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# The significant behavioral aspects of adopted children within successful adoption in Romania

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## Abstract

The human behavior is giving the entire picture of a person. The behavior is based on a complex combination of personal innate factors, experience and education and the social network within which the individual is integrated. Each moment the complex individual factors face external and internal environmental aspects which in turn, generate proactive and retroactive reactions. The adoption process is an important and challenging social experiment, bringing to the adopted child a new affiliation, social network, experiences and educational standards. This comes in his/her life after the trauma of losing his biological affiliation and social and emotional support. Which are the significant characteristics of the adopted child's behavior? Which are the behavioral characteristics of the adoptive child that guarantee the success of the domestic adoptions in Romania? These are the questions we are going to answer here based on the research done within FISAN<sup>6</sup> project. The 32 children, 11-16 years old, adopted by Romanian families, during the early ages (0-4 years), were evaluated with complex evaluation tools for children and parents. The adoptive families participating in the research live in the Western counties of Romania.

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<sup>6</sup> *Factori ce influenteaza succesul adoptiei nationale* (Factors that influence the success of the national adoption) (FISAN) is a research project funded by CNCISIS, a structure which belongs to the Minister of Education in Romania.

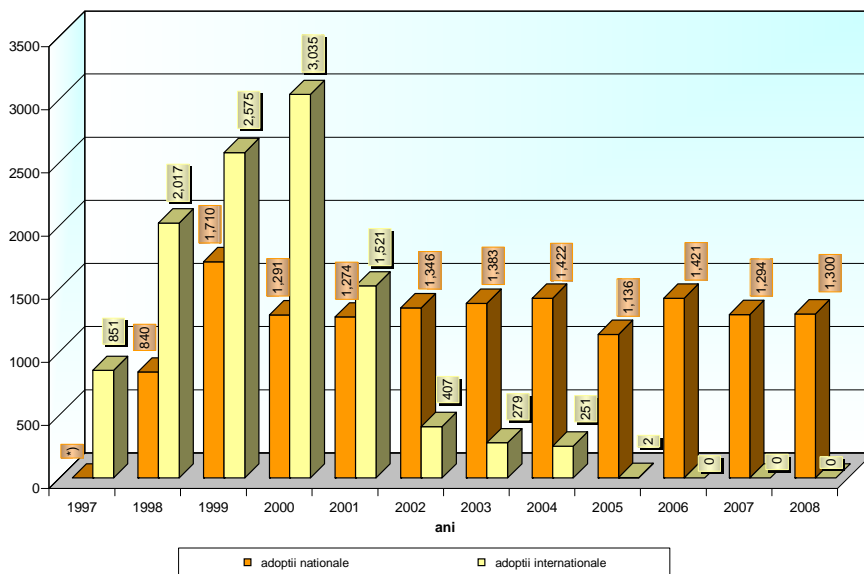
Successful adoption is defined as secure attachment of the adopted child. The conclusions emphasize the importance of: the pro-social behavior, the loving behavior showed to the parents, the assertive behavior, the differentiations between parents and people outside the family, and between the two parents, and the humor. These behaviors displayed by the adopted children are the ingredients of a successful integration within the adoptive family.

*Keywords: successful adoption; adolescent; behavior; evaluation; attachment.*

## Introduction

Since 2001, when the international adoptions were banned in Romania, the national adoption became a priority within the child protection system. Consequently, during the last decay in Romania there was a constant increase in national adoptions (fig. 1). Unfortunately, in parallel, the Romanian public opinion became aware of the cases of adoptive families asking to resign the adoption.

*Fig.1. The evolution of the national adoption during the last 10 years<sup>7</sup>*



In 2008, 23696<sup>8</sup> children lived within the institutions of child protection and 1300 children went in domestic adoption.

<sup>7</sup> [www.ora-gov.ro](http://www.ora-gov.ro)

<sup>8</sup> Anuarul Statistic al Romaniei 2009 ( 01.07. 2008)

A slightly decrease of the national adoptions during the last 3 years (2006-2007) is obvious. The situation is known to the Romanian researchers in the field. "The statistic data at the national level show for the last two years a decrease of the number of national adoptions" (Cojocaru & Cojocaru, 2008, p. 125). One of the explanations is the legislation and the very bureaucratic procedure which discourage the family wishing to adopt children (Cojocaru, 2008; Cojocaru, 2009). The special request of the adoptive family regarding the desired child is another reason for the decrease of national adoption. In the mean time there are also adoptive families ready to resign the adoption. The cultural aspects are not taken enough into account when we try to understand the national adoption phenomenon. The statistics within the fig.1, above, mirror the results of a huge work done by the Romanian professionals within the child protection system and lots of efforts on the political side focused to change the way in which the child is perceived by the family and to improve the place of the child within the entire society.

### **The context of research**

The research project FISAN (The factors which influence the successful national adoption) was initiated in 2009, by the research team of CICOP (Center for Research on Child-Parent Interactions), within the West University in Timisoara, in agreement with the central and local governmental structures in child protection in Romania. The project is part of the international network *Adoption/Attachment/Adolescence*, (<https://sites.google.com/site/aaarnetwork/home>) set-up by SUPEA Research Unit from Lausanne University, Child and Adolescent Psychiatry Dept., and coordinated by Blaise Pierrehumbert. Within FISAN project, 32 children aged 11-16 years old, adopted in the first years of their life (0-4) were assessed together with their adoptive families.

*The instruments* used within the research to collect our data are three questionnaires, two semi-structured interviews, one with the parents and one with the child, and an unstructured interview which was organized at the beginning of the meeting with the family. The data is fulfilled with a retroactive perspective through a structured interview. All the instruments used work within the theoretic framework of the attachment theory which brings an ecosystemic and interactional vision to the psychology of human development.

For the purpose of our papers we will discuss here only the findings based on the semi structured interview FFI, and one questionnaire administrated to the child as a self-report (SSP).

The Friends and Family interview (FFI), used here, is a semi structured interview, developed by Howard Steel (2003), and its purpose is the evaluation of the

youth's attachment. The evaluated items are: 1) coherence; 2) reflective functioning or mentalization; 3) the ability to show an understanding of diverse feelings present in significant relationships; 4) evidence of safe haven/secure base availability (in relationship with the mother, father, other); 5) evidence of self esteem; 6) peer relations; 7) anxieties and defense; 8) differentiation of parental representations; 9) attachment classification rating; 10) notes (remarks during the evaluation process); 10) non-verbal codes (fear/distress, and frustration/anger).

Each dimension is quoted between 1 and 4, as it follows:

- 1 = absent/no evidence
- 2 = mild evidence
- 3 = moderate evidence
- 4 = marked evidence

Attachment is evaluated within FFI, from two, respectively four dimensions: autonomous secure attachment and insecure attachment with the following forms: avoidant dismissing attachment, ambivalent (preoccupied) attachment and disorganized/disoriented attachment. FFI is not just an evaluation instrument, but it also has a developmental component by creating a moment of reflection for the child which may give the chance for a mental organization of the attachment situation within his family (Steel, 2005).

The School Success Profile<sup>9</sup> (SSP) questionnaire evaluates the social efficiency of the child that embodies his state of well-being and healthy development and that offers an orientation regarding his life evolution. The theories that bring up this instrument are the developmental, ecosystemic and interactional (Bowen, Rose, Bowen, 2005) or, in other words, the eco-interaction-developmental theory according to which „the balance between the protective and the risk factors from the social environment of the children influences school and life success” (Bowen, Rose, Bowen, 2005, p. 25). The Romanian version of SSP questionnaire has 220 questions and is administrated as self-report. Only part of the information brought by SSP will be used in this analysis.

## **Theoretical consideration and questions for our research**

The literature provides strong evidence that the exposure to early stress influences later emotional regulation. Regarding adopted children early stress, poor life conditions, and especially the separation of their biological parents may constitute potential risk factors for the social emotional development and it can

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<sup>9</sup> It is a sensitive and loyal instrument, validated on the Romanian school teenagers within the project Social Diagnostic of School Performance Through the School Success Social Scale and the Projecting of Intervention Methods Tested Through Research, developed by Babes-Bolyai University, during 2008-2010, conducted by Prof. Maria Roth

build-up an initial trauma for children. The period of adolescence, which involves new separations and new relationships may be especially sensitive in this regard. The role of pre-adoptive environment and the age of adoption have been highlighted in relation to attachment processes and behavioral difficulties of adopted children (Chisholm, 1998). Most of the abandoned and adopted children have experienced a number of adverse conditions (Rutter, 1983) that may influence their adjustment and parent-child relationship within the context of adoption. At adoption, children are often physically, behaviorally and cognitively delayed (Rutter, 1998; Johnson, 2001; McLean, 2003) because of the time spent in institutions in poor living conditions, without an attachment figure and waiting for a definitive status (Vinay, 2003; Grotevant et al., 2006). These factors increase the risk that the child encounters adverse life events, with probabilities of long term consequences on his/her development (Groza, Ryan, 2002; Pratti, 2005; Cojocaru D, 2008; Cojocaru, D., 2009). When adopted children are entering the new family, they have lots of new conditions and stimulus to which they have to adapt. In their life there is a disruption which will ask from them and their adoptive families' lots of adaptive efforts. All of these factors can have long-term consequences on the lives of both the adopted child and their adoptive parents. Adolescence represents by itself a critical developmental period. Due to a variety of physiological, cognitive and emotional changes, adolescents become preoccupied about who are they, where do they come from and what will they become (Bimmel et al., 2003). The process of searching for answers to these questions and the answers when they are found will build-up the adolescents' identity. Obviously answering to these questions is more difficult for adoptive children. Although the children understand the meaning of adoption at about 8-12 years (Brodzinskiy et al., 1984; Brodzinskiy, 1987; Kirk, 1984; McRoy et al., 1984) they tend to become concerned about these issues only later on, in adolescence (Brodzinskiy et al., 1992; Lee and Quintana, 2005). For adopted children, the period of adolescence, with the task of construction of their own identity, can be very difficult for different reasons among which: the cut off from their origins and several difficulties in collecting information about their biological parents as well as facing their own abandonment done by the biological parents (Bimmel et al., 2003). In Romania, where often the adoptive parents choose to hide the adoption from their children, the process of adolescence can be even more difficult and dangerous due to the child's inquiries which can bring him or her to discover the truth regarding his or her origins. Within our research an important criteria to work with families and children is that the child should know about his/her adoption. During the adolescence the adopted children can start to see the differences in appearance and physical traits between them and their adoptive parents (Grotevant & McRoy, 1990; Bimmel et al., 2003) which make their process even more difficult. Adolescents often compare themselves with their peers and see the differences. To conclude, being adopted may constitute a risk factor regarding the psychological development, particularly in adolescence. Overall, the literature about adoption shows an

increase of behavior problems during adolescence for adopted children (Juffer and Van Ijzendoorn, 2005). Externalizing behavior problems have been especially described (Wierzbicki, 1993; Castle et al., 2003; Bimmel et al., 2003), but some studies also found increased internalizing problems among adolescents adoptees (Borders et al., 2000; Dalen, 2001; Fan et al., 2002; Storsbergen, 2004). However all authors agree to consider that the majority of adopted adolescents function in the normal range. Contrast in these results can be partly explained by disparities in samples and in methods. According to the attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969), poor relationships before adoption may influence the development of emotional regulation and the later social adaptation (Tessier et al., 2005). In the 1950s, Bowlby concluded that many orphans in English institutions were unable to establish and maintain a stable and secure relationship with adults. A good quality of relationship between the infant and his/her caregiver would stimulate a feeling of security, normally elicited through the caregiver's responses to the child's needs, during the child-adult interactions. This is then internalized in terms of expectations and representations of the relationship with the caregiver. Such 'internal working models' (Bowlby, 1969) based on generalization and differentiation of the child's experiences will then extend to later social interactions. In adoption, the previous child-caregivers bonds may have been disrupted or remained undeveloped, generating psychological vulnerability (Howe, 1997; Cederbald et al., 1999; Verhulst et al., 1992) and jeopardizing the adoption process.

A better understanding of the behavior of the adoptive children and of parents' representations about the adopted child when adoption is successful can prevent the failures in adoption process. For all these considerations we are trying here to highlight the positive behavioral aspects of the adopted child, which support the successful domestic adoptions in Romania. Our conclusions could probably be relevant for any other kind of successful adoption.

## Questions

We focus our research on behavioral aspects and socio-emotional development of adopted adolescents. The success of the adoption is considerate as being build-up by the quality of the child attachment. The securely attached child always has 'good enough parents' (Winnicott, 1964). For adoptive parents to become good enough parents it is a more demanding job then for the biological parents. They have to work more in order to understand their child and to let the child, despite all the adverse previous experience, to trust them. The child's previous experiences as well as the child's innate potential are essential in successful matching with their family members. The child's adolescence is a difficult period which can jeopardize the success of the adoption and the previous good relationship and parents-child interactions.

Which are the significant characteristics of the adopted child's behavior? What is the behavior of the adopted adolescents towards their parents and family, their peers and themselves when the child is securely attached?

## Findings

As we mentioned before, we consider the successful adoption as equal to the secure attachment of the adopted child. The assumption is based on the researches in which it was found that the security of attachment is associated with: trust, confidence and harmony in relationship with the parent and significant others, emotion regulation, self-reliance, ego-resilience, personal efficacy, relational intimacy, social competence, relationship-based developmental disorders, understanding of an orientation towards others, language and cognitive competences, play competence, exploratory skills, communication style, and other outcomes influenced by self-confidence and ego functioning (Prior, Glaser, 2006, p.160). The quality of attachment is mirroring the previous experiences in relation with the attachment figure but it also gives the pre figuration of future development and functioning of the people within different life circumstances. The quality of attachment is a holistic vision of the person's efficacy and happiness.

We are looking for answers to the question: What is the behavior of the adopted adolescent towards his/her parents and family, peer and himself/ herself when the child is securely attached?

The description of the entire sample, made out of 32 adopted adolescents, according to the age at the evaluation, the age at adoption and the gender is presented in Table 1.

The entire sample has 62% females, and 38%, males. All the adoptive families in the sample talked openly with the child about the adoption even if this was done first at children's different ages. According to the parent's story, in one case when the disclosure of adoption was done at a later age of the child, the emotional reactions were very intensive and disruptive for the entire family.

Taking in account the attachment quality, found with FFI, three different groups of adopted children could be established within our sample: Secure attachment (9 children), children with a good score in security attachment (10 children), children with insecure attachment (13 children). See Table 2.



Table 1. The sample of adopted children evaluated

No.	Identification code	Child's age at the evaluation/years	gender	Child's age at adoption/months
1	A.V.	11	M	1
2	B.A.	11	F	36
3	B.I.	11	M	48
4	B.R.	11	F	1
5	C.C.	11	F	10
6	M.F.	11	M	1
7	T.S.	11	M	7
8	A.I.	12	M	24
9	B.T.	12	F	24
10	C.P.	12	M	36
11	G.A.	12	F	9
12	G.C.	12	F	5
13	I.M.	12	M	2
14	L.S.	12	F	48
15	M.A.	12	M	11
16	M.G.	12	F	48
17	A.F.	13	M	16
18	B.C.	13	F	3
19	C.H.	13	F	48
20	C.D.A.	13	F	42
21	I.I.	13	F	24
22	L.O.	13	F	1
23	F.K.	14	F	32
24	S.B	14	F	14
25	S.I.	14	F	15
26	B.A.	15	F	11
27	B.G.	15	M	36
28	B.O.	15	M	42
29	B.M.	16	M	48
30	C.I.	16	F	36
31	L.C.	16	F	36

Table 2. Attachment classification ratings. Results of assessment with FFI on the entire sample.

Quotation	Secure Autonomous		Insecure dismissing		Insecure preoccupied		Disorganized disoriented	
4	9	28%	3	9%	1	3%	0	0
3	10	32%	6	19%	4	12%	2	6%
2	2	6%	11	34%	7	22%	4	12%
1	11	34%	12	38%	20	63%	26	82%
	32	100%	32	100%	32	100%	32	100%

The following analysis is focused on a sample of 19 children made out by the first two groups of children: children securely attached (9), and children with high score regarding the security of attachment (10).

The demographic description of the new sample, according to the age at the evaluation, gender, and age at the adoption, is presented in Table 3.

Within the two groups, 32% are males, and 68%, are females, comparing with 38% males and 62% females, in the initial sample.

According to the parents' level of education, it is surprisingly enough that in most of successful adoption the parents have middle level of education (58% for mothers and 53% for fathers), which means that they graduated high school. In 4 cases of successful adoption we found single parent family, in which the mother was the breadwinner.

Usually the families asking for adoption are not in low economic conditions. The most important is not the real state of affaire but what the child feels about the economic safety of the family. The poverty of the family which is not perceived by the child does not affect his or her development (Felner, 2000). None of the adolescents in the sample investigated has the feeling of being poor, and almost half of them (47%) feel as having all they need. Most of the adolescents are excellent in school (68% have the highest grades) and a third part of the sample (32%) have good results in school.

Table 3. The description of the two groups (9 and 10 children) of adopted children with high scores on attachment security

No.	Identification code	Child's age at the evaluation/years	gender	Child's age at adoption/months
1	AV	11	M	1
2	BA	11	F	36
3	AI	12	M	24
4	GA	12	F	9
5	IM	12	M	2
6	FK	14	F	32
7	SI	14	F	15
8	SB	14	F	14
9	BA	15	F	11
1	B.I	11	M	48
2	C.C	11	F	10
3	M.F	11	M	1
4	B.T	12	F	24
5	L.S	12	F	48
6	M.G	12	F	48
7	A.F	13	M	16
8	B.C.	13	F	3
9	L.O	13	F	1
10	M.C	16	F	30

Table 4. Description of sample of 19 children securely attached

mother's level of education			father's level of education			the family's wealthy perceived by the child			the grades of the child during last school's year	
basic	middle	high	basic	middle	high	decent	we can afford expensive	we have everything we need	the best: 9-10	the good: 6-8
2	11	6	1	8	6	6	4	9	13	6
11%	58%	31%	7%	53%	40%	32%	21%	47%	68%	32%

Comparing the entire sample of adopted children with the two groups of children with high score in security of attachment, based on the ages at the evaluation and the ages at adoption, the results are as follows:

*Table 5. Comparative description of the entire sample and the new sample made out of two groups of adopted children with high security of attachment*

Ages of children at evaluation/ in years	The entire sample		The two groups together		Ages of children at adoption in months	The entire sample		The two groups	
	Number of children and %		Number of children and %			Number of children and %		Number of children and %	
11 years old	7	22%	5	26%	1-5months	7	22%	5	26%
12 years old	9	28%	6	32%	7-11 months	5	15%	3	16%
13 years old	6	19%	3	16%	14-16 months	3	9%	3	16%
14 years old	3	9%	3	16%	24-36 months	10	32%	5	26%
15 years old	3	9%	1	5%	42-48 months	7	22%	3	16%
16 years old	4	13 %	1	5%					
total	32	100%	19	100 %		32	100 %	19	100%

The description of the two samples based on the ages at the evaluation, and the ages at adoption, does not show significant differences.

Evaluated through 4 different items: the truth, the economy, the relation and the manner of child’s verbal behavior, more than half (10 children) out of 19 adopted children, have an overall excellent coherence. According to the handbook of FFI (Steele, Steele, 2009) the truth is assessed by the convincing evidences provided by the children, during the entire interview, in order to support their appraisal of self and others. The economy of verbal behavior is quoted taking in account the “right amount of information” provided by the child. In the most successful cases of adoption the parents consider the child as being shy and as needing time in order to become familiar and to talk open with a new acquaintance. The familiar behavior with strangers is one of the significant behaviors of children insecurely attached (Prior, Glaser, 2006). The 19 adopted children are not showing such indiscriminate behavior and the new social contacts are approached tactfully. This tendency gives an ‘economy’ on their verbal behavior. The ‘relation item’ refers to the relevance of given examples. All the children give examples of relevant relations, with significant persons for their existence. “The manner” evaluates the cooperation behavior of the child and the interviewer, including

politeness, interest in dialogue and age-appropriate level of attention during the interview. The overall coherence shows the most significant differences among the two samples and support our choice to split the initial sample in two categories: children with good quality of attachment (19) and children insecurely attached at the moment of evaluation (13). The overall coherence is given by the global quality of the interview, such as: the interview seems plausible, complete, and gives an accurate picture of the person's social and personal experiences and appraisals (Steele & Steele, 2009).

Table 6. Coherence in the group of 19 adopted children with high score on secure attachment: truth, economy, relation, manner, overall coherence

quotation	Coherence									
	Truth		Economy		Relation		Manner		Overall coherence	
4	10	53%	4	21%	8	42%	15	79%	10	53%
3	9	47%	10	53%	11	58%	3	16%	8	42%
2	0		4	21%	0		1	5%	1	5%
1	0		1	5%	0		0		0	0
Total	19	100%	19	100%	19	100%	19	100%	19	100%

In conclusion, the 19 adopted children show good cooperation skills, have good relationships in their social environment, and are used to express the truth, in confrontation with tasks and responsibilities.

Reflective function or mentalization is one of the most important functions in building up the resilience of a person (Masten, 2001). The resilience is the capacity to face difficulties, including traumatic events and to continue the personal development (Ionescu, 2008). The reflection ability allows the person to redefine him or herself, his or her place in the world as well as the relationship with others following traumatic event (Johnson, Wiechelt, 2004). Usually, the traumatic event created by the abandonment is placed at the beginning of the adopted children's life. Developed in a favorable family context, the child has the opportunity to practice his reflective function. Reflecting together with the adoptive parent on the initial traumatic event will strength the child, will calm down the fears and will promote the security of child's attachment to the parent. FFI is looking in an extensive way to the reflective functioning of the child. One application of the reflective function investigated through FFI is the developmental perspective of the child in relation to the most significant persons.

Table 7a. Reflective Functioning or mentalization: developmental perspective

quota	Developmental Perspective		Can assume mental perspective of another Person									
			Mother		Father		Friend		Sibling		Teacher	
4	4	21%	8	42%	6	35%	6	32%	5	42%	6	32%
3	10	53%	8	42%	9	53%	8	42%	3	25%	6	32%
2	5	26%	3	16%	2	12%	5	26%	4	33%	7	36%
1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	19	100%	19	100%	17	100%	19	100%	12	100%	19	100%

Within the interview the child is asked about the way in which he or she thinks that his/her mother, father, friends, sibling and teacher changed in time the vision about him or her. If the child is capable to reflect on the modification in time of the image that others have about him, he is capable to assume the mental perspective of another person but also to see how this moves along the time.

Most of the 19 children (74%) in the sample have good developmental perspective, with the best understanding on the perspective of mother (84%) and father (88%). This difference between the understanding of the mother's and father's mental perspective could be due to the more affectionate mother's behavior which gives the child the feeling that it hasn't changed much in time.

As the physical distance between the child and the person increases, the reflective function of the child seems to be less efficient. Consequently, the mental perspective of the teacher is assumed by the child on the lower rate, but still a very good one (64%).

Another application of the child's reflective function, investigated through FFI, is on the diverse feelings present within significant relationship. The interview highlights the child's capacity to understand the feelings involved in relationships and how do the feelings affect the relation.

7.b. *Reflective functioning (mentalization): Able to show an understanding of diverse feelings present in significant relationships (1. Self; 2. Mother; 3. Father; 4.Friend; 5. Sibling; 6.Teacher.)*

quota	Able to show an understanding of diverse feelings being present in significant relationships											
	Self		Mother		Father		Friend		Sib		Teacher	
4	8	42%	10	53%	8	47%	5	26%	5	42%	4	21%
3	9	47%	8	42%	7	41%	12	63%	2	16%	11	58%
2	2	11%	1	5%	2	12%	2	11%	5	42%	4	21%
1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	19	100%	19	100%	17	100%	19	100%	12	100%	19	100%

The reflection on the relationships has slightly better quotation in relation to all significant people in the child’s life. The 19 securely attached adopted children are capable to reflect about their own feelings (89%) and to talk about it. They understand the feelings of their parents (95% for mother, and 88% for father) even better than they understood their mental perspective.

Taking in account the ages of children (22% are 11 years old) in the sample, the reflective function displayed by the respondents is quite high. Between the cooperation and coherence shown and reflective functions there is a strong connection and the very congruent results (see tables: 6, 7a, 7b) on the sample mirror this link.

Table 8. Selected items from SSP

items from SSP	I can trust my friends ( C1 a)			You fight in the classroom( D8 i)			I had an argument with my teacher (D8j)		
	Not at all	a little bit	a lot	Not at all	Little bit	a Lot	Not at all	little bit	a Lot
quality									
number of children	0	6	13	14	0	5	14	1	4
%	0	32%	68%	74%	0	26%	74%	5%	21%

As shown within table 8, 14 children (74%) out of the 19 who made the sample, had never fight with their colleagues and had no arguments with teachers. The behavior emphasized by SSP is totally congruent with the data brought by

FFI application. The trust toward friends is very high (68%), comparing with the level of trust regarding friends (69,8%) found on a national enquiry done with SSP on the representative sample of children of the same age (Muntean, Roth, Iovu, 2010).

The child’s mental health continues to depend in adolescence, as it did during infancy, in the sense that a secure base from mother, father or others is available. This is evident when the child is upset or in separation moments (Steele & Steele, 2009). The strategy of the children in distress is relevant for the quality of the relationship with others but also for his/her resilience. FFI is investigating to whom the child turns for comfort, who is the person bringing more security and capable to calm the child and to help him or her in order to overpass the bad moments. Even the attachment theory does not limit the function of attachment figure to the mother, due to biological and cultural context, we still expect that the mother will play the most important role in settling the child. Within the sample of 19 children securely attached, 63% find a secure base available in relation to the mother, but 41% will better or equal go to the father, and 28% have friends and other person to go to. In fact, turning for support is not limited to one person and as children are growing up they find more resources for themselves, as a consequence of their initial secure attachment.

Table 9. Secure Base Availability in relationships

quota	Secure Base Availability in relationship with					
	Mother		Father		Other	
4	12	63%	7	41%	5	28%
3	5	26%	7	41%	9	50%
2	2	11%	3	18%	4	22%
1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	19	100%	17	100%	18	100%

One of 19 children specify that in such circumstances, when she is upset she goes to her mother but if she is not available, and the father is not available, she will turn to her dog. This behavior was confirmed by the parents. Finding more resources in the environment proves good attachment and resilience and is a support for better development of the child.

The results of FFI concerning the secure base are congruent with the findings in SSP. The question regarding family members supporting each other (D1a), received 100% positive answers from the sample of 19 adopted adolescents. Another significant item here explored by SSP is: “I can trust my friends” (table 8) where 68% of children trust totally their friends. The 78% of children who turn



for support in difficult moments to others (table 9) has an explanation in the results found with SSP (table 8).

The self esteem which is the base of the life projects of adolescents is evaluated through the semi structured interview FFI by the social competences, school competences, body image and references to body parts. Here we consider separately the social self and the cognitiv (school-achieving) self as hold by the repondent. We see to which extend the interview suggests a robust, hopeful and optimistic orientation towards different aspects of self ( Steele &Steele, 2009).

Table 10. Evidence of self esteem

quota	Evidence of self esteem re:									
	Social competence		School comp		Gender identification		Body image/rep'n		Ref to body parts	
4	7	36%	8	42%	14	74%	11	58%	9	47%
3	11	58%	9	47%	4	21%	4	21%	4	21%
2	1	5%	2	11%	1	5%	3	16%	4	21%
1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	5%	2	11%
Total	19	100%	19	100%	19	100%	19	100%	19	100%

The representation of self includes the physical self and the psychological self, and the satisfaction of the child regarding both of them build-up the self esteem.

Even the adolescents in the sample do not display much attention to the body (79% for body image/body representation and 68% references to different parts of the body) they have good gender identification (95%) and they are confident regarding the school competences (89%) and social competences (94%). ‘Robust’ social competences together with gender identification help the child to find his/her place in relationship, and to feel comfortable and connected with others, and to belong to social groups: family, friends, peers, and generation. The SSP questionnaire bellow (table 11) shows the same good school competences of the child and trust regarding the future. The trust regarding the future is a global characteristic based on the child’s self esteem as well as on the trust regarding social environment.

Table 11. Selected items from SSP questionnaire

items of SSP	I like to learn new things at school (B9 b)			I know that I will be successful in the future (B23 b)		
quality	not at all	little bit	very much	a little bit	a lot	very much
number of children	1	5	13	4	5	10
%	5%	26%	68%	24%	26%	53%

This conclusion based on the results of the evaluation of self esteem (table 10) and the self report of SSP is proved by the next table (table 12) displaying the frequency and the quality of peer relations. This is rated in respect to the friendship identified by the respondent as the most important one (Steele & Steele, 2009).

Table 12. Peer relations

quotation	Peer relations			
	Frequency of contact		Quality of contact	
4	15	79%	10	53%
3	3	16%	5	26%
2	0	0	4	21%
1	1	5%	0	0
Total	19	100%	19	100%

Even if the quality of the contacts with peers is not totally satisfactory (79%), the sample, less one child, is keeping frequent contact (95%). The quality of contact is resulting from both sides in contact which means that not being 100% pleased with the relations, but having good reflective function, and staying in contact, the adolescents will be in permanent process of improving the quality of their relationship with peers. This dynamic will keep them always connected as a part of the generation, and will prevent the social isolation.

Anxiety and defense, which prevent the coherence in mentalization and behavior, are not very high (see table 13). The low level of anxieties and defensiveness allows the highest adaptive responses (100%).

Table 13. Anxieties and defense

qu ota	Anxieties and defense													
	Id'zn M		Id'zn F		Rvsl M		Rvsl F		Anger M		Anger F		Adaptive response	
4	0	0	1	5%	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	10	53%
3	2	11%	4	21%	1	5%	0	0	2	11%	0	0	9	47%
2	8	42%	4	21%	4	21%	4	21%	5	26%	6	32%	0	0
1	9	47%	10	53%	14	74%	15	79%	12	63%	13	68%	0	0
Tot al	19	100 %	19	100 %	19	100 %	19	100 %	19	100 %	19	100 %	19	100 %

Anxieties, and the consecutive defenses, are highlighted within FFI through the idealization of parents, reversal role with parents and the anger towards them. The idealization process is very low which means that children do not have to idealize the parents in order to preserve the good relationship with them. Similarly, the children are not overwhelmed with parental roles and have and know their own role, as a child, within the family. Therefore the adolescents in the sample have little anger towards parents and towards father even less than towards mother.

The evaluation based on children's verbal behavior during the semi structured interview is fulfilled by data regarding the nonverbal behavior of the child during the FFI application. The congruence of verbal and nonverbal behavior is by itself significant for child's status quo. Additionally, the congruence prevents the dual and ambivalent messages in communication.

Table 14. Non-verbal codes

quotation	Non-verbal codes			
	Fear/ Distress		Frustration/ Anger	
4	0	0	0	0
3	1	5%	2	11%
2	10	53%	6	32%
1	8	42%	11	57%
Total	19	100%	19	100%

The adolescents in the sample reveal within their nonverbal behavior (table.14) very little fear or distress (95% are quoted with 1 or 2) and little frustration and anger (89% have low quota: 1 or 2). Comparing with the anger revealed towards parents (see table 13), the proportion of these bad feelings mirrored by the non verbal behavior (table.14) is congruent, almost the same, as those displayed in their verbal behavior.

The SSP item searching for depression received similar answers with those in table 14:

Table 15. Selected item from SSP regarding depressed feelings

item of SSP	Very often I feel depressed ( E14 c)		
	quality	Not at all	Little bit a Lot
number of children	10	9	0
%	53%	47%	0

In conclusion, the 19 adolescents securely attached show only on the much reduced scale bad feelings, which can jeopardize their relationship and good atmosphere within the family. Fears and distress, frustration and anger and depression are not the emotional characteristics of these children's behavior.

### Limits of the study

The adoptive children and families assessed within FISAN project do not represent the average of the adoptive cases in Romania. As already mentioned, only the families which talk openly with the child about the adoption can be evaluated within the research here. Secondly, only the families who can be find by the staff in charge with adoptions, within the county's department in child protection can accept to participate at the evaluation. There are many situations in which the families, for different reasons, moved out of the department where they did the adoption. In such cases intentionally or just by chance, they do not leave any address to the state department in charge with child protection. All these aspects prevent the current study to be representative for domestic adoption in Romania.

The sample of 32 adopted children split-up in three groups of: 9, 10 and 13 children, according with the quality of attachment, is not statistically representative.

An important criteria in the research is that the child's age at adoption is limited up to 48 months (4 years) and the child's age at evaluation is minimum 11 years old.

Even if the complex evaluation instruments used in the research give a good support for our conclusions there is always the risk to overestimate some aspects and underestimate others.

The discussions and conclusions are based usually on the cumulated results quoted with '4' and '3' in the evaluation. The design of the sample with good quality of attachment is already based on this vision which is kept all along the analysis done here. Even if there are differences between the best quotation(4) and the next (3), we found reasonable to work in this way as great differences are found between the quota '2' and '3', as Howard Steel mentioned (2009).

Our findings can be considerate only as an orientation and a base for discussions and not as a final truth.

## Conclusions

The human behavior is giving the entire picture of a person. The behavior is based on a complex combination of the personal innate factors, the experience and education as well as the social network within which the individual is integrated. Each moment the complex individual factors face external and internal environmental aspects which generate proactive and retroactive global reactions (Stroufe, et al, 2005).

The adoption process is an important and challenging social experiment which brings to the adopted child a new affiliation, new social network, new experiences and educational standards. This comes in his/her life after the trauma of losing his biological affiliation and social and emotional support. We are looking here for the behavioral contribution of the adopted child to the good matching with the adoptive family in the case of successful adoption.

Among 32 assessed children, 11-16 years old, we found 3 groups: securely attached (9 children), children with good score in attachment security (10), and insecurely attached (13 children). Searching for significant behavior of children in succesful adoptions we focus our analysis on the behavior of a selected sample made out of the 19 children with highest quotation on the quality of attachment.

The sample displays an overall coherence in connection to the good reflective functioning. The relationships with friends and family are supported by these qualities of the child and the child's qualities are build-up in the nest of the good relationships in the family and among peers.

The adolescents living in succesful adoptions have good sense of humor and pleasure to play together with peers and friens. They spend a lot of time with friends doing different activities together, although all of them mention pleasant individual activities which they display within their free time.

Most of the children perform different sport activities or other leisure activities in which they challenge their bodies and minds.

Most of the parents within succesful adoptions consider their children as being timid, and avoiding or not getting easy along with unknown people outside the family. Comparing with the indiscriminate friendly behavior towards strangers, mentioned by different authors (Chisholm,1998; Zeanah et all, 2005), as being one of the most significant signes of insecure attachement, the adopetd children in our sample show an opposite behavior.

The adolescents here tend to have an amused visions and sometimes even critic on their adoptive parents.

The 19 adopted children have pet domestic animals and enjoy playing with them. Sometimes when they look for comfort, in difficult moments, they are talking to the compagnon animal, as we already mentioned.

A relevant aspect regarding the securely attached children in our sample is that they have reasonable and satisfactorry projects for the future. At one of the last questions:"what would be your three best wishes for the future be? " these adolescents have answered: a partner, family, children, work place, to live in a certain place or city.

Probably because of our little and statisticaly not relevant sample, we did not find the expected connection between the child's age at adoption and the security of child's attachment. Not all of the children adopted at an early age are found among children securely attached (table 5) and some children adopted at a later stage (48 months) are among the sample with securely attached adolescents within succesful adoptions. This asks for more research focused on this connection because the age of the child at adoption was always considered as a critical point for the success of the adoption (Chisholm, 1998).

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