergen and Laak, 2005). The new optimistic-idealistic model of adoption spread widely and influenced the number of transnational adoptions in Spain. This image of adoption was widely distributed through mass media outlets (Marre, 2011; San Román, 2013), and also by adoptive parents (Angulo and Reguilón, 2001) and adoption professionals (Jociles et al., 2012). At the same time, it created unrealistic expectations about the development of adopted children and resulted in selection criteria that evaluated would-be parents' desire to be parents rather than their potential as competent parents (Berástegui, 2007).

According to San Román (2013), although this idyllic image of adoption is still maintained, especially in the first years of childhood, adoption discourse in Spain has started to change. As large numbers of transnational adoptees enter adolescence, more and more adoptive parents report conflicts related to their children's academic performance or behavior. Some parents and professionals have begun to consider the possibility that experiences prior to adoption have resulted in negative cognitive and emotional effects in the children. These new discourses about adoption pathologize adoption and divest families of agency. At the same time, they prioritize medicalization and psychotherapy as answers to the difficult situations that families face.

The social discourse that problematizes adoption is constructed and legitimized through international clinical research about the adaptation of adopted children (Brodzinsky, 1993; Wierzbicki, 1993). These accounts are enjoying wide dissemination through self-help books and guides for adoptive parents written in Spain or

written abroad and translated into Spanish. They also appear in television programs such as the documentary, “Adoptions: 18 years later,” which was broadcast on a regional television station in May 2014.<sup>1</sup> This program refers to the difficulties of adolescence and the experience of abandonment among adopted people: “Having arrived at adulthood, they have left behind their adolescence, one of the most difficult periods of personality formation. They have become conscious of their reality and the reasons that led to their being abandoned.”

According to Wegar (2000), the clinical research forming the basis of the discourse that problematizes adoption does not take into account influences from the social and cultural context in the formation of identities, attitudes, and behaviors of adoption’s protagonists. Furthermore, these interpretations fail to take into account the impact of the dominant ideology of biological kinship on adoptive families. This lack of attention to the context contributes to perpetuating the social stigmatization of adoption in public opinion (Potter, 2013), among post-adoption service professionals (Jociles et al., 2012) and in adoptive families (Rodríguez-Jaume and Ruiz, 2015). This situation highlights the importance of making alternative forms of kinship visible, such as gay and lesbian families and those created through the use of reproductive technology. Research on the construction of kinship ties beyond biology can make these other family forms a reference point for adoptive families (Howell, 2006; Logan, 2013; Marre and Bestard, 2009; Modell, 2002; Yngvesson, 2010).

## **Adolescence as a social category**

Adolescence is a social category that is historically constructed (Mead, [1935] 1990), as part of a system that classifies people by age, according to expected behaviors at each developmental stage, and whose objective is the maintenance of the hegemonic social order. This social category emerged in the 19th century, a period in which knowledge produced by experts in psychology and the social sciences was presented as scientific truth and used to justify and legitimize the control and regulation of individual behavior and social life, through practices of normalization (Foucault, [1975] 1998). According to Lesko (2012), the dominant social discourse about adolescence defines adolescents as people whose humanity is incomplete and who therefore need to be regulated.

Adolescence, understood as a transition toward an autonomous status, becomes increasingly complicated and uncertain, and therefore, an adolescent’s search for an individual identity causes tensions in his or her family and social environment. These tensions are interpreted and used to spread and reproduce a negative image of adolescence as disruptive. This representation resonates in our current postmodern society, which is characterized by risk and the need to control it, both at the personal and global scales. These risks derive from modernization processes and surpass the institutions of control and protection provided by industrial society (Beck, [1986] 2002: 113). This need for control is based on trust in expert, scientific knowledge, and even more fundamentally on the idea—widely disseminated via

mass media and new communication technologies—that this knowledge is available to the entire population. Gaitán Muñoz (2010) notes the profusion of specialized magazines, books, and radio and television programs that disseminate expert knowledge about how to handle adolescents. These guides claim that a “difficult” teen can become an “easy” one who adapts to adult expectations, through treatments and specialized interventions carried out by experts.

More and more research results indicate that the majority of Spanish families with adolescent children have satisfactory relationships and resolve their conflicts by negotiating spaces of autonomy and coexistence (Gimeno et al., 2006; Mari-Klose et al., 2010; Ruano and Serra, 2001). Nonetheless, studies at both the international (Buchanan and Holmbeck, 1998) and national levels (Casco and Oliva, 2004, 2005; Ridao and Moreno, 2008) show the persistence of a negative view of adolescence both among parents and society more generally.

## **Representations of adopted adolescents**

Meta-analyses of international studies paint a picture of adolescence as problematic for adopted children (Brodzinsky, 1993; Wierzbicki, 1993), but these findings have been questioned in later research (Bimmel et al., 2003; Juffer and IJzendoorn, 2005; Palacios and Brodzinsky, 2010). The latter body of work suggests that transnational adoption does not have a negative effect on adolescents’ behavior except in cases in which children experienced extremely adverse pre-adoption circumstances. In fact, these extreme cases could be the reason for the elevated ratio of behavior problems in transnationally adopted adolescents. These studies recognize the importance of the analysis of clinical cases as an empirical and theoretical starting point for further research on adoption. They also point out the necessity of carrying out studies that offer a more realistic perspective on the situation of adoptive families.

There are more and more studies whose results provide a more realistic perspective on adoptive families, which reveals adolescence to be a challenge but not necessarily a problem. These international studies use large samples of the general population to compare the behavior of adopted and non-adopted children (Ceballos et al., 2004; Rosnati et al., 2008) and adopted and non-adopted adolescents (Miller et al., 2000; Rosnati et al., 2007). Other studies focus on protective factors rather than risk factors in the adolescence of adopted children; for example, family satisfaction with respect to the adoption (Nilsson et al., 2011), parent–child relationships (Burt et al., 2005; Caples and Barrera, 2006; Smetana, 1996; Whitten and Weaver, 2010) and positive attitudes of parents about their parenthood (Gavita et al., 2014). In the case of Spain, researchers have used large samples of the general population to compare the perception of the degree of conflict (Bernedo Muñoz et al., 2005) and the perception of parental socialization strategies (Bernedo Muñoz et al., 2007) in adoptive and non-adoptive families. Although the results of these comparative studies are inconclusive, it seems that the arrival of adolescence is not a risk factor for adoption, as long as families have the competencies and necessary

support network to face family tensions generated by teens' concerns and demands for greater independence (Berástegui, 2007; Sánchez-Sandoval and Palacios, 2012).

The results of these studies and the findings of research on families with adolescent children show that most have satisfying family relationships and resolve tensions and conflicts by negotiating spaces of autonomy and coexistence. In my analysis of parents' concerns about their adopted teenage children, I apply this view of adolescence as a challenge and opportunity for adolescents and their families. It is true that adopted and non-adopted children's entry into adolescence produces tension in families, as a consequence of the desire of teens to define their identity and have more independence. The tensions are also due to the demands of a complex socioeconomic context in Spain that makes it difficult for young people to move out of their parental homes and that lengthens the developmental stage of adolescence. If families interpret these tensions in accordance with the social image that problematizes adolescence, they will likely respond to their children's demands for more independence with greater parental control and supervision. This response can turn tensions into conflicts.

If we exclude cases of adopted children who have extremely adverse pre-adoptive histories, families with adopted adolescent children face the same tensions as families with non-adoptive adolescent children. However, added to these tensions are the difficulties derived from the dominant social discourse about kinship, which stigmatizes adoptive families and makes them feel different because their kinship relationships are not based on biology. Family strategies for managing the consequences of this stigmatization may lead them to deny or emphasize differences, instead of recognizing and dealing with them. In Spain, families additionally face the consequences of the optimist-idealist view of adoption, which dominated at the time of the adoptions of children now entering adolescence. This discourse created unrealistic parental expectations about the development of their children and also resulted in family selection criteria centered above all on the desire to become a parent rather than on parenting skills. These factors may make it more difficult for adoptive families to manage the family tensions that accompany the entry of their children into adolescence.

## Methodology

The interviews that I analyze in this article were conducted as part of a larger interdisciplinary research project on transnational adoption in Spain. One theme of this study is the integration of adopted children into the family and the broader society, which is being analyzed via instruments in wide international use<sup>2</sup> with two samples of families with transnationally adopted children. One sample is composed of children aged 6 to 11 and the other of adolescents aged 12 to 18. The families were recruited through the pediatrics department of a Barcelona hospital. Parents were interviewed with the *Parent Development Interview*, modified for use with adoptive families<sup>3</sup> (Steele, 2003). Children and adolescents were evaluated with the *Friends and Family Interview* (Steele et al., 2009). In addition, parents answered

a questionnaire, designed by the research team, which covered socio-demographic information and details about the adoptions. Quantitative analyses of these data have produced interesting results about the attachment, adaptation skills, and social relations of transnationally adopted children (Abrines et al., 2012; Barcons-Castel et al., 2011, 2012, 2014).

This article presents part of the qualitative results from the (*Parent Development Interview*) interviews carried out with parents of transnationally adopted adolescents. Although a quantitative analysis is also planned, following Priddis and Mateljan (2010), I argue that the richness of the parents' talk also warrants a qualitative analysis.

The sample of families with transnationally adopted children is composed of parents from 24 families, with a total of 32 interviewees (10 men and 22 women). Fathers were aged between 47 and 63 and mothers between 43 and 60. All of the parents had completed tertiary studies and had professional careers. All of the families resided in the province of Barcelona. Except for two single parents and one lesbian couple, the parents (21) were heterosexual couples. Of the adopted children, 13 were boys and 11 were girls and their ages ranged from 11 to 18 at the time of the interviews. Most of the children were adopted between the ages of 3 and 5 in South Asia, Latin America, Sub-Saharan Africa, and Eastern Europe. All of the parents qualified the adaptation process of their children as good or very good.

The *Parent Development Interview* (Aber et al., 1985) is a semi-structured clinical interview that aims to analyze parents' representations of themselves, of their children, and of their relationship with their children. These representations are key to the process of reflexive functioning of the parents, that is, their ability to be conscious of the mental states of their children and take them into account in their relationships with them. The interview has been widely used in different studies, both in its original version (Aber et al., 1999; Slade et al., 1994) and in the version for adoptive parents (Steele et al., 2003; Steele, 2009). The interview has made it possible to evaluate the quality of parent-child relationships, a key factor favoring the adaptation of adopted children and their psychosocial development (Simmel et al., 2001). Studies have also demonstrated the necessity of keeping in mind the uniqueness of adoptive ties as non-biological ones and of deepening the analysis of the influence of socio-cultural discourses about parenthood in the family relationships of adoptive families (Priddis and Mateljan, 2010).

The *Parent Development Interview* is an excellent tool for analyzing parental concerns about transnationally adopted children. This interview schedule was designed to collect information about parents' perceptions about themselves, their children, and the relationship between them, through open-ended questions that invite them to illustrate and complement their answers with the description of concrete family situations, for example, "Probe if necessary: What kinds of situations make you feel this way? How do you handle your angry feelings? How do you think these situations affect (your child)?" Nonetheless, a more complete analysis of family interactions and practices will require complementing the analysis of

parental speech with direct observation of family interactions, such as in the approach used by Rueter et al. (2009) to compare parent–child interactions in adoptive and non-adoptive families.

## Results

Of the 32 people interviewed, 28 (9 fathers and 19 mothers) reported having concerns about their children, in particular, their behavior, their academic performance, and their future, in their responses to the question, “When you worry about (your child), what do you find yourself worrying about the most?” Conduct is the main concern and is mentioned by 13 parents (3 fathers and 10 mothers), followed by school with 15 parents (3 fathers and 12 mothers) and entry into adult life with 13 parents (6 fathers and 7 mothers).

### *“Adolescence distorts everything”: Acceptance of the dominant social discourse of adolescence as problematic*

Given the growing influence in Spain of the social discourse that presents adoption as problematic (San Román, 2013), it is surprising that the families do not rely on this possible explanation for situations that concern them. Although they reject this discourse, they do use the dominant social discourse about adolescence as a problematic developmental stage (see Lesko, 2012). The use of this discourse about adolescence likely relates to their desire to normalize their family life and the circumstances of their adopted children. This desire has been identified in other studies (Priddis and Mateljan, 2010), and several authors have linked it to the strategy of the negotiation of difference employed by families to manage the effects in their daily lives of the social stigma that surrounds adoptive kinship (Kirk, 1964). This stigma derives from the dominant social discourse about biological kinship (Wegar, 2000), of which Spanish adoptive families are clearly aware (Rodríguez-Jaume and Ruiz, 2015).

According to the dominant social discourse about adolescence, adolescents’ behaviors and reactions are a consequence of hormones, bodily changes, and peer group influence (Lesko, 2012). Consistent with this discourse, the parents describe the adolescence of their children as a difficult, problematic, and confusing period, as a consequence of hormonal and psychological changes and also influences and stimuli from their surroundings, especially from friends, the Internet, and social media.

The parents report that upon entering adolescence, their children become more reserved. They withdraw, isolate themselves, and separate themselves from their families. Additionally, they have a hard time getting organized and concentrating, and they react impulsively and sometimes aggressively and violently when faced with rules and limits set by their parents. These changes surprise four parents (from four different families), as seen in four extracts, because of the contrast with the attitudes, reactions, and behavior of their children at earlier stages. Parents express these reactions in the following examples.



The first example comes from the mother of Rebeca, an 18-year-old girl adopted from Nicaragua at age 5. Her parents describe her adaptation process as good but with difficulties.

Now is when she's changed a lot, because of course, I guess they are changes that come with her age. She used to be really quiet, really calm, like that. And now she talks back, she frowns...she's always in a bad mood.<sup>4</sup>

The second example comes from the father of 13-year-old Mercè. Mercè is the middle of three siblings born in Ukraine and adopted when they were between 4 and 5 years old. Their parents describe her process of adaptation to the family, her school life, and her academic performance as good.

She was doing relatively well at school and this year suddenly she dropped off. She's been lazy, unconcerned....

In both cases, the parents manifest their concern for the consequences of changes in their children that they attribute to adolescence. In the first of these examples, the mother is worried about changes in the personality and mood of her daughter, which affect communication and family relationships. In the second example, the father refers to changes in the interest and motivation for school that have occurred suddenly (*"de cop"* in the original Catalan) and that are negatively affecting his daughter's school performance.

Several of the parents mention impulsiveness, which leads their children to speak or act without thinking about the consequences. Five parents (from five different families) refer to this kind of reaction using the Spanish word *"prontos."* That is, sudden actions motivated by passion or an unexpected occurrence. This impulsiveness in the reactions and behaviors of their children appears in the following two examples.

The first is by the mother of Alex. Seventeen years old, Alex was born in Ukraine and adopted at age 8 by a lesbian couple, which is now divorced. They described the adaptation process of their child to the family as good.

Alex has a hot-blooded impulse [*"pronto"*] [...] like any teenager.

The second example comes from Mercè's father:

These impulses [*"prontos"*], these impulses [*"prontos"*] that she has sometimes, that exasperate me. She has some reactions and attitudes.... I want to believe it's because of preadolescence....

In addition to hormonal changes, five parents (from five different families) point to influences from the current social context from which their children receive a

series of stimuli (friends, Internet, social media, etc.) that “hook” their children and distract them from school work. I include two examples.

The first is by the father of Paul. Paul is 13 years old and was adopted from Colombia at 3 years of age. His parents describe his process of family adaptation as very good.

Now he’s entering adolescence and that distorts everything (...) Now there are so many messages from outside and things that distract him and since it’s pretty easy to distract him from his schoolwork...

The second example comes from the (female) guardian of Marian. Marian, 17 years old, was born in Cameroon and since age 8 has been under the guardianship of a Barcelona family with three adult biological children. Her guardians describe Marian’s process of adaptation as very good.

Today we’re going through a difficult period with kids, for adolescents it’s a difficult period... because of everything; they have too much input. I think the Internet is too addictive and there are lots of kids that get hooked and it terrifies me, because of course, studying and being connected to the Internet doesn’t work. We have to do what we have to do...and that’s difficult.

In this example, Marian’s guardian is terrified of the hypothetical possibility that Marian could become “hooked” on the Internet and social media, and overlook her studies. This feeling of terror seems to respond to the negative and conflictive image of adolescence that exists in current postmodern society, which is characterized by the sensation of risk (see Beck, [1986] 2002; Romání, 2010).

***“All teenagers have problems, whether they’re adopted or not”: Rejection of the dominant social discourse of adoption as problematic***

Five parents (from five different families) normalize their descriptions of their children’s entry into adolescence, with references to the fact that this developmental stage is equally difficult and problematic for all children, whether or not they are adopted. Four of these parents implicitly reject the social discourse linking problems to adoption and a fifth—Alex’s mother—explicitly rejects any link:

But now it’s the period of adolescence and all teenagers, all of them have problems, whether they’re adopted or not. We all know this.

Other parents offer an implicit rejection of the notion that adoption could be a causal factor. The following example comes from the mother of Núria, who is 16 years old and was adopted from India at age 4. Her parents describe her adaptation

as very good. In the following case, Núria's mother compares her own adolescence to Nuria's, implicitly equating their experiences:

Sometimes I would like her to tell me more things. But then sometimes I think about how I did that too. I guess it's a phase that we have to go through. That she has to go through...

It is surprising that, despite the wide dissemination of the social discourse of adoption as problematic, only 3 of the 28 parents who express concern mentioned adoption as a possible cause. These three examples refer to two children, and in both cases, the parents list experiences prior to the adoption as a possible cause of the situations that they find troubling.

The first two examples come from the father and mother of Paul:

When he gets upset, it's probably because different things come together for him, including the adoption, and he probably gets overwhelmed in some situations, "What am I doing here and on top of it they're pressuring me..." (...) When that happens I wish I were more skilled.

The first days (after the adoption) he was playing war all over the hotel (...). We don't know for sure, but he's seen war and his parents were displaced. We think he probably lived through difficult times. I think that the tantrums he has sometimes might come from that, from seeing something that had a big impact on him.

The following example is from one of Alex's mothers:

Today I found out that he doesn't go to school (...) To him that seems completely normal, because he was on the street for who knows how many years...not telling me anything, not talking to me about it... It's true that we don't interact a lot... but I mean, leaving school...

The first example refers directly to adoption, while the other two attribute difficulties to experiences prior to the adoption.

## Conclusions

My analysis has shown that, somewhat surprisingly, when adoptive parents talk about their concerns, instead of using the dominant social discourse in Spain that presents adoption as problematic (San Román, 2013), adoptive families resort to the hegemonic view of adolescence as a difficult and conflict-ridden life stage (see Casco and Oliva, 2004, 2005; Lesko, 2012; Ridao and Moreno, 2008). The use of this discourse about adolescence and the denial of the influence of the fact of adoption may respond to the desire of these parents to be "normal." The dominant social discourse about kinship stigmatizes adoptive families. Facing a lack of

examples for constructing non-biological kinship, they don't feel "normal" (Wegar, 2000). Family strategies for managing the consequences of this stigmatization may lead them to deny or emphasize differences, instead of recognizing them and dealing with them head on (Brodzinsky, 1990; Kirk, 1964). I conclude that the use that adoptive parents make of the dominant social discourse about adolescence may lead them to respond to their children's demands for more independence with more control and supervision, turning family tensions into outright conflict. A better alternative may be to negotiation spaces of autonomy and coexistence. It may also lead them to downplay the socio-culturally significant ways that their families are different and may need different kinds of support than biological families.

Despite the small sample size, my results have interesting implications for future research and for family practices and adoption policies. First, these results are of great relevance in today's Spain, where large numbers of children adopted at the peak of transnational adoption are now entering adolescence.

According to my analysis, the social discourse that problematizes adolescence in the perceptions of these adoptive parents may hamper parents' ability to manage the tensions that arise (in adoptive and non-adoptive families) when children enter adolescence. The current social context encourages parents to respond to adolescence by exerting more control over their children instead of negotiating spaces of autonomy and co-existence (Gimeno et al., 2006; Mari-Klose et al., 2010; Parra et al., 2005; Ruano and Serra, 2001). In Spain, in particular, given the optimist-idealist image of adoption, which existed at the time that these parents adopted, it is important to foster parental competencies and support networks so that families like these can successfully face the challenges presented by their children's entry into adolescence (Berástegui, 2007; Sánchez-Sandoval and Palacios, 2012).

Second, my results confirm the usefulness of an interdisciplinary and dynamic perspective on adoptive kinship, which explores the influence of social discourses on the perception that parents have of themselves, their children, and their family relations. The importance of analyzing the influence of the dominant discourse of genetic kinship on adoptive families has been underlined in several studies (Carsten, 2004; Jones and Hackett, 2011; Leon, 2002; Modell, 2002; Wegar, 2000). My results illuminate the interaction of this stigmatizing discourse surrounding adoptive kinship with the problematizing vision of adolescence (Lesko, 2012). These families likely use this vision as part of their strategy to manage difference in a context in which alternative models of kinship are often unavailable (Howell, 2006; Logan, 2013; Marre and Bestard, 2009; Modell, 2002; Yngvesson, 2010).

Finally, in terms of professional practices, social workers should keep in mind the interpretations of parents, which, in the case of participants in this study, are influenced by dominant social discourses about adolescence and adoptive kinship. These influences can have troubling consequences. The stigmatization of adoptive families (Rodríguez-Jaume and Ruiz, 2015) in public opinion (Potter, 2013) and by

adoption professionals (Jociles et al., 2012) may make adoptive parents particularly likely to adopt the dominant discourse that presents adolescence as problematic and entrench themselves in the impulse to control their children rather than to negotiate opportunities for independence, which would enable them to define their identity and integrate their differences. Future research comparing adoptive parents with biological parents could help tease out the effects of adoption stigma on attitudes toward adolescent children. The interdisciplinary and dynamic perspective that I propose for research and professional interventions can challenge the stigmatization of adoption and, relatedly, the pathologization of adolescence.

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### Notes

1. <http://blogs.ccma.cat/senseficcio.php?itemid=53435>
2. With participation in the *Attachment Adoption Adolescence Research Network* ([https://sites.google.com/site/bpierreh/accueil\\_en\\_sp](https://sites.google.com/site/bpierreh/accueil_en_sp))
3. Translated into Spanish by M. Román and J. Palacios (2006).
4. Interviews were conducted in Spanish or Catalan, according to the preference of the interviewees. Extracts were translated into English by a translator.

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