Associations Between Peer Attachment and Positive Adoption Affect Throughout Adolescence and Emerging Adulthood.

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Introduction

Peer Relationships
- Friendships an important aspect of human behavior, especially important during adolescence (Waldrip, Malcolm, & Jensen-Campbell, 2008).
- Friendships also important in emerging adulthood, but are joined with new focuses of romance, work, and value exploration (Arnett, 2000).
- Internal working models of attachment are somewhat stable over time, with attachment patterns often concordant across relationship type (Pearson, & Riosmann, 2017; Furman, Simon, Schaffer, & Bouchey, 2002).

Affect about Adoption
- Adolescence is sensitive for identity development, with increased concern about reasons for placement (Wrobel, 2009).
- In emerging adulthood, concerns shift to practical questions about biological and medical history (Wrobel, Grotevant, Samek, & Von-Korff, 2013).
- Satisfaction with adoptive experience more predictive than objective facts about experience (Grotevant, McRoy, Wrobel, & Ayers-Lopez, 2013).
- Similar study has found linkages between positive adoptive affect and strong sibling relationships (Farr, Flood, & Grotevant, 2016).

Research Questions

RQ 1: What is the relationship between positive affect about adoption and peer attachment at one time (e & b)?
RQ 2: Are positive adoption affect and peer attachment stable over time (a & b)?
RQ 3: What is the relationship between positive affect about adoption and peer attachment over time (c & d)?
RQ 4: Do the relationships between these variables differ for men and women? If so, what are those differences?

Participants
- Participants selected from large longitudinal study of adoptees and their families (MTARP; Grotevant, McRoy, Wrobel, & Ayers-Lopez, 2013).
- All adoptees adopted through private domestic adoption prior to their first birthday.
- 139 target adoptees were given questionnaires at Wave 2 (1996-2001) and Wave 3 (2005-2008).
- 139 adoptees with data on measures relevant to study, 111 with complete data.

Measures

Positive Affect – Adoption Dynamics Questionnaire (ADQ; Benson, Sharma & Roelkepartain, 1994)
- ADQ assesses the participant’s feelings and perceptions about their own adoption.
- Positive affect subscale consists of 20 Likert scale questions.
- Higher scores indicate the adoptee has positive feelings toward their adoption.

Peer Attachment – Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment (IPPA; Armsden, & Greenberg, 1987)
- IPPA measures attachment to peers, with a focus on trust, communication and feelings of anger/alienation, factors typically associated with relationship quality.
- The peer subscale consists of 25 Likert scale questions from 3 subscales (trust, communication, and anger/alienation).
- Higher scores indicate higher relationship quality/strong peer attachment.

Results

RQ 1: Positive affect and peer attachment were positively correlated in emerging adulthood, (r = .33, p < .001), but not in adolescence, (r = .17, p = .064).
RQ 2: Positive affect in adolescence predicted positive affect in emerging adulthood (β = .52, p < .001). Peer attachment in adolescence did not predict peer attachment in emerging adulthood.
RQ 3: Positive affect in adolescence predicted peer attachment in emerging adulthood (β = .21, p = .024). Peer attachment in adolescence did not predict positive affect in emerging adulthood.
RQ 4: There was a significant interaction between positive affect and gender (β = .33, p = .019) in predicting peer attachment at W3, indicating a stronger relationship between W2 positive affect and W3 peer attachment for females.

Discussion

- Adolescent adoptees with positive feelings about their adoption more likely to have stronger friendships in emerging adulthood.
- Distinct differences by gender; could be indicative of differences in emotional closeness in friendships for men and women.
- Another limitation is the low-risk data sample as difficulties with adoption are more common in transracial, international, or welfare adoptions. Further research should include adoptees who were adopted transracially, internationally, and/or through the welfare system.
- Implications for encouragement of exploration of adoption affect in therapeutic settings.

Table: Descriptive and Correlations of Study Variables

| X | N | SD | PA-A | IPPA-A | FAA-A | PFA-A | PA-EA | IPPA-EA | FAA-EA | PFA-EA | N = 139, *p < .05, **p < .01 |
|---|---|---|------|--------|--------|--------|-------|--------|--------|--------|--------|-------------------|
| PA-A | 126 | 73.428 | 10.335 | -      | -      | -      | -     | -      | -      | -      | -      |                  |
| IPPA-A | 125 | 108.459 | 14.491 | .169   | -      | -      | -     | -      | -      | -      | -      |                  |
| FAA-A | 124 | 74.120 | 10.437 | 5.17** | .073   | -      | -     | -      | -      | -      | -      |                  |
| PFA-A | 125 | 108.721 | 12.140 | .227 * | .239 * | .32**  | -     | -      | -      | -      | -      |                  |

Selected References