

Literature highlights

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Adoptive families

Adoption and family therapy. (2003). Goodwach, R. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Family Therapy*, 24(2), 61–70.

The aim of this article is to sensitise family therapists to adoption. A major assertion of the paper is that adoptive families are different from biological families. The family therapy context is a natural framework for examining these issues, as adoption affects and alters both birth and adoptive families, and adoption-related problems occur within the context of the extended family system. The differences between intra-racial (socially-motivated) and inter-racial adoptions are discussed, as well as the differences between closed and open adoptions. The study of families affected by adoption provides a model for other family forms, such as stepfamilies, foster families and families who form through new birth technologies. (Journal abstract)

Adoption issues or just growing up? (2007). Harding, L. *Adoption Australia, Autumn*, 5–8.

Adopted children often use their adoption as a weapon against their adoptive parents when they start to express teenagers' rejection of family. This article discusses the psychology of this behaviour and then offers some strategies for dealing with it.

Bent but not broken: Building resilient adoptive families. (2006). Paddock, D. A. *Adoption Australia, Winter*, 13–16.

Adoption is created out of profound loss for all parties, yet the reverse of this is the resilience of adoptive families. This article discusses the many issues and potential trauma that adoptive families often face, and the resilience that develops and helps overcome this adversity. It summarises some recent research on resilience among children, attachment in adoption and how parents can help develop resilience in their children.

Grief and loss issues for adopted children: Caring adults can make a world of difference. (2006). Paddock, D. A. *Adoption Australia, Winter*, 17–18.

Adopted children often feel different, at fault, angry, frustrated, sad and anxious. These responses can become a problem when they affect the child's emotional development. This article recommends that adults validate the adopted child's experience and explore their feelings.

The importance of maintaining adoptive family support groups. (2005). Brown, J. *Adoption Australia, Spring*, 6–9.

For adopted children, issues involving adoption and race may appear to be resolved at one stage, only to resurface and peak later on. This article argues the importance of remaining connected to adoptive family support groups through the middle childhood years and beyond. It considers what makes these groups work, identifies things to keep in mind when forming and sustaining these groups, and recommends seeking advice from younger members when organising groups.

The inner world of the adopted child. (2006). Alexander, C. J. *Adoption Australia, Autumn*, 7–9.

Adopted children often manifest a range of psychological disorders and behavioural problems that differ from those of other children, and are overrepresented in mental health and correctional facilities. This article reviews developmental factors, aspects of family life and the role of anger in the emotional and behavioural problems of adopted children.

Why wasn't I told? Making sense of the late discovery of adoption. (2000). Perl, L. Bondi, NSW: Post Adoption Resource Centre, Benevolent Society of NSW. www.bensoc.asn.au/uploads/documents/why-wasnt-i-told-may2001.pdf

This document describes a project which examined the effects of late discovery on adopted adults, based on a survey of people who had contacted the Post Adoption Resource Centre (PARC), a service of the Benevolent Society of NSW. The background to the study is outlined and the methodology discussed. The questionnaire and consent letter are presented in the appendices. Results are discussed with reference to: how the sample found out about the adoption; initial reaction; previous suspicions;

informing the adoptive parents of the discovery; some reasons for never telling the adoptive parents; the effect on adoptive family relationships; contact with the birth family; impact of the reunion; late discovery as an ongoing issue; better not to know; a suitable age to tell; and advice for other late discovery adoptees.

Intercountry adoptions

Overseas adoption in Australia: Report on the Inquiry into adoption of children from overseas. (2005). Australian Parliament. House of Representatives Standing Committee on Family and Community Affairs. Canberra, ACT: House of Representatives Standing Committee on Family and Human Services. www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/fhs/adoption/report.htm

This report is about the policies and practices governing overseas adoption (referred to as intercountry adoption) in Australia. The history and statistics of intercountry adoption are provided. The legal framework for intercountry adoptions and the limited role of nongovernment organisations, the establishment of new programs overseas, and a comparison of the performance of the different states and territories are discussed.

Promoting a multiracial Australia: Population policy and intercountry adoption. (2005). Gerhmann, R. AQ: *Journal of Contemporary Analysis*, 77(4), 13–18.

Why have rates of intercountry adoption by Australians decreased in recent years? This article considers government policy on intercountry adoption in various Australian states and contrasts this with related policy in the United States. It discusses the particular slowness of the Australian process, misconceptions leading to an anti-adoption culture, and punitive financial costs and the adoption triangle of birth parents, adoptive parents and child. It outlines a proposal for reforming intercountry adoption.

Returning to the homeland: Why, when and how did it go? (2004). Matthews, A. *Adoption Australia*, Winter, 10–12.

Intercountry adoptees may want to return to their homeland for many reasons. The author considers when the optimal time to take the trip might be, why they should return, search and reunion issues to consider, and general considerations for adoptees and parents. She discusses several case studies of adoptees who returned to their birth countries.

Sibling relationships

Children's perceptions of their sibling relationships during parental separation and divorce. (2004). Sheehan, G., Darlington, Y., Noller, P., & Feeney, J. *Journal of Divorce & Remarriage*, 41(1–2), 69–94.

Does parental separation and divorce influence children's experiences of their sibling relationship? This article uses first wave data from a longitudinal study that investigated sibling relationships and adolescent adjustment to parental divorce. It tests the hypothesis that a highly stressful home environment may cause siblings to become closer than they otherwise would have. The article discusses types of sibling relationships in divorced and married families, differences between married and divorced families, separation and divorce as a catalyst for change in the nature of the sibling relationship, and implications for practice.

Facilitator manual: Groups for siblings of children with special needs. (2005). Nesa, M., & Strohm, K. Adelaide, SA: Siblings Australia.

Siblings of children with disabilities may be at greater risk of developing emotional and behavioural problems than other children. This manual presents a support program, Groups for Siblings of Children with Special Needs, devised for 8 to 12 year old siblings. It discusses sibling relationships, concerns of siblings and positive effects siblings may gain from having a brother or sister with special needs. It outlines the following aspects of the program design: program principles, program location, group composition, group leaders and co facilitator responsibilities. It explains principles of group work, group formats, promoting group cohesiveness, and managing disruptive behaviour. The manual is accompanied by a booklet for group participants.

Participant booklet for 8–12 year old siblings of children with special needs. (2005). Nesa, M., & Strohm, K. Adelaide, SA: Siblings Australia.

Having a brother or sister with a disability can sometimes be an extra challenge. This booklet is designed to be used with the program Groups for Siblings of Children with Special Needs. It has exercises that deal with getting to know the people in the group, differences and similarities among siblings, support networks, problem solving, wiping out worries, and leaving the group stronger and supported. An accompanying facilitator manual has been indexed separately.

Sibling effects, environmental influences, and university attendance: A follow-up study. (2004). Marjoribanks, K. *Psychological Reports*, 95(3), 1267–1270.

This study, which examines relations between sibling variables (number of children in the family, birth order position), and university attendance, is a follow up to a 2002 study that examined relations among sibling variables, environmental influences and school dropout. The study, which uses data from the Longitudinal Survey of Australian Youth (LSAY), also takes into account differences in family social class, ethnicity and family and school learning environments. Findings indicate that young adults from Asian, Middle Eastern and middle class families were less likely to drop out of school

and more likely to attend a university than were young Australians from Anglo- Australian, English, European and working class backgrounds. And secondly, that after taking into account differences in family background and learning environment measures, there continued to be a small but significant relationship between the number of children in a family, birth order position, and the likelihood that young people would drop out of school or attend university.

Sibling relationships of anxious children: A preliminary investigation. (2002). Fox, T. L., Barrett, P. M., & Shortt, A. L. *Journal of Clinical Child & Adolescent Psychology*, 31(3), 375–383.

Researchers now view sibling relationships as one of the most potentially important influences on a child's development. They can protect against or increase chances of depression, antisocial and other externalising disorders. Research into child anxiety has largely focussed on the child and the parents, rather than looking separately at sibling relationships. The authors present findings of a study into the sibling relationships of anxious children. Some behaviours analysed include: degrees of warmth and closeness; conflict, status and power; hostility; control of sibling; and task maintenance.

South Australian Sibling Project: Report 2000. (2000). Strohm, K. Adelaide, S: Women and Children's Hospital, Division of Mental Health. www.siblingsaustralia.org.au/2000_report.pdf

In April 1999, the South Australian Sibling Project was established in the Department of Psychological Medicine at the Women's and Children's Hospital, to develop and coordinate services for siblings of people with disabilities or chronic illness. The activities undertaken by the South Australian Sibling Project during the year 2000 are described in this report which provides details of future directions and discusses some of the issues involved in the support of siblings. Issues discussed include: clinical services to individual families which include a child with a disability; presentations to parent groups; workshops for siblings; support to organisations that provide services to families; raising awareness of sibling issues, including contribution to training of professionals; policy that reflects a commitment to the mental health needs of siblings; project funding; risk factors for siblings; sibling support; the National Mental Health Strategy; and what siblings need.

Supporting siblings within families to reduce problematic youth substance use and prevent youth homelessness. (2001). Cernaz, J., Toumbourou, J. W., & Hodges, C. *Parity*, 14(8), 67–69.

The authors discuss the development of services that consider the role of family support in the prevention and treatment of substance abuse among young people. They describe the Sibling Peer Support Project which was run by the Centre for Adolescent Health in collaboration with

the North East Drug and Alcohol Service. The project established peer support groups with the aims of reducing isolation, developing problem solving skills, providing accurate information about substance abuse, minimising harm and gaining information on the impact on siblings of substance use. The authors' experience with the project suggested that important early intervention and treatment opportunities can be gained through appropriate service delivery to siblings. They consider that by extending family services to include the needs of siblings, substance abuse may be reduced and family connections strengthened, thus helping to reduce youth homelessness.

Supporting siblings: When a brother or sister has a disability or a chronic illness. (2003). Smith, M., & Lloyd, M. Armadale, Vic: Association for Children with a Disability.

Current research into the experiences of siblings of children with a disability or a chronic illness is outlined in this report. The first section of the report, 'Sibling experiences from childhood to adolescence', covers emotional and behavioural responses of siblings described within the context of various stages of child development. In the second section, 'Family and social influences on sibling adjustment', sibling experiences within the context of the family and social environment are explored.

The forgotten siblings. (2007). Young, S. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Family Therapy*, 28(1), 21–27.

In this article, the author argues that the qualities and dynamics of sibling relationships may have been overlooked in family therapy. Sibling relationships are a significant feature in the emotional life of children, where children practise identity and can learn how to be one in a group. The author concludes that family therapy treatment may not make enough use of the dynamic of the sibling relationship. (Journal abstract, edited)

The sudden and unexpected death of a sibling and its impact on surviving children and adolescents: A family perspective. (2002). Biggs, C. T. *Grief Matters*, 5(2), 31–34.

When a child dies suddenly and unexpectedly, so shocking and painful is the loss that grief devastates the family and threatens to tear it apart. The way that surviving children and adolescents grieve cannot be understood without examining the impact of such a loss on the whole family. This paper examines the effect of such a death on the family system and its parental, marital, sibling and parent-child subsystems. The review of the literature suggests that openly expressing thoughts and feelings, tolerating different grieving styles, remaining flexible, and caring and supporting one another enable a family to live with the change the death inflicts on their lives. (Journal abstract)