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Stigma and the value associated with adoption

PhD Thesis Abstract

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2016

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Keywords: adoption, stigma, adoptive parents, adopted children, media, community

INTRODUCTION

Parenting is an essential aspect of development, and adoption, as a form of family is an institution in transition that creates a different family in respect to the biological traditional family, serving a dual purpose, to provide primarily a home to a child and then to provide child to parents.

The adoptive connections are a changing process, and social scientists, clinicians and practitioners began to be interested in the social context of the adoptive family since the individuals involved in the triangle of adoption can not be understood by practitioners unless the latter observe the social context that shapes their identities, their attitudes and behavior. The nature of adoption is dynamic and it is desirable to have a connection between practice and research. It is important to note what adoption can teach us about families and their place in society, identifying both stigmatizing aspects, and highlighting the positive aspects. The research into adoption involves more than simply describing the experiences of adoption in order to understand the process behind the results, leading to the development of the theory (Wrobel & Neil, 2009).

The subject of "adoption" has produced more than 150 studies, carried out by psychiatrists, psychologists and other health professionals in the past 50 years (Wegar, 1995).

The research questions are usually based on a deficiency in general a pathological approach to adoption (Bartholet, 1993; Miall, 1996). The researchers focused only on what they assumed to be problematic and on the negative differences between biological and adoptive families.

The complexity of adoption, its challenges, its rewards and difficulties need more attention from specialists, from the public, the adoptive parents, and the community. Specialists may be influenced by prejudices in society, in culture, in relation to adoption (Brabender V. & Fallon, 2013), as for example the view that adoption is the second effective way to starting a family, that adopted children have irreparable problems, that adopted children have difficulties, all of the parents' fault (logically contradicting one another). Those specialists who do not recognize these biases in working with clients may fail to support them, and even exacerbate the individual difficulties.

Researchers have found in some studies that parents who adopt due to infertility are happy to adopt, they have positive expectations and experiment more satisfactions becoming

better parents than the biological parents (Levy-Shiff, Goldschmidt, & Har-Even, 1991; Malm and Welti (2010).

Researchers tried to explore the general adjustment of adopted children compared with the non-adopted, focusing in particular on comparisons, on the motivation of adoptive parents, on the psychosocial characteristics of adoptive parents.

In a meta-analysis, Grotevant and McRoy (1990) concluded that in the case of adopted children, psychological interventions are 2 to5 times more often than in non-adopted children.

In literature, adoptive families are seen as a second choice after the biological families (Miall & March, 2005). The idea of adoption appeared after a period in which they have had multiple medical investigations, treatments, after having invested time and emotional, but also financial costs, insecurity reactions, and hope. After years of disappointment, shame and experiential guilt, infertile couples take adoption into consideration. Later, after finally adopting appear many secrets around adoption, parents wanting privacy related to adoption. Sometimes the child does not know to be adopted because parents are fearing, in general, the possibility that relatives or neighbors may throw painful words (Bhargava, 2005). Therefore parents avoid discussions related to this subject, believing that the child will mind if told not to be their biological child.

The decision to adopt brings multiple questions: *How? What are the options? From where? At what age? To adopt ... not adopt? What will the neighbors say, the classmates, the teachers?* In the contemporary society, many couples want to adopt as an alternative to build a family, as a result of fertility problems. The reactions are often intensified by the social context in which blood relations are still considered prominent, attaching the stigma to adopt (Carp, 2002). All of these factors can affect life adjustment and satisfaction of the adoptive parents, a very important aspects for practitioners.

The first important theme of this research tackles adoption in the current context of Romania, namely the attitudes towards adoptive families, towards adopted children and towards the perspective of adoption, of students, on the one hand, and on the other of the professionals within the Child Protection. The purpose of researching the stigmatizing aspects and of those valorizing the adoption is to bring additional benefits by contributing to the expertise and to the institutional policies. Understanding the assumptions, beliefs, attitudes and perceptions of adoption is particularly valuable for those working in adoption services (Carter-Black, 2002). The second important issue that I will discuss is the portrait of adoption achieved through content analysis, as shown sketched in the media. The value of these topics

to be analyzed becomes obvious from a better understanding of the specialists' attitudes, of the future generations of parents' towards adoption, and of the media. An in-depth understanding of their perception can provide a clear vision of the actions needed to maintain a successful adoption as an option and a positive experience for those who decide to adopt. Generally, students, a population of interest because they are the future parents, have more liberal views and accept new ideas more easily than others. Some studies have shown that students have no attitudes towards adoption at this time of life (Whatley, Jahangardi, Ross, & Knox, 2003). The concern for this issue stemmed from the fact that in Romania, until now, no studies have been conducted about the opinion of future parents on adoption and on the adoption portrayal in the media.

The situation of adoptions in Romania has been, after 1990, a favorite subject of international media in the context of the changes that have occurred in this particular period in the Central and Southeast Europe (Buzducea & Lazarus, 2011). While the legislation was changed in 2004 in order to comply with the international regulations and to encourage national adoption, the absolute number of national adoptions has remained relatively steady over the past five years. The number of children in residential care is still high, most being ten years older and disabled or with other health problems which defines them as "special needs children" for adoption (Buzducea & Lazarus, 2011).

The motivation of the adoptive families is influenced by the cultural context and as regards Romania, adoptions are not, traditionally, a common solution for the children separated from their parents. The communities consider adopted children as second hand people and families are often stigmatized. (Munteanu & Stan, 2010). Stigmatizing adoptive families seems more common worldwide than we could expect (Lansford, Abbey, & Stewart, 2001).

To introduce the research approach of this paper and to emphasize the importance of the research topic, Chapter 1 will follow the historical evolution of adoption over time in different cultures and then in particular, in Romania.

Adoption is a phenomenon that dates back to the beginnings of human society, but the modern legal form for adoption dates only from the mid nineteenth century. By examining the historical antecedents of adoption today, it was outlined that adoption is as old as society (Benet, 1976, p.22). Adoption appeared in Romania for the first time as the "adoption" in *Code calli* (art. 236 et seq.) and the *Caragea Code* (Article 1, part IV, Ch. 5) provided that "Making spiritual sons/ of soul is but to save those who do not have children (Avram, 2001, p.93) .

Adoption establishes a permanent legal relationship between a child and the adoptive parents dissolving the legal relationship with the biological parents.

Art. 1 - "Adoption is the legal operation which creates the connection of filiation between the adopter and the adoptee, as well as family ties between the adoptee and the adopter's relatives." (Law 273 of 21/06/2004). [1]

The central element of Law. 273/2004 is finding a family for the adoptable child, and not a child to a foster family. Children's rights are a priority and more important than the wishes and needs of families who ardently desire a child. Even the adoption procedure will start from the child for whom specialists decided that adoption is the best solution (Mihăilă, 2010).

The conventional form found in many papers is the adoption triangle formed of the adopted children, the adoptive parents and the biological family. Consistent with this approach, but not forgetting to consider the multitude adoptive relationships, we filled in Figure 1.1, which represents *the star of adoption,* another two important vectors, namely the community and the foster care. The beauty of this representation, unlike the triangle, is that you can add or delete items by frame (Hart & Luckock, 2004).

The statistics conducted nationwide in December 2015 by ANPDC shows that the number of adoptable children nationally is 2953, the highest number recorded for the age group 7-13 years (1711 children). Chapter 1 is also dedicated to explanatory theories, such as the biological prospect, sociological theories, psychological theories attempting to explain the changes that occur in the process of adoption, both in children and in the adoptive parents, but also to identify the characteristics of the adoptive families following the issues and aspects that emphasize the stigmatization of adoption. In the research literature on adoption, most theories address the negative effects of policies on the lives (Fisher, 1973; Lifton, 1994) and tend to consider adoption as problematic. Society considers adoption *"a second choice / on the second place."* The biological theory of development has been taken up and used by numerous specialists in the field of children adoption, to explain the hereditary influence on the further development of adopted children and the possible hereditary risks that they can acquire. The main assumption of this theory is that, individual development and adaptation are essentially determined by genetic inheritance. The social role theory, whose initiator is David Kirk, can be considered a benchmark for the further development of modern theories in the field of adoption of children. The result of intensive field work, stretched over a period of about 10 years, the theory was considered by many experts as the first systematic attempt to explain the adaptation of adoption in terms of the pattern of family interaction (Brodzinsky and Smith, 1998 Zamostny et al, 2003).

The central hypothesis of the theory is that adoptive parents present a *role handicap* resulting from the differences between biological parenting and adoptive parenting, for which there are no cultural requirements and determining requests, unique challenges and conflicts. These are reinforced by the attitudes of others who, although seem to accept adoption, consider it as an alternative inferior to the birth of a child and even a risky alternative (Wegar, 2000). Dilemmas include how foster parents are seen in relation to other parents, how they relate to the child, and how the adoptive parents remember the information received about the child (Kirk, 1964).

Psychological theories have emphasized the importance of attachment in the life of the adoptive family, trying to apply the theory of resilience of the adoptive parents to punctuate the identification of the strengths that arise when they cope with stressors, adversity crises. In the field of children adoption, attachment theory is useful to respond on the effects of separation on the adopted children and his ability to form a new bond of attachment with adoptive parents (see Tizard and Rees, 1975 Singer, Brodzinsky, Ramsay, Stern, Water, 1985). However, this theory explains the adoptive parents' ability to understand and meet the need for attachment of the child, to provide the necessary care in the context that they went over a series of events particularly important in the history of parent-child relationship and especially mother- child, that is the prenatal period and the time of the birth of the child.

In Chapter 2 of the paper we will address the issue of stigma. One of the first definitions of stigma is given by Goffman (1963), who defined stigma as a trait deeply discrediting, stating that stigma is a social interactive process.

Spiker (1988, p.40) identified three elements that contribute to the idea of stigma: 1. the attribute someone possesses and which compromises him in the face of others; 2. a social attitude towards a stigmatized person; 3. a stigmatized person's feelings. (Bejenaru, 2009, p. 66)

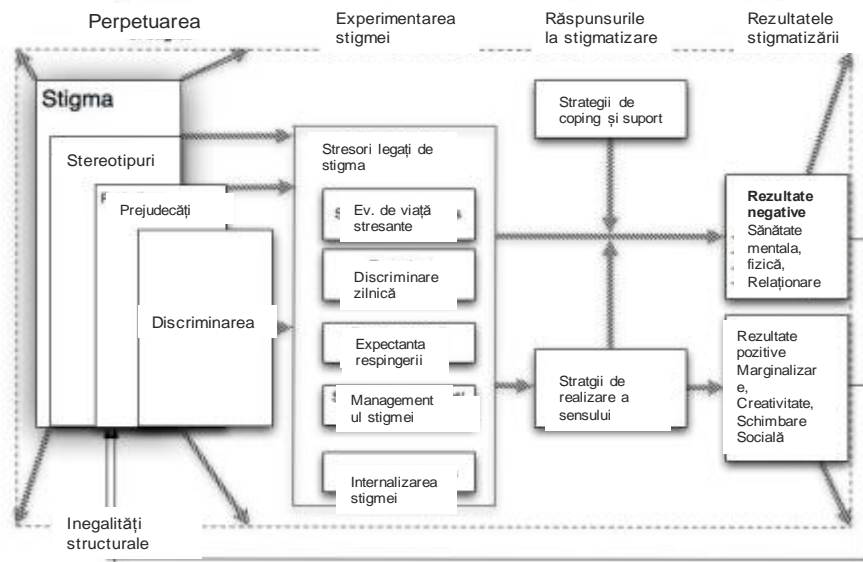An operational definition that satisfies our approach is given by Frost (2011), which integrates the perpetuation of stigma due to the negative experience of stigmatization, the negative consequences of stigma but also the positive effects. Frost's model (2011), *The process model of social stigma and its consequences* is an integrative model, which started from classical theoretical approaches.

Figure 2.1 The process model of social stigma and its consequences

Procesul modelului stigmatizării sociale și consecințele sale Sursă: Frost,D.,(2011)

Perpetuarea | Experimentarea stigmei | Răspunsurile la stigmatizare | Rezultatele stigmatizării

Stigma

Stereotipuri

Prejudecăți

Discriminarea

Inegalități structurale

Stresori legați de stigma
- Ev. de viață stresante
- Discriminare zilnică
- Expectanta respingerii
- Management ul stigmei
- Internalizarea stigmei

Strategii de coping și suport

Stratgii de realizare a sensului

Rezultate negative Sănătate mentala, fizică, Relaționare

Rezultate pozitive Marginalizar e, Creativitate, Schimbare Socială

deficiency (Miall, 1984).

While Goffman in his work on stigma does not appear specifically to be stigmatized, he cites yet another author (Carling, 1962) which associated the handicap of a woman who *"feels inferior and different because ... of her inability to have children"* (Goffman, 1963).

According to a study conducted in Sweden (Deka & Sarma, 2010), three separate factors appear to contribute to the psychological stress experienced by men and women as a result of infertility. The three factors in order of importance to women are:

1 *Having children is the main purpose of living,*

2 *Women's role and social pressure,*

3 *The effect on sexual life.*

For men, the order of importance of factors 1 and 2 is reversed. Women experience more intense infertility and also the desire to have a child is stronger.

The experience of adopted children, adoptive parents and biological parents was modeled by the double "stigma of infertility and legitimacy" (*"twin stigmata of infertility and illegitimacy")* (Haimes Timms and 1985, Brodzinsky & Schechter, 1990). All societies

distinguish between legitimate and illicit births and penalties apply to unmarried parents and, in many cases, to illegitimate children. The *Illegitimate* label is given to a social group and may have negative connotations. Even if we remove this label, we may believe that the predicament is solved, but this does not really happen (Hartley Foster, 1975).

David Kirk (1964, 1981) suggests that the adoptive parent is perceived by the general public as being different from the biological parent. One of these differences is the time required to prepare as a parent. The biological parent, usually appears after a process that progresses at a certain time, the 7/9 months (conception, gestation and birth) as well as during maternity, preparing the room for the baby, other events during pregnancy or after birth. There is no standard period in terms of time for one to become a foster parent. The perception of this difference is striking in Kirk's study of public attitudes, indicating that the adoptive parent is considered *the second choice* after the biological parent.

Investigating the attitudes towards adoption will be discussed in detail in Chapter 3 of the thesis. The concept of "attitude" refers to the disposition to respond favorably or unfavorably to an object, person, institution or event. The formal definitions of attitudes differ, the attribute characteristic attitudes being the evaluative nature (pro-against, pleasant-unpleasant) (Ajzen, 2005). Public attitudes to adoption have been examined from different perspectives (Miall, 1996; ROMPF, 1993), as well as the general attitudes towards adoption (Miall; ROMPF), the attitudes towards interracial or transsrasiale adoption (Hollings-Worth, 2000a; Howard, Royse , & Skerla, 1977) or the social stigma associated with being adopted (March, 1995).

Based on the results of the international studies in this area, we can conclude that, in some studies, adoption appears to be pathological based on the assumption that adoptive family ties are *"second"* and adopted children are a *"second choice"* (Bartholet 1993 Kirk, 1964, 1981, Miall, 1996, 1989, Model 1994). Both the adoptive parents (Miall 1987, 1989), and the adopted adults (March, 1995) have shown that they are socially stigmatized by others who question the solidity of the adoptive family ties. In other articles are obvious the favorable attitudes towards adoption, towards the adoptive parents, but also towards the biological families. Trying a summary of the research carried out in local literature, the main investigated subjects were related to areas of interest such as attachment of adopted children, adoptive parents profile, motivation to adopt and the stigma of adoptive families. In this chapter we alos outlined the myths that appear in adoption, adopted children and adoptive parents.

Previous meta-analyzes focused on the development of adopted children in different

areas, for example on cognitive development (Van IJzendoorn, Juffer, Poelhuis & Klein, 2005), physical development (Van IJzendoorn, Bakermans- Kranenburg, & Juffer , 2007) and less on learning disabilities (Van IJzendoorn et al., 2005) and clinical problems (Juffer & Van IJzendoorn, 2005).

The existing literature suggests that only a small percentage of adopted children are experiencing long-term difficulties in one or more areas. The reasons of internationally adopted children often included poverty, social disruption and trauma (Altstein & Simon, 1991; Feigelman & Silverman, 1977 and 1983; Sokoloff, Carlin & Pham, 1984). Many children adopted internationally experienced abuse, neglect, malnutrition, medical care situations (Chisholm, Carter, Ames, & Morison, 1995 Groza, Ryan & Cash, 2003; Hoksbergen et al., 2003b; Lin, Cermak, Coster, & Miller, 2005; MacLean, 2003; Morison, Ames, & Chisholm, 1995).

The community attitude depends on how community members define the attributes or experiences. The individuals and families involved in adoption can experience social support or social sanctions contrary to normal interaction. Social support can serve as an intermediate mechanism between stress and health for these individuals (Coburn & Eakin, 1993 Hazs & Sherbourne, 1990). The lack of social support may exacerbate problems associated with adoptive families. Social workers and psychologists offer advice and guidance to potential adoptive parents for their lack of empirical information that are shaped and influenced by the community. The theoretical orientation of social constructivism was welcome to explore community attitudes in general, adoptive parents and adopted children.

Many studies in the literature that investigated the attitudes towards adoption have focused either on specific populations or on practices in adoption. The favorable attitudes to adoption towards adoptive parents and biological parents were highlighted by Haugaard, West and Moed (2000), both on a random sample in Canada (Miall, 1996) and in the US population (ROMPF, 1993). Hollingsworth (2000a) highlighted the socio-demographic correlates of the attitudes towards transrasial adoption. Beeman and Boisen (1999) found that the attitudes towards the professionals working in the child protection system are favorable, considering that professional carers are more difficult to supervise.

The Community, as party involved in adoption, provides the social context for recruiting adoptive families. The habit of community values is essential for recruiting and training practitioners for adoption and preparing the clients for the cultural and social potential responses of theadoptive family (Wegar, 2006).

Many studies have found positive results in adoption. Miall (1996), in examining the

parenting of adopted children and adoptive families, found that adoptive families are functional as well as the biological families and experiencing the same rewards and challenges as the biological families.

O'Brien & Zamostny (2003) have suggested that improvements could be achieved following a methodological research to improve adoption:

1 Using the appropriate comparison groups;

2 The inclusion of multilevel longitudinal assessment;

3 Using consistent methods of data collection;

4 Attention in interpreting the data.

Chapter 4 focuses on the research on students' and professionals' attitudes towards adoption and their perception of the potential social stigma on behalf of adopted children and adoptive families.

Most studies have focused on predicting behavior from attitudes within the theory of planned behavior theory, with rational choice theory as its predecessor (Ajzen, 2001).

The central premise of the theory of rational choice is that people make behavioral decisions based on the consideration of the available information (Ajzen, 1975 Deborah, Gallois & McCamish, 1993). From this perspective, it is assumed that people are *"rational actors"* who make motivated behavioral decisions. According to the model, the immediate determinant of behavior is the intention of the person to realize it (Deborah, Gallois & McCamish, 1993). The model proposes that people's attitudes toward behavior is based on the behavior and beliefs regarding the consequences of behavior acknowledgement and the value of each consequence (assessment results).

I considered stigma a source of social constraint that could adversely affect the formation of new families.

The method used was the survey and the instrument used is the questionnaire consisting of 28 closed questions, grouped into four categories, namely about parents and children about adoption in general, adoptive parents and the adopted children.

The objectives were:

1. Examining the professionals' perception on adoption, adopted children and adoptive parents, and the students' perceptions in respect to the issues mentioned.

2. Analyzing the potential differences between the two samples related to the attitudes towards adoption.

3. Analyzing the potential differences between the two samples related to the willingness to consider adoption.

4. Analyzing the potential differences between the two samples, depending on how adopted children are perceived compared with biological children.

5. Exploring the reasons of students for wanting to consider adoption and the barriers to adoption.

To reach the targets we formulated three hypotheses of quantitative analysis. These are:

Hypothesis 1: *There are significant differences in how respondents perceive parenting in biological child and adopted child.*

Hypothesis *2: Depending on the respondents' experiences there are significant differences in the characteristics (1) of adoptive parents and (2) of adopted children.*

Hypothesis *3: Depending on the respondents' experiences there are significant differences in terms of attitudes towards adoption and intention to adopt.*

We have analyzed the open questions in the questionnaire: *What are the reasons why students should consider the option of adopting? What are the barriers that would prevent the students to consider the option to adopt?*

The variables analyzed are:

• Label variables: gender, age, occupation

• The attitude towards adoption

• The desire to (intention)

• The portrait of adopted children (the wat they are perceived compared to other children: in school, behavioral, alcohol, adaptation, happiness, confidence)

• Adoptive parents (associations: which is the first word associated with his adoptive family)

• Information sources (which are the main sources of information related to the adoption)

The research sample is formed of 360 subjects: 60 professors (working in child protection, specialized in adoptions: lawyers, social workers, psychologists, teachers) and 300 students.

The questionnaire was applied to students from Babes-Bolyai University (Faculty of Letters, Political Science, FSEGA) and Medical University (Dentistry ward) in Cluj-Napoca.

The professionals completed the questionnaire on line. Within the the students, only 11 completed the questionnaire in the online version. The sample was of convenience, based on the access to the specified units where and on the desire of the professionals, and of the students, to fillm the online questionnaire.

The questionnaire was the preferred instrument for this study for two reasons, namely to ensure the anonymity of participants and to encourage, through anonymity, the providing of honest answers to questions about how the adoption perceived, the adoptive parents or adopted children .

After data collection, followed their introduction in SPSS version 21 (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences), respectively, their coding.

The general lot of participants consists of 72.8% women and 27.2% men. The distribution by sex is unequal, being more female subjects.

Gender distribution of the students sample record the following percentages: female respondents is 67.3% versus 32.7%, the percentage of male students.

The attitude towards adoption from the perspective of professionals and students is generally favorable. From the perspective of those who expressed their intention to consider adoption, adoption is regarded as the only acceptable solution given that other methods have resulted. The importance given child for family happiness being acknowledged, adoption is permitted as a positive process, when the couple failed to have a biological child, even through artificial procreation methods. We identify a valorisation of biological, blood relationships, inside the family's genetic background and the importance of further development of the child, especially socially.

Therefore, most respondents have a favorable attitude towards adoption (80.6%). Analyzing the results of the two samples, the specialists (86.6%) achieved a higher percentage compared to the students (79%). Most students respondents would not like to adopt (62.3%). Most experts however are undecided (68%). The life and work experience of professionals (social workers, lawyers, psychologists and teachers) do not help them have stronger opinions on the contrary, makes them more hesitant, even if the attitude to adoption is a positive one.

Table 4.1 D i s t r i bu and the two samples t n functions and is of the view to adoption

R AS P UNS	students and		professionals	
	Rub you .	%	Rub you .	%
Favorable opinion signed	238	79%	52	86.6%
neutral complicated	58	19, 33%	8	13.33%
unfavorable complicated	4	1.33%	0	0

T a t of	300	100%	60	100%

Most respondents believe that, these children have school problems at as well as the biological children (93.3%), presenting a good emotional development (95%), confidence (68.3%), adaptation (71.6%), they are equally prone to manifesting undesirable social behavior (66.6%), the same problems with different substances (91%). We found that experts give the happiness of the adopted child in the family the highest percentage (95%).

The respondents' opinion about the adoptive parents focus on infertility (unable to have children) (42.2%), and adoptive parents desire to have a family (36.1%).

But in the foreground is infertility, so that the transition from the status of infertile person to adoptive parent can be influenced, according to Salzer (2000, p. 390) both by negative factors (stigma) and positive factors to foster parenting (desire to have a family). An extremely small percentage of respondents (6.1%) perceive adoptive parents as happy.

Specialists have professional experience and then the portrait of adopted children is much sharper, observing this in the percent difference that exists between the two. The observations existing in the records of adopted children, in psychological evaluations, characterization and data pursuing their school evolution and in terms of monitoring by the service post-adoption provides experts more information, shaping a real portrait of adopted children. Some research results are different from the results obtained abroad, on accomplished professionals, a third of them (28%) indicating that some adopted children have more problems at school, delinquent behavior or drug problems. This is surprising, since there is little empirical evidence to support this belief (Whitten, 2008).

Another source of social stigma in adopted children is the focus on issues externalized by adopted children (Miall, 2000), an idea advocated by a third of the student respondents (36%) considering that, in general, adopted children are more likely to manifest undesirable social behaviors. Also, more than a third of the student respondents (44.3%) consider adopted children as less happy than other children.

In order to verify the veracity of the first hypothesis we used t-test for independent samples to measure that *there are no significant differences in how respondents perceive parenting in biological child and adopted child.*

Analyzing the data resulting from the t-test, the conclusion is that there are no significant differences in perceiving parenting the of biological children and adopted children between the two subgroups formed by experience (students and professionals).

Given that there are no significant differences in parenting perception in the two subgroups

we may confirm the first hypothesis research.

The second hypothesis research verifies that according to respondents' experiences there are significant differences in the characteristics (1) of adoptive parents and (2) of adopted children.

The features of adoptive parents refer to the following items investigated: the fact that they can not have children (infertility), the desire to have a family, are happy and generous.

The characteristics of adopted children refer to the following items investigated: they have behavioral problems, problems with alcohol / drugs, adaptation, self-confidence.

To measure significant differences in terms of how the respondents' experiences capture the features of adoptive parents was used for t test independent samples. We found that there are significant differences in the characteristics of adoptive parents, that it can not have children between the two subgroups formed by experience (professionals and students).

We found that there are still significant differences in the characteristics of adopted children, they are having a problem behavior between the two subgroups formed by experience (professionals and students).

Given that there are significant differences only for the features adoptive parents (can not have children) between the two subgroups we can confirm partially the second hypothesis of the research.

A third research hypothesis, *based on the experiences of respondents, we assume that there are significant differences in terms of attitude towards adoption and the intention to adopt was also tested.*

To measure significant differences in terms of attitude towards adoption and the intention to adopt were used t tests for independent samples.

Table 4.1 *Comparing subgroups (students and professionals) depending on the attitude towards adoption, intention to adopt, friends / acquaintances who are adopted, sources of information*

	t	S i g. 2 t of it ed	Med i a	
			S (N = 60)	St (N = 300)
Features of adoptive parents	2692	.001	0.27	0.45
Attitude towards adoption	-1.4	.002	0.65	0.98

Intention to adopt	15.22	.000	1.53	0.38
Information Sources	-0.85	.395	0.50	0.56
Parenting biological child and adopted child	1.50	.134	2.00	1.90
Features adopted children	0.702	.483	1.77	1.71

L e g e nd complicated : t = v a lo has a t; sig. (2 - t to him is d) = lev e le s e MNI f i like you the 5% of it's t (int er v a le in Christian d er e e t is the 95%

Analyzing the data resulting from the t-tests, the conclusion is that there are significant differences in the attitude towards adoption between the 2 subgroups, experts and students. These results may be due to small sample compared to students in case of specialists.

After analyzing the data we found that there are significant differences depending on the intention to decide between the two subgroups (professionals and students).

Given that there are significant differences only for the intention to adopt between the two subgroups, we can confirm partially the third research hypothesis.

To complement the quantitative data we analyzed the responses of the two categories of respondents to the open question, depending on the following topics: motivation to adopt and barriers to adopt.

The themes on the answers were focused on the motivation to adopt and outlined the barriers to adoption, for students.

Table 4.2 The reason for adopting (for those who responded to the open question)

To make a difference in a child's life	11.21%
To give a child a family experience positive	**20%**
Meaning and significance in life	**11.21%**
persuasion	**0.9%**
I would love to become a parent	**1.8%**
Can not have their own children (infertility, difficulties in conception, birth fear, fear of complications)	**54%**

The strongest motivation for adoption is infertility (*in case you can not have children*), a 54% of all responses, followed by the desire to provide a family (20%) and to make a difference in a child's life (11.2%). Religious reasons were chosen by respondent students as less important (0.9%).

Table 4.3 Barriers to Adoption (for those who have answered the question open)

Too young	23.5%
Occupation / career / studies	**4.7%**
Inadequate financial resources, accountability	**16.03%**
Insecurity due to ill health or temperament, genetic attachment	**6.6%**
I never thought	**16.03%**
Blood Ties (I own biological child)	**28.3%**
I do not want kids, I do not like	**2.8%**
I'm not married	**0.9%**
their baby	**0.9%**

While the primary motivation to adopt is infertility, the main barrier to adoption is *blood relation* (the desire to have their own biological child), a percentage of 28.3%.

The following stage barriers are age (23.5%), students life and the constraints resulting from this period (16%).

The following barriers are blurred due to ill health or temperament, genetic attachment; they do not want children, they are unmarried or because they already have a child.

The main source of information about adoption is the internet, especially for the age group 25-34. If the results are different in specialists, the main source of information are friends and then Internet.

The visibility of the institutions in charge of adoptions is low, only specialists consider them a source of information because they are part of these institutions as employees of child welfare institutions.

How is adoption seen in the media? This is a question seeking response in Chapter 5, by investigating the portrait of adoption in the media and that was important to explore for professionals because the adoptive and prospective parents tend to look for information about the adoption of various sources - including media, online resources.

The wording of this question was based on the observations in the literature showing that the news appearing in the media are dramatic, sensational, with a representation of a 2:1 ratio of the negative to positive ones. Researchers have concluded that the public does not think about the full adoption (Adamec & Miller, 2007).

Mass communication via television, radio and print media influence personal attitudes

and behavior, through a process of propagation of communication in two stages. Emerging ideas through the media, initially reach opinion leaders and from them, in a second phase, the population groups less involved in the media. (Sana, 2014). As for adoptions, the audience of all the problems is the adoptive parents, an apathetic public that can be formed of people who know situations but are not very interested in the field. On the other hand, friends and relatives of some audiences may be one problem, being concerned when specific issues arise. The public of hot issues is the people who have heard about adoptions only in the media and are receptive to information about this topic (Sana, 2014). The cultural context is present in decoding and interpreting the message, while informational perspective side attaches more importance to cognitive (Rotar & Lepădatu, 2013).

The image that many people have about adoption is that of a young couple, economically stable, eager to have a baby, attaching itself to a healthy baby resembling the couple, who were born to a teenage mother, incapable of emotionally and financially to take care of him / her. The couple raising the child as such as birth parents, in which neither the child nor the adoptive parents do not look as different from other biological families they know (Hollingsworth, 2003).

Content analysis was used to investigate the content of news reports published in electronic print on adoption, in Romania from 2009 to 2016 (the years were selected so as to be part of this doctoral thesis preparation period). From a total of 288 links accessed were selected 118 newspapers. The articles published on personal blogs, websites, legal presentation / response to questions about the process have been removed. Keywords used for search were *adoption, adoptive parents, family, adopted children, biological family* . It was being used Atlas ti., Version 10.48.

Statistica descriptivă
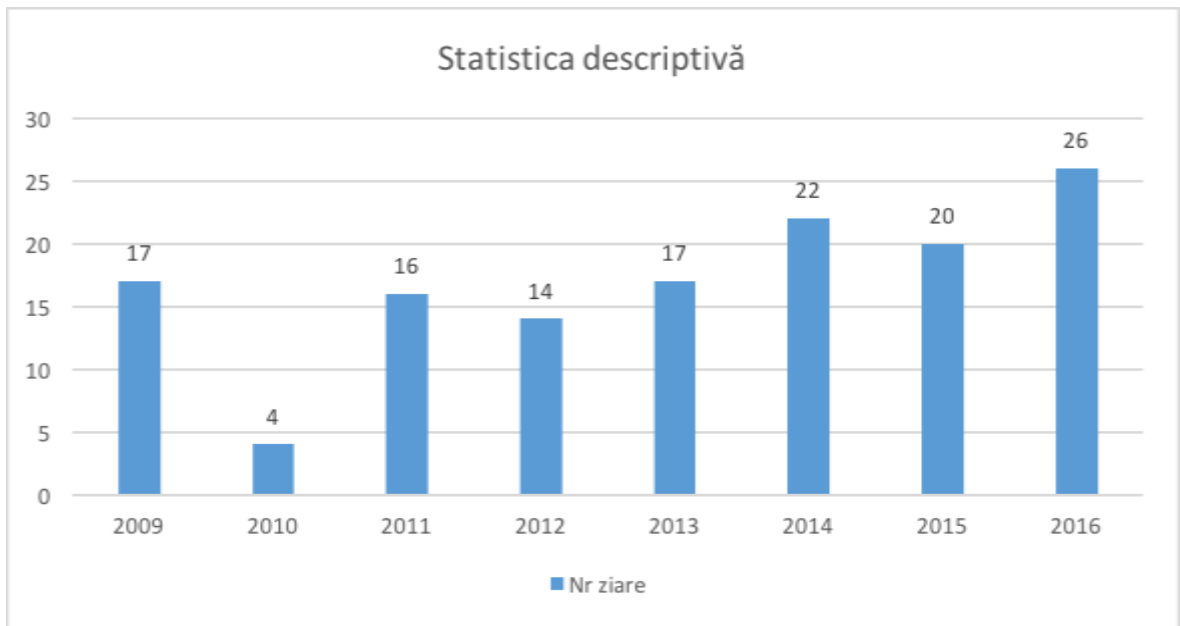
Figure 5.2 The number of articles published between 2009-2016 following keywords searches on the internet after adoption / 2009-2016 adopted children
Excluded: articles published on personal blogs and websites published articles on legal presentation / answer questions about the procedure.

As in other international research conducted (Creedy, 2001) the portrait of adoption of the biological parents in the media is negative. Biological parents are not mentioned as often as adopted children or adoptive parents. What is different from the studies mentioned in the literature is a much higher percentage for articles containing securities with positive valence, which can improve visibility in the eyes of the reader adoption, fostering and adoption. Also, if adoptive parents in this research outweigh the positives against the negatives, but overall neutral valence articles outnumber positive ones, insisting on legislative issues.

Even if there was a greater number of for titles with positive valence, analyzing the content of each category we can identify that the adoptive parents portrait is neutral, the articles presenting information on legislation, procedural steps to follow statistics.

Also the vast majority of images used by the media to illustrate this topic presented either babies or babies accompanied by families, sending a message resulting in a misrepresentations of the age segment of adoptable children. The statistics conducted nationwide in December 2015 shows that the number of adoptable children nationally is 2953,

the highest number recorded for the category of 7-13 years (children adopted nationally in 1711), the total number of adoptable children in 2953 (ANPDC source). [2]

Also, the adoptive family portrait created via images is different from the real picture. It closely resembles the image that exists in international literature, the image of a young couple, economically stable, eager to have a baby, attaching itself to a healthy baby that resembles couple (Hollingsworth, 2003).

The more often a topic is presented in the media, for example, emphasizing aspects of procedural legislation so the subject becomes more accessible in public memory. The news focuses more on a particular topic, the audience will perceive that as being an important topic, so perceiving it difficult to adopt a child.

News reports dramatic increase in the power of agenda setting. Therefore, articles related to biological parents are also mainly negative, emphasizing the sensational side, such as abandonment, sales of children. These issues contribute to the stigmatization of adopted children, who are considered then *the second choice,* with problematic, stressing the importance of biological ties.

People pay more attention to stories in the first part of the news bulletin, accepting the news as valuable and representative (Baran & Davis, 2012). This is reflected in the research conducted, analyzing the associated value of titles. The associated value of titles is positive (45%). Category titles which have a positive valence securities content focuses on children's rights in family, simplification of procedures, greater number of adoptions finalized benefits for adoptive parents.

Research findings, limitations of the research and some recommendations are presented in the last chapter of the book.

The portrait of the adoptive family in the media is similar to the said official institutions involved in adoption, Romanian Office of Adoption and ANPDC i.e. average age, most people who adopt are families (seven of eight adoptive) rather than singles (one of eight) have biological children, tried unsuccessfully to have their own children, adoptive families is the average age of 38-40 years, the level of education (Buzducea, D., & Lazarus, F. (2011), Bejenaru 2010). Instead, the images associated to adoptive families are often images of a young couple, loving with adopted children who are similar to adoptive parents.

The visibility of official institutions in charge of adoptions is low for students, but the specialists employees in child welfare institutions consider it a good source of information.

The sensational and dramatic cases presented in the media reveal a negative portrayal

associated with biological parents who are not mentioned as often as adopted children or adoptive parents.

The source of information for students regarding adoption are the internet. The next generation of adoptive parents is considered *digital natives,* a generation born with technology, which, by interacting with digital technology, has a better understanding of the concepts related to this topic. Digital technology is part of their nature, they grew with it, and it has shaped the way they think and process information in a fundamentally different from *Digital Immigrants* (those who grew up in the culture of print and TV) (Prensky, 2001).

Regarding the limits of this paper, the research is overshadowed by the fact that the results are based on responses from a small number of professionals and that the instrument used does not clarify the answers or exploring certain themes. However, the questionnaire allowed some answers about this subject and can be a starting point towards an exploratory research aimed at the general public attitudes related to the adoption.

Aspects of this research can be improved, in particular by involving more researchers, the encoding process is important to involve more researchers to strengthen and validate data consistency.

Like all content analysis, an aspect of the research is that only manifest content can be encoded. Sometimes the meaning is lost because the article can not be classified in a particular category. Several articles have encouraged individuals to adopt, but did not mention the adoptive parents.

Other issues worth considering as analysis articles with high ratings or number of views for each article separately. According to the agenda setting theory (agenda-setting), presenting success stories of adoption, which are often unknown to the public, we have the opportunity to shape public attitudes and opinions.

One of the limitations of the study is that this segment of the population is not representative of the whole community, and the results can not be generalized. It would be interesting to investigate the attitudes of students longitudinally to see the differences that occur in attitude, intention and behavior itself after being involved in family life.

The small number of specialists in research is another limitation of the study.

Some departments continue the research on the topic I propose, first, to carry out further investigations on a broader lot, including subjects from as many localities, both urban and rural, and should include also other professions. It would be worth to direct our attention to investigating those who have achieved positive results regarding the intention to adopt, to find out if they will ultimately adopt. Not ultimately, a qualitative research, which seeks to analyze

the decision-making process to adopt, would bring valuable additions to this work.

Among **the recommendations** based on research, but also studied literature include:

1 Developing programs of family education for students;

2 Centering the media messages on child in difficulty and the child's right to have a family;

3 Training courses for specialists to keep up with the latest research regarding adoption, adoptive parents, adopted children, community media to ensure improved quality of services offered

4 Creating support groups for adoptive families, adopted children (socio-emotionalm skills development);

5 A guide to the myths and reality for adoption families and the members of the adoption triad;

6 Media campaigns to future parents (to the age category specific to students) to promote adoption;

7 Using the stories of adopting parents in recruitment campaigns;

8 Using the internet as a way of promoting the adoption (Electronic Press, interactive websites, Mobile phones applications, accessibility to the socialization networks used t by the young generation i.e.: Facebook, Snapchat , Instagram , Youtube);

9 Increasing the visibility of institutions and services offered by different forms to traditional (General Directorate of Social Assistance and Child Protection ANPDC);

10   Changes in level language through a positive adoption language (focused on positive changes in the use of terms) in the media;;

11   A guide for journalists with suggestions on how they should write about adoption;

12   Modification of subjects assigned adoption tert take (emphasis on stories et tile adoptive families, presenting stories et fish successful) t n order valued complicated country adoption tert take;

13) Changing the images used by media in presenting adopted children and adoptive families;

14) Making public education campaign regarding adoption, the features of adoptive parents, adopted children by specialists involved. These campaigns should focus on the myths that appear frequently associated with adoption, adopted children and adoptive parents (illegitimacy, infertility, children with problems);

15) Creating, by the institutions involved and specialized, campaigns in adoption with adequate information related to the procedure and legislation;

16) Continuing to conduct campaigns to promote adoption in the media;

17) Support groups for foster parents to achieve these groups and connection with the community.

The value of the research is anchored in the fact that in Romania there are no studies on the subject and that the results of the proposed hypotheses reach conclusions similar to other international studies on the same invoice. This opens up numerous opportunities for further study investigating attitudes on adoption but also trying to modify the image of adoption in the media, which may have as result an increasing the number of adoptions.

Adoption is a lifelong process that brings joy and satisfaction of parents. The road to adoption may be one with multiple expectations, different policies, frustrations. Some of the adoptable children have physical or psychological problems that become apparent over time, affecting child development. Even without these problems, adoptive parents must face challenges, to help the child build a healthy self-esteem, a difficult task in a society that values biological ties, identity including all aspects of the child's background without denying any of them.

Changing the image of adoption in social representation is a necessary process, aiming at implementing European standards in Romania's child protection system. In a broader sense, the intended effect of the research is to contribute to changing the attitude of the next generation of parents, increasing the number of adoptions and amending the language used in the media on the subject of adoption.

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