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2nd Place Contest Entry: International Adoption: Its Rise in the United States and Downfall in the Education System

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At the beginning of the research process, I was quite intimidated. I was not familiar with finding research articles, nor did I have much experience with utilizing Leatherby Libraries. However, despite my initial trepidation, once I explored the online databases and sought help from librarians, I was able to successfully navigate the website. The design and layout of the website contributed greatly to my ease in finding necessary research materials, and I became excited at the prospect of discovering journal articles.

My research paper was assigned in IES 303, *Education Through Life Transitions*. We were tasked with writing a five-page paper about a topic we were passionate about, and I chose international adoption as my focus, because I am an international adoptee myself. Initially, the process of finding relevant journal articles was shaky, since I was unsure which keywords would be broad enough to find pertinent articles, but not so limiting that only two articles would appear. Yet, by utilizing a specific time period to ascertain peer-reviewed articles that were published no later than ten-fifteen years ago, I was able to research the current, most relevant state of international adoption education and assess the ongoing discussion.

For this project in particular, our main source of evidence was meant to originate from peer-reviewed articles, so I did not search for books, websites, or other materials. Although these types of sources do yield useful anecdotal research, research articles provide empirical evidence to support arguments, and I wanted to use that evidence to add authority to the connection between international adoption and the educational process. During this search for peer-reviewed articles, I was reminded of a presentation I had in another IES class; we visited the library and

librarian Lauren Dubell showed us some hints and tricks about the Leatherby Library website. What I specifically remember is how Lauren Dubell demonstrated how to identify databases that were classified by subject. In my case, since I am an IES major, I discovered the four main databases for my research paper: Academic Search Premiere, ERIC (EBSCO), ERIC (ProQuest), and PsychINFO. From these databases, I was able to find peer-reviewed journal articles published in the last ten-fifteen years that contributed to the ongoing discussion of international adoption, identity formation issues, as well as Universal Design Learning. The parameters I used not only specified and narrowed my pool of possible articles, but they also helped me find the most up to date, intriguing articles in my field of interest.

Another useful strategy I learned throughout this process came from my professor, Anne Steketee, who advised us to mine reference pages of exemplar articles to find other landmark articles, as well as additional journals that could be useful. What I noticed, however, is that when I attempted to locate these articles on Google Scholar, in order to access the article, I had to pay. It was then that I learned to utilize the Chapman Discover meta-database, instead, since this permitted me to access the articles for free.

Throughout the process of finding, evaluating, and incorporating articles into my research paper, I learned three valuable lessons. First, I learned how to critically evaluate articles using strict inclusion criteria. As my professor, Anne, had instructed, the best method for evaluating articles involved establishing a time period, identifying relevance, determining authority and accuracy, as well as comprehending the overall purpose of the article. Ideally, articles were included if they were published in the last ten-fifteen years, pertained to my keywords, originated from credible peer-reviewed journals/sources, transparently stated their method(s) of data

collection, and asserted the importance of the research conducted. Second, although I referenced a particular historical event in one portion of my paper (Romanian adoption), I learned that by establishing an effective time period, I could integrate historical context within current educational discussions of my topic, thereby addressing both historical descriptions and updated research. Third, and most importantly, I learned that the production and consumption of research is highly subjective, and, for that reason, it is imperative to be critically conscious in selecting articles to include. By using standard evaluation criteria, I can determine which articles are reliable and valid enough to use and which ones are less credible. Ultimately, the ease of finding articles and the vast well of information Chapman provides its students inspired me to become an educational researcher. Had it not been for the user-friendly website and informative librarians, I never would have discovered my passion for research. I am excited to see what the future holds, and hopefully one day a peer-reviewed journal article in the Chapman database will be authored by me. (**784 words**)

Sample Three Page Excerpt

A Case Study: Romanian Adoptees

One of the primary countries that relied on international adoptions was Romania, which

stimulated the conversation surrounding international adoption within the United States.

Although many countries were considered major senders of children, in the 1990s, Romania

received extensive attention and scrutiny due to its coverage by media outlets. Through the

exposure of the poor conditions of Romanian orphanages, it was discovered that children were

subjected to severe starvation, which led to issues of nutrition and hygiene (Le Mare, Audet, &

Kurtnik, 2007). Ultimately, with the subpar living conditions and the concerning effect on the

children, many researchers have been interested in investigating the overall impact of

international adoption – both psychologically and developmentally.

Developmental Challenges for Romanian Adoptees

While more severe cases like the institutionalized Romanian adoptions are relatively uncommon,

the implications of this case study are also applicable to international adoptees in general. For

example, research suggests that living in institutions can lead to poorer life outcomes. Often,

children who are raised in these serious circumstances are exposed to limited opportunities to

develop intellectually, physically, or psychologically (Le Mare, Audet, Kurytnik, 2007). The

subsequent lack of emotional and behavioral development, along with the duration of deprivation

and severity of time spent at the institution, collectively increase the child's risk for experiencing

complex problems (Le Mare, Audet, Kurytnik, 2007). In the case of the Romanian adoptees,

upon arriving to their new home country, it became apparent that the conditions of the orphanage

would play a significant role in how the children were able to fully develop outside of Romania.

For instance, Kennedy et al. (2016) cited O'Connor, Rutter, Beckett, Keaveney, and Kreppner who identified developmental issues including growth stunting, quasi-autism, complications with attachment, and cognitive impairments among Romanian adoptees who were brought to the United Kingdom (p. 1114). The presence of these developmental delays is considered one of several consequences caused by the psychological deprivation, (Wilson, 2003), malnutrition, and overall conditions within the orphanages (Kennedy et al., 2016). Taking into account the severity of mental and physical impairments related to the Romanian adoptions, further development of intensive treatments is warranted and continues to be investigated.

Implications of the Romanian Adoptions

Today, almost thirty years after the first adoptions from Romania, there are ongoing efforts by researchers and medical professionals in order to address the extreme trauma these children experienced at such a young age. Researchers have learned a great deal about international adoption based on observations and data collected from the families who were part of the initial Romanian adoptions. For example, these families were found to seek out services related to behavior, physical heath, academic, relationship, mental health, speech, and parenting problems at least once during the child's first ten years with the adoptive family (Le Mare, Audet, Kurytnik, 2007, p. 245). It was evident that the Romanian adoptees faced behavioral and emotional difficulties associated with their institutionalization, which then required subsequent access to a wide range of services in order to address these issues. Although the case study of Romanian adoptees serves as an extreme example of how pre-adoption circumstances can impact an adopted child, it also functions as a starting point to understanding the impact of international adoption overall. Not only do families of the Romanian adoptees pursue support systems, but

also families formed by international adoption in general. For instance, on average, international adoptees display more behavioral problems than nonadopted children, and show a greater risk for externalizing and internalizing problems (Juffer & van IJzendoorn, 2005). Therefore, while Romania is an intense sample of international adoption, it is clear that international adoptees as a whole are susceptible to increased physical, emotional, and behavioral issues.

Educational Implications

Developmental challenges faced by international adoptees can manifest in several different aspects of life. Some of the issues that arise include "displaced anger, antisocial behavior, attachment issues, and family systems issues" (Crawford, 2017, p. 10). While the comprehensive list is much longer, research suggests that international adoptees exhibit behavioral issues at a higher rate than nonadopted children (Juffer & van IJzendoorn, 2005). With the elevated risk of developmental problems, it is imperative that professionals understand the psychological and physical damage resulting from the international adoption experience. Not only can medical professionals benefit from intensive education on international adoption, but also school teachers as well. In order to provide services that address the genuine needs of adoptive families, especially academic ones, the full implications of international adoption must be carefully parsed out and understood.

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