

THE CONNECTIONS AMONG ADOPTION, ATTACHMENT, AND VIOLENCE

by

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Liberty University

A Dissertation Proposal Presented in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

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ABSTRACT

Research regarding the experience and outcomes for adopted children has largely ended upon the individual turning 18 years old and has failed to provide adequate information about how adoption impacts an individual throughout the lifespan. Because of a lack of information gathering from the Department of Justice, there is little information about the incarceration rates of adopted individuals and the reasons for those incarcerations. This qualitative research study seeks to gain a better understanding of those individuals who were adopted and committed murder at some point after they were adopted. Court records, transcripts, motions, and evidence related to the murders committed by 19 individuals who were adopted and later committed murder were reviewed for information. This research identified several common characteristics between these individuals and their situation, including that they were largely male and although there were three cases in which the offender killed someone else, the vast majority of offenders killed one or both of their adoptive parents. Additionally, mental health diagnoses were given to each offender where the information was available, but few received treatment and those who did identified treatment as unhelpful. This research offers additional information to treatment providers and lawmakers who are considering treatment and legal options for adopted individuals.

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Dedication

This research is dedicated to those who understand the value of adoption and who work endlessly to improve outcomes for this population.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Introduction

According to American Adoptions, more than 18,000 children are adopted annually; however, the research related to why adoptions appear to correlate with attachment disorders and with violence is limited, nor does there appear to be a wealth of research related to the psychological connection between attachment and violence. The relationship with a parent is the first, and most important, relationship that any child can form (Hornor, 2019).

Unfortunately, many children have significant difficulties during early infancy and are then either placed into institutions or foster care homes, ultimately displaying very problematic externalizing and internalizing behaviors (Purvis et al., 2013). Indeed, the ways in which these children function tend to create difficulty with engagement with others, particularly as they become older (Lehmann et al., 2018). Many of these behaviors are indicators of mental health difficulties as well as difficulty with dealing with the loss that they have experienced (Leitch, 2022).

Viewing the issue of adoption, attachment, and violent crime through the lens of developmental theory, the relevance of the ways in which participants were raised and how they view their childhood is of the utmost importance. This research attempted to address the gap in the literature, focusing on the psychological connections among attachment, adoption, and violence. This research additionally attempted to identify commonalities seen among those individuals who were adopted and murdered others, whether it be their parents or others, particularly when compared with traditional parricide or homicide offenders. This fills a gap in the literature that fails to separate the adoption status of an individual.

Background

Secular Research

Adoption occurs when the biological parents of a child are not able to care for them, and there are a variety of methods and reasons that this occurs. International adoption occurs when children are adopted from one country (generally, these are considered “underdeveloped” countries) to another country (generally, these are “first world” countries), and these children are often adopted from institutions or residential care facilities, rather than foster homes. Planned adoption refers to those adoptions that take place because a biological mother has chosen not to maintain custody of their child, and they generally can make choices about who is going to adopt their child. Finally, adoption from foster care occurs when the state has taken custody of a child or children because of abuse or neglect, and when the parent is unable to regain custody of their child or children. Then these children are adopted either by their foster parents or by other adoptive parents who have worked with the state to become adoptive parents. Both planned adoption and adoption through the foster care system are referred to as “domestic adoption” since they all take place within the home country of the child.

The very nature of adoption, then, causes its own trauma for a child. For even those children who are adopted at birth must deal with the trauma of not being raised in their biological family, as well as not having early days to connect physically with their biological parents. It is also not unlikely that the parent has experienced trauma while they were pregnant, and there is also frequently the use of drugs, alcohol, or cigarettes during pregnancy, which creates difficulty for the child moving forward (Dowdy-Hazlett & Boel-Studt, 2022). Internationally adopted children and children adopted from foster

care may have also experienced several Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), and there is ample evidence that the more ACEs a child experiences prior to their adoption, the greater the impact on their ability to make progress and changes in their future functioning (Crandall et al., 2019; Paine et al., 2021). Indeed, the types, intensity, and duration of traumatic experiences before adoption also affects the way that a child functions in the future, including with their mental health and interpersonal relationships (Naumova et al., 2019).

Adopted children struggle with a variety of difficulties throughout their childhood and adolescence. These children often have relatively significant behavioral difficulties (Batki, 2018), have difficulty with interpersonal relationships (Guyon-Harris et al., 2019), struggle academically and with behaviors in the classroom (Bsomans et al., 2020), and struggle to avoid engagement in delinquent or criminal behavior (Yao et al., 2022). Notably, those individuals who have difficulty with attachment and early childhood trauma additionally have significantly higher risk of experiencing mental health issues and are more often diagnosed with psychopathology (Ogundele, 2020). While adoption has been found to be a mediating factor for a variety of issues, particularly when children are placed into nurturing homes and are subsequently able to build healthy attachments (Anthony et al., 2019; Cioffi et al., 2020), there are still life-long outcomes that occur post-adoption. Understanding how childhood adoption impacts criminally violent behavior later in life will offer significant information both to future researchers and to care providers who are working with children and families throughout the adoption process.

One area that has been studied very little is parricide, the murder of one or both parents. Researchers have focused on the differences between the murder of biological/adoptive parents and stepparents, but research has failed to identify the differences in offenders who murder their adoptive parents when compared to biological parents. Groundbreaking work conducted by Heide (2012) has identified a typology for offenders who engage in parricide, three types of offenders, which includes the severely abused parricide offender, the severely mentally ill parricide offender, and the dangerously antisocial parricide offender. Understanding the motivation of these offenders will likely play a major role in identifying ways to decrease the frequency of parricide.

Biblical Foundations

The Bible identifies God as the “father to the fatherless, a defender of widows...” (Psalms 68:5, *New International Version*, 2011) and calls on Christians to care for orphans and widows: “Religion that God our father accepts as pure and faultless is this: To look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world” (James 1:27, *New International Version*, 2011). God calls on parents to raise children in the way “he should go” (Proverbs 22:6, *New International Version*, 2011) and Jesus talks often in the New Testament about the importance of children and His desire that children should be raised and cared for in the same way that God cares for his Children. Yet, there are so many children who are treated poorly, who are abused and then who seem unable to form the relationships that should come as naturally as breathing. Although all things occur with God knowing, the fall of man has changed the way in which humans interact with each other as well as with God, which

has led to significant trauma for many people, particularly for those who do not have the healthy relationship with their biological parents, as God had intended.

God calls on parents to care for their children, and to treat them as a gift and a blessing, not as something that they must cope with. For many children and families, the thought of adoption sounds lovely, for the family is being “chosen,” and the child is being “rescued” from the pits of despair. Yet, many of the children and families who are united through adoption often struggle behaviorally, and the image that parents had of their future family begins to falter. When this happens both the parent and the child must learn to grieve the loss of what they had hoped for: the picture-perfect family where all things were good and lovely. God calls on Christians to care for children who are dealt a difficult hand when they are unable to remain with their biological family members for one reason or another. This research will serve to provide information to caregivers so that they may be prepared when they do choose to grow their family through the process of adoption and will also provide information to clinicians who can work in collaboration with families to help them to be more successful.

Problem Statement

Research regarding adopted children and their behaviors has focused almost solely on how the individual responds and reacts as a child or adolescent (Baldwin et al., 2019; Batki, 2018; Caceras et al., 2021; Cote et al., 2020; de Martino et al., 2021; Dowdy-Hazlett & Boel-Studt, 2021; Lind et al., 2020; Neha et al., 2022; Vasquez & Miller, 2018), not regarding how their behavior continues to change into adulthood. It is well researched that children who experience trauma, particularly early childhood trauma, and are ultimately adopted, experience significant difficulties with interpersonal

relationships (Batki, 2018, Depasquale & Gunnar, 2019; Johnson, et al., 2019; Pitula, et al., 2019). There has also been evidence that these children are more likely to suffer from physiological differences than their non-adopted counterparts, particularly the way that they produce and utilize cortisol and the way in which their brain physically develops (Hartinger-Saunders et al., 2019; Johnson et al., 2019; Pitula et al., 2019).

More than 18,000 children are adopted in the United States annually, according to the Children's Network, and this number has continued to rise in the post-Covid era. The millions of children who have been adopted over the years will quickly become adults, and the failure to provide appropriate treatment that will help address the difficulties while in childhood will mean that these difficulties will continue into adulthood, often escalating as the individual becomes older and does not have the support of the parents who they previously had to help them with regulation. The importance of providing appropriate, evidence-based treatment cannot be understated (Hartinger-Saunders et al., 2019).

Research has focused primarily on the outcomes of children who have been adopted but has failed to identify how adoption impacts an individual throughout their life span. This research provides critical information related to how unresolved childhood trauma and attachment impacts an individual's emotional regulation in adulthood (Baron & Forde 2018), particularly regarding the ways in which they engage with the world around them and their ability to follow rules and laws in cognitively and developmentally appropriate ways. Information will benefit both future researchers as well as care providers and treatment providers who work with adults and children who have been adopted, ensuring that adopted children are not revictimized by failing to receive the most appropriate, evidence-based treatments that they require. God calls on Christians to ensure that they are meeting the needs of all people, including the "least of these" and, as noted previously, calls on Christians to

care for orphans and widows (James 1:27, *New International Version*, 2011). Christians are encouraged to bless and care for others, and Psalms 11:5 states, “The Lord examines the righteous, but those who love violence, he hates with a passion” (*New International Version*, 2011). Clearly, Christians are called to help eradicate violence, and it will only be through knowledge that this can occur.

Purpose of the Study

This qualitative research was intended to gain a better understanding of the experiences of individuals who were adopted prior to the age of 18 years and later committed murder.

Research Questions

Research Questions

RQ 1: What qualities and demographics do individuals who were adopted prior to the age of 18 years and later committed murder have?

RQ 2: What experiences do individuals who were adopted prior to the age of 18 years and later committed murder have in common?

RQ 3: Why do individuals who were adopted prior to the age of 18 report that they have committed this crime, and what do court records identify as the motivation for their crime?

RQ 4: Utilizing Heide’s 2012 seminal work, what parricide typology do these offenders fall into (for those participants who murdered one or both parents)?

Assumptions and Limitations of the Study

There are assumptions that have been identified in this study. First, the manner of identifying individuals who are appropriate for this research was conducted using a search engine, which requires that there be articles, books, or websites about the crime

that specifically identify the offender as adopted. Finally, it assumes that the information that is contained within court reports is accurate and relatively complete.

Limitations to this study do include the lack of ability to engage directly with identified individuals, and thus, all information comes from court records, arrest reports, psychological reports, and court exhibits. Sample size is additionally limited, given the number of individuals who meet the requirements of being identified as adopted and having engaged in and been convicted of homicide. This study will also be limited to information that is contained within publicly available records, which may or may not provide a holistic view of either the offender or the victims.

Theoretical Foundations of the Study

Theoretical Foundation

Developmental theory has been influenced by a variety of theorists, including Piaget, Erikson, and Vygotsky, among a host of others. This theory seeks to note both short- and long-term changes, and the ways in which experiences impact future development and behaviors (Miller, 2022). There are multiple theories that fall under the umbrella of developmental theory, such as social learning theory, information processing, and developmental theory of criminal behavior. Using the broad lens of developmental theory, largely based on Piaget's theory, Erikson's theory, and Vygotsky's theory, this research study seeks to have a better understanding of how early childhood trauma, or trauma that occurs prior to the age of 18 years old, influences an individual's engagement in criminal behaviors in adulthood. The developmental perspective views the behaviors of adults as being driven by events that happened in childhood and development has been

described as “a spiral from birth to death” when looking at these theoretical orientations together (Georganda, 2019).

Piaget’s theory of cognitive development refers to the development of the process by which a child processes information and acquires intelligence, perception, and language abilities. These skills arguably foster the child’s success, or lack thereof, throughout the life span and create their cognitive ability to make decisions (Saracho & Evans, 2021). One interesting construct put forth by Piaget was the “grasp of consciousness,” which was described as the cognitive process of assimilating one’s own functioning or that of the other when interacting with physical objects, people, and oneself (Stoltz, 2018). This is particularly relevant when considering those individuals who engage in violent criminal behavior, as there often appears to be no attempt to assimilate one’s own functioning, instead focusing solely on the way that they experience the world and how they want to behave. Piaget focuses on the individual and the way in which the individual grows cognitively throughout childhood and into adulthood, whereas Vygotsky focuses primarily on the socio-cultural context.

Vygotsky’s theory focuses on the interaction between an individual and their environment. Learning comes not just from internal processes, but instead, is a process arranged by concepts, social objects, and activities. In an alternate perspective, Piaget argues that the individual creates the social environment around them based on their own cognitive development, while Vygotsky argues that the social environment shapes the individual’s mental ability (Reham, 2022). Indeed, one of the most important concepts that Vygotsky put forth is that of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which refers to “the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent

problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers” (Eun, 2019, p. 19-20). In essence, ZPD refers to the space in which an individual can grow from their current level of functioning based on the level of functioning of others who are more capable than they are. When considering the experience that adopted children have, particularly as they experience early childhood trauma, there is question about whether or not they can actually reach their ZPD before adoption, and then there is question about whether or not they can reach that zone once they are adopted.

Erik Erikson additionally contributes to the discussion about the way that childhood experiences influence later criminal behavior, and whether or not there are specific time periods in which children must be removed from traumatic homes in order to avoid difficulty in adulthood. Erikson stressed the importance of eight stages in human development, all of which have a positive outcome (such as basic trust of the world) and a possible negative outcome (e.g., mistrust). When an individual does not reach the positive outcome early in life, they must move on, to some extent, to the next stage, and failure to meet the positive outcome creates difficulty later in life (Maree, 2021).

Developmental theory offers a lens through which to view an individual’s behavior, particularly attempting to understand how a child’s early experiences with trauma and attachment affect their later interaction with the criminal justice system. Understanding how adoption functions in the life of an individual as they age will provide important information for future researchers as well as those who are actively working with adopted children and families. The Bible provides additional insight into how important a healthy childhood is for adulthood and functioning within the world.

Biblical Constructs

The Bible identifies God as the Father, often referred to as the “heavenly father” or “holy father,” indicating the level of importance that He places on the relationship between a child and a parent. He offers His own behaviors as a father to encourage parents to engage appropriately with their children. 2 Corinthians 6:16b,18 states “I will live in them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people...and I will be your father, and you shall be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty” (*New International Version*, 2011). Scripture also states, “Do not be afraid little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom” (Luke 12:32, *New International Version*, 2011). The Bible presents a model of how to parent children by the way that people are treated by God, and it is clear that God was willing to give everything in order to save all of His children, even by sacrificing Jesus.

The Bible additionally speaks to how parents should care for their children, and how the care that they provide for their children will impact them throughout their lifespan, which provides further confirmation of developmental theory and how we are impacted by things that happen throughout our childhood. Ephesians 6:1-4 states “Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. ‘Honor your father and mother’ (this is the first commandment with a promise) ‘that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land.’ Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord” (*New International Version*, 2011). As has been shown in secular research, the Bible calls on parents not to parent from a place of anger, as research has shown that harsh parenting will harm children. Psalm 103:13 says, “As a father shows compassion to his children, so the Lord shows compassion to

those who fear him" (*New International Version*, 2011). The Bible is clear about the way that parents should care for and treat children. There is now the question of whether or not nurturing and supportive parenting can resolve the trauma that adopted children experience before their adoption.

Definition of Terms

Early Adopted Child – Early adopted refers to children who were placed in their adoptive home prior to the age of 12 months (Hillman et al., 2020).

Late Adopted Child – Late adopted refers to children who were placed in their adoptive home after the age of 12 months (Hillman et al., 2020).

Significance of the Study

This study is significant for future researchers, law makers, and those who are providing treatment to those children who are in out-of-home care or who have been adopted. This research additionally fills a gap in current research, given that the vast majority of adoption research that has been conducted up to this point has been conducted only with children. This research has focused on the struggles that adopted children have in their relationships with peers (Guyon-Harris et al., 2019), adoptive parents (Nelson et al., 2020; Van der Voot et al., 2013), and adoptive siblings (Hunsley et al., 2021; Muzi & Pace, 2022); difficulty with education and in-classroom behaviors (Anderman et al., 2022; Bsomans et al., 2020); social and emotional developmental delays (Julian et al., 2019; Lind et al., 2020); and behavioral difficulties, which impact all of the other areas that have already been discussed (DeMartino et al., 2018; DePasquale & Gunnar, 2019). Little information exists about the long-term effects of adoption with relation to the likelihood of engaging in violent and criminal behaviors, and this information will

provide significant information for those working with adopted children, with their families, or with adults who were adopted as children.

For future researchers, having this qualitative data will allow for a base of understanding before conducting additional research regarding both correlation and causation. For those who create policy and law for adopted children, and children in out-of-home care, having a firmer understanding of the outcomes of some of the decisions that have been made may be helpful. Finally, care providers and clinical providers require the most accurate information in order to try to help ensure that the children who are in their care are given the best possible treatment, which requires accurate information about some of the possible outcomes for these children.

The Bible speaks clearly of the need to support those who are in a position of need, and also to help others by not leading them into sin. Matthew 18:6 states “If anyone causes one of these little ones – those who believe in me – to stumble, it would be better for them to have a large millstone hung around their neck and be drowned in the depths of the sea” (*New International Version*, 2011). Romans 14:19 states, “So then let us pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbringing” (*New International Version*, 2011). Often, once someone has entered a prison, particularly for violent crimes, they are often seen as “lost causes” and are not viewed as “people” who deserve the attention and support of others; however, God has called on Christians to care for all people, not just other Christians or “good people.” This study will additionally provide insight into what to expect for those individuals who were adopted or who were in out-of-home care, thus

ensuring that care providers can abide by God's Word and attempt to help these children and adolescents avoid negative outcomes.

Summary

Adoption provides a permanent home and family to children who might otherwise not have the opportunity to reside in a home or with a family of their own. However, there are difficulties that are created by the process of adoption. Many children experience significant trauma prior to their adoption, and the intensity, frequency, and duration of the trauma that the child experiences impact their future functioning (Naumova et al., 2019). Historical research has focused on the functioning of children and families while still under the age of 18 years old, rather than considering what occurs after the adopted individual reaches adulthood, such as considering behavioral difficulties (Batki, 2018; Crea et al., 2018; Paine et al., 2021; Vasquez & Miller, 2018), relationships with peers (Caceres et al., 2021; Depasquale & Gunnar, 2020; Pitula et al., 2019), difficulty with education (Bsomans et al., 2020; Dalen & Theie, 2019; Embury et al., 2020), and problems with attachment within the family (Hubbell et al., 2019; Hubbell et al., 2021; Keil et al., 2022). However, developmental theory affirms that what occurs during childhood impacts an individual throughout the life span, understanding that childhood trauma and subsequent adoption will affect an individual throughout their life.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

The purpose of adopting children is to provide children with permanency with non-biological parents when the biological parents are not able to provide long-term care for their child. Research has focused primarily on how the child experiences the world during childhood, and how the family experiences their interactions with their children. These studies have focused primarily on the ways in which children interact with others, where children often lack the ability to engage appropriately with both peers (Guyon-Harris et al., 2019) and with family members (Nelson et al., 2020). There is additional research that explores how the manner in which a child is placed into an adoptive home impacts their future development. For example, being in an orphanage or other institution prior to their adoption increases a child's risk of serious mental and behavioral health issues throughout childhood (Chinn et al., 2021). Biblical research also explores the importance of the parents caring for their children in the way that is biblically based, and also calls on Christians to care for orphans and those who are fatherless (James 1:27, *New International Version*, 2011).

Research has additionally focused on the way that early childhood trauma impacts the child throughout the life span, both physically and emotionally. Research has found that adopted children tend to have physical alterations in the brain and they also show diminished responses in different parts of the brain when shown pictures of family members or strangers (Oliveira et al., 2022). These results demonstrate the differences in the way that adopted children experience relationships with others and appears to show a decreased level of responsiveness when compared with non-adopted children. Research

regarding homicide has not often focused on the idea of parricide, but the research that has been conducted provides an overview of the most common motivations for people to murder their parents, the type of offenders who commit parricide, and how the psychology of the offender plays into the crime. Based on the research that has been found, the importance of understanding how adoption impacts an individual's ability to manage and regulate emotions is of the utmost importance.

Description of Search Strategy

This literature research was conducted using the Jerry Falwell Library online database. Inclusion criteria included peer-reviewed journal articles in English that were published between May 2018 and February 2024. A small portion of research articles (less than 20%) were published prior to these dates but are considered important research in this area. Searches were conducted throughout 2023 and through February 2024. Primary key words that were used included any version of adoption and violence, aggression, delinquency, behavior, development, developmental delay, parricide, matricide, patricide, and motivation. The biblical research was conducted using online Bible resources to search for specific keywords (including adoption, orphans, parents, love, and care). The primary biblical online resource was through the website www.openbible.info.

Review of Literature

The literature regarding the connections among adoption, attachment, and criminally violent behavior is relatively non-existent, as the vast majority of research related to adoption is focused almost solely on the behaviors of the child or family during childhood and adolescence, and they are not followed into adulthood. However, the way

that a child experiences infancy, childhood, and adolescence influences and impacts the way an individual functions into adulthood. Understanding how early childhood experiences impact an individual into adulthood is of the utmost importance. Homicide occurs at a surprising rate in the United States (the top homicide rate of any of the G7 countries, according to The World Population website), and while parricide represents only a small fraction of annual intentional homicides, it is the second most common reason that women are murdered, falling behind only homicide by current or former partners (Condry & Miles, 2022).

Developmental theory argues that all the things that have happened in a person's life continue to affect future growth, and, thus, the way that children are raised will impact their future development into adulthood. Viewing the entire lifespan as being impacted by the events that have occurred up until then gives a view as to why it would be important to identify if adoption is a mediating or moderating factor with regard to engagement with the criminal justice system (Miller, 2022). Adoption in childhood, and the subsequent effects of that adoption into adolescence and adulthood, must be viewed with the entire lifespan in mind, and not simply looking at there being a time period of childhood and a time period of adulthood, as though adulthood is unimpacted by childhood. It has been estimated that nearly 40% of adopted children have difficulty with general development, mental health issues, and insecure attachments. Additionally, 22% of adopted children display disorganized attachment styles, which is of significant concern for both care providers and for treatment providers (Vasileva & Petermann, 2018).

Parricide

Parricide refers to the murder of one or more parents (including stepparents) by their child or children. Familicide refers to the murder of three or more members of the same family, which could include other children/siblings, parents, etc. Parricide constitutes approximately 2% of homicides that occur on an annual basis in the United States (Heide, 2012). The majority of these incidences of parricide include a single parent or stepparent and a single offender, making up nearly 84% of parricides committed between 1976-2007 (Heide, 2012). Although research clearly separates the murder of parent versus stepparent, it does not differentiate between adoptive parents and biological parents. Research has additionally shown that over half of these murders are committed by offenders who are under the age of 24 years, and nearly 20% are committed by offenders who are under the age of 18 years. Among identified age groups prior to the age of 25 years, stepparents are much more likely to be murdered (Heide, 2012).

Mental health plays an important role in parricides, with many researchers identifying schizophrenia as a common diagnosis that is given to those who commit double parricides (both parents). Although many cases have found these offenders are often on the schizophrenic spectrum, it has been shown that mood disorders and personality disorders are also common (Raymond et al., 2020). Additional research has shown that the majority of those who commit parricide are middle-aged, single, males, with more than one-third having been diagnosed on the schizophrenic spectrum (Bojanic et al., 2020). Heidei (2012) created a groundbreaking typology of parricide offenders, which is often used in research and literature. This typology identified the severely abused parricide offender, the severely mentally ill parricide offender, and the

dangerously antisocial parricide offender. This typology provides a basic framework for understanding why children and adults murder their parents, although this typology has never specifically been utilized with adopted individuals. It is additionally of note that although many of these individuals have been diagnosed as severely mentally ill and often spend time in prison in their mental health wards with mandated treatment, it is rare for them to successfully argue not guilty by reason of insanity, when in court (Valenca et al., 2021).

Effects of Paths of Adoption

There are three primary paths for adoption in the United States. Planned adoptions occur when a parent voluntarily places their child for adoption. International adoptions occur when children from outside of the country are brought into the United States to be adopted. Finally, children can be removed from the care of their biological family members by the state, and, if the child is not able to be returned to the care of this family, then they can be adopted by non-family members. While each area of adoption brings with it its own influences, international adoptions do seem to have significant influences over future development and behavior.

Children who have been brought into the country through the international adoption process tend to struggle in a variety of areas, including in their social and emotional development, cognitive development, and educational ability, particularly if they are brought into the country and do not speak the language. The older a child is at the age of placement, the more difficulties the child is likely to have in attempting to “catch up” on missed or delayed milestones (Canzi et al., 2017). Children who remain in institutions, when compared with children who were institutionalized but then were

placed into foster homes and raised in family settings, had almost a two-fold higher risk of psychopathy, psychopathology, mental illness, externalizing and internalizing behaviors, attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder, and substance abuse issues, although both groups had higher rates in each of these categories than those children who were never institutionalized and/or were raised by their biological family members (Humphreys et al., 2020).

International adoption has come under fire in recent years, and this trend began to be seen in earnest during the 1990's and early 2000's when the Ceausescu regime fell in Romania, and over 170,000 children were found in terrible conditions in orphanages. However, the subsequent international adoptions were often illegal, with money changing hands to "purchase" children, certain children being kidnapped and taken because they were more adoptable, and some children going to facilities for a period of time when their parents could not care for them and being illegally adopted out (Hernandez, 2022). Internationally adopted children who have come from orphanages or institutions additionally struggle with their interpersonal relationships with peers throughout their childhood; however, those children who were raised in institutions tended to display the most difficulty with peer relationships and development (Caceres et al., 2021). A major difficulty for internationally adopted children tends to be an inability to read the facial expressions of others, including peers, which creates difficulty with engaging in appropriate or prosocial behaviors, particularly when considering how children process verbal and facial expressions of anger (Chinn et al., 2021). Internationally adopted children often enter the care system due to poverty, inability of the parent to care for the child, unwillingness to rear a child with a disability, and occasionally an involuntary

removal of a child because of abuse and neglect. While internationally adopted children tend to display a number of perinatal complications, such as pre-term birth and low birth weight, these things do not appear to be problematic once the child is adopted; however, they do continue to be problematic for those children who are not adopted out of the institution (McCall et al., 2019). Institutionalized children also appear to have a reduced differentiation of reaction when looking at familiar faces and those of strangers (Oliveira et al., 2022).

Genetic and Biological Influences

Children who spend time in their early childhood in institutions tend to display some serious endocrine modifications, particularly when it comes to alterations in cortisol regulation, which consequently leads to suppression of the diurnal cortisol variation. Cortisol variation produces difficulty with sleep patterns, wakefulness, and cortisol production when it is needed for a fight/flight/freeze response. Additionally, internationally adopted children are at a 20-fold higher risk of precocious puberty, particularly in children from Africa or India (DeMartino et al., 2018). Telomere length, which is a well-known hallmark of both cellular and organismal aging, has been shown to be shorter in those children who have experienced early life institutionalization and trauma, and the longer a child has experienced institutionalization, the shorter the child's telomere length, particularly in females (Drury et al., 2012). There additionally appears to be statistically significant differences in DNA methylation states in institutionalized children when compared with children who were raised in families, including adopted children. Some of these differences may directly impact behaviors and increase behavioral deficits (Nuamova et al., 2019). Children adopted from institutions also tend

to display lower cortisol reactivity than would be seen in age matched peers, which influences their ability to engage with peers and others around them in a way that displays empathy or understanding of the other's experience (Johnson et al., 2019).

Children who are adopted internationally tend to display a variety of physical ailments that impact them later in life. Children who come to their adoptive homes with intestinal parasites tend to display emotional, psychological, and behavioral problems later in childhood and into adolescence, even if they are adopted into a country where the parasitic infection is not prevalent and it is promptly treated upon their arrival (Heikkila et al., 2021). Additionally, children who are adopted internationally are more likely to arrive in their home country both malnourished and undersized, particularly in relation to children who have some other form of delay or disability. Although catch-up is possible, the age at which a child is adopted does impact the level to which catch up can occur (Ivey et al., 2021). Early childhood trauma is significantly associated with obesity, lower self-esteem, and negative experiences interacting with health care providers (Mundi et al., 2021). It has been additionally noted that females tend to be able to show significant progress in a variety of domains related to psychopathology, particularly with relation to self-esteem and adaptive functioning, but male children, even after adoption and clinical treatment, tend to remain stable regarding their functioning (Smith et al., 2021).

Fetal alcohol spectrum disorder (FASD) is also of concern for those children who have been adopted from international institutions. The prevalence of the diagnosis of FASD is 10-40 times higher than in the general population, which is 7.7 per 1,000 people (Koren & Ornoy, 2021; Neil et al., 2020). Children who are exposed in-utero to drugs, alcohol, or cigarettes are also at a higher risk of developing conduct problems throughout

childhood and into adulthood (Marceau et al., 2019). FASD creates some significant neurological abnormalities that often create lifelong problems for the child who has been exposed before birth to alcohol. Prenatal alcohol exposure can lead to a decrease in overall brain volume with reduction in gray matter as well as disorganization of the central nervous system. The parietal lobe and frontal lobe appear to be particularly sensitive to alcohol exposure. Additionally, there have been abnormalities found in the corpus callosum, cerebellum, caudate, hippocampus, basal ganglia, diencephalon thalamus, and amygdala, as well as abnormal network connectivity being noted in the insula, basal ganglia, cerebellum, and amygdala (Mattson et al., 2019). Children's brains attempt to manage this experience of trauma by initiating adaptive stress mediating neural systems, which creates some difficulty in general brain development (Onyiriuka, 2019). Aggression and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) are positively correlated with maternal hostility of the adoptive parent, although there appears to be additional underlying genetic components that impact the development of aggression and ADHD outside of just the environmental conditions set by adoptive parents (Sellers et al., 2020).

The ability to separate the genetic component of a child's behaviors versus an environmental component is difficult, even when considering adopted children. However, adopted children do seem to benefit educationally when their adoptive parents have attained higher levels of education, although adopted children do not benefit to the same level that biological children benefit from their parent's educational attainment (Domingue & Fletcher, 2020). On the other hand, when biological parents display a learning disability, this is generally associated with worse outcomes for their children, even when the child is adopted (Neil et al., 2020). Additionally, later in life substance use

on the part of adopted children appears to be moderated by a positive relationship with adoptive parents who self-identify as experiencing low stress, even if the biological parents have their own substance abuse issues (Blake, 2021).

Pre-Adoptive Trauma

Prenatal trauma is often difficult to study simply by the nature of not having reliable reporters to gather this information. However, children who experience in-utero exposure to alcohol display significant behavioral and physical difficulties. Children with prenatal exposure to alcohol display higher mean diffusivity in the left uncinate, smaller right anterior cingulate and superior frontal gyrus volumes than non-exposed children (Andrew et al., 2020). While there is some question about the prevalence of prenatal alcohol exposure in cared-for children, some samples have found that nearly 30% of children who are adopted have confirmed exposure to and long-term difficulties due to alcohol exposure. Additionally, many children who did not have confirmed exposure still displayed both neurological and behavioral indicators of likely alcohol exposure in utero (Tenenbaum et al., 2020). Children who are exposed to violence or other unhealthy habits of biological parents are also more likely to develop difficulties of their own. Risk factors include exposure to domestic violence, chronic family conflict, limited social support, and caregiver mental health and substance abuse issues. Children who are exposed to these risk factors tend to display higher rates of mental health difficulties (Dowdy-Hazlett & Boel-Studt, 2022). Children whose parents have four or more ACEs have a 23.1% higher risk of experiencing four or more ACEs themselves when compared with children of parents who do not identify any ACEs. The intergenerational adversity cycle would likely need to be interrupted at the parental level to avoid that influence on the child (Schickedanz et al., 2021).

Many children who are the victims of crime as young children became violent as they aged, largely due to their historical experience and their understanding of the world, whether they have been adopted, in out-of-home care, or not (Baron & Forde, 2019; Lietor et al., 2021). Children who are highly reactive tend to require very specific parenting in order to manage this reactivity to ensure appropriate growth and mental health regulation (Corval et al., 2020). Children who experienced sexual abuse prior to their adoption displayed significantly more externalizing behaviors than those children who did not (Crea et al., 2018), and some populations of children are more likely to be maltreated repeatedly, such as American Indian children (Landers et al., 2021). The more traumas the child experiences prior to adoption, the more intense their behaviors become (Paine et al., 2021; Roman et al., 2022), particularly related to violence and aggressive behavior instigated by the adopted child (van Ginkel et al., 2018). Children who experience higher levels of maltreatment, are in foster care for more than one year, and have two or more foster placements also display poorer outcomes than non-adopted counterparts or those children who did not experience these things. Poorly managed transitions between foster homes and/or the adoptive home is also significant and often leads to poorer outcomes (Neil et al., 2020). Early childhood trauma impacts the development of the brain and overall cognitive functioning during adolescence, when the brain is attempting to grow and develop, often causing an increased risk of impaired self-regulation and engagement with the juvenile justice system (Williams, 2020). Additionally, children and adults who report early childhood emotional abuse show higher levels of depression, anxiety, stress, and neuroticism compared to those who reported only physical, only sexual, or combined physical and sexual abuse (Dye, 2020).

Children who were institutionalized as infants display lower developed capacities for emotional regulation, display more impulsive behaviors, and show some developmental delays when compared with children who were adopted earlier in life or who were raised

with their birth families (Batki, 2018; de Martino et al., 2018; Lind et al., 2020). Caceres et al. (2021) found that children who were adopted from institutions had significantly poorer peer relationships than children who were raised by their biological family (the most successful group), or those who were adopted domestically, although adopted children fared worse overall with peers. The study of reactive attachment disorder (RAD) has shown that it leads to significant difficulty with externalizing and internalizing behaviors, as well as difficulty with emotional and behavioral regulation (Vasquez & Miller, 2018). While RAD causes the child to distance themselves from interpersonal relationships, those children who display indiscriminate friendliness with others are also often diagnosed with an attachment disorder, disinhibited social engagement disorder (DSED), and these children tend to display disinhibited social behavior and disinhibited attachment behaviors. They often suffer from anxiety, are exposed to safety risk, have difficulties with peers throughout the life span, and have impaired impulse control and impaired attention. These children display behavioral disparities from their non-traumatized counterparts; however, they also display differences in activation in the amygdala. There appears to be less amygdala discrimination between mothers and strangers, and the intensity of this differentiation correlates to age-at-adoption. Specifically, those children who are adopted at an older age tend to respond to the faces of their adoptive mother and strangers in a similar manner compared with those who were not adopted (Toth, 2018).

Institutionalized children show significant difficulties in a variety of developmental levels when they experience poor care prior to their adoption, particularly with regard to their motor development, as well as their social and emotional development, even once the child has left the care of the institution (Baptista et al., 2018). It has been found that children who are cared for more successfully within institutions tend to show substantial improvements in physical, cognitive, and social-emotional development, even without changes in nutrition,

safety, sanitation, or medical care (McCall et al., 2018). This finding leads many to argue that the relationships that the child builds, even with non-parental caregivers, can improve all areas of their life.

The older the child is at the time of placement in the adoptive home, the more difficulties the child is likely to have. These can include a variety of neurological, emotional, health, and cognitive difficulties. However, there is some question about whether age is simply an indicator of the level, intensity, and duration of maltreatment that the child suffered before entering care, causing them to have more behavioral difficulties because of what they experienced, not solely because of their age (Neil et al., 2020). The longer a child is in care prior to adoption, the more likely it is that they will experience a higher number of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). Children who have fewer than four ACEs tend to show positive responses to counter-ACEs, which refers to advantageous childhood experiences; however, children who have experienced more than four ACEs in their life tend to show lower responses to counter-ACEs, including in overall health issues (Crandall et al., 2019).

There is some serious concern about the legality and ethical nature of international adoption, leading some countries to place a permanent moratorium on international adoptions. Ethiopia closed their country to international adoptions in 2018 due to reporting that children were being kidnapped to be adopted. Other children were adopted with false narratives, stating that a child's parents have died, when this is not the case, or that a child was "found" abandoned, when really the "finder" was a family member who simply could not care for the child because of poverty or health issues (Steenrod, 2022). It has been discovered that when adoptive parents learn that the story that they were given about their adopted child is false, they often make every effort to seek out the truth and have often been able to locate and engage with family members from foreign countries, but only with the support of costly private investigators (Steenrod, 2022).

Children who are adopted domestically from foster care may have resided in multiple foster homes for long periods of time prior to their placement within their adoptive home. Adoption does appear to be a mediating factor regarding educational achievement, income level, disability, criminality, and suicidality when compared to half-siblings who were in foster care but who had never been adopted. However, rates of mental health disorders and substance use were closer, although there was still a slight improvement in those children who were adopted (Hjern et al., 2019). Adoption as a mediating factor when considering success of orphaned children is further confirmed by noting that those individuals who are raised within orphanages and are never adopted tend to struggle with challenges related to locating family members, future bonding, bitterness and isolation, self-identity and forgiveness, and securing employment and a positive support system, things that may be available to those children who are adopted (Gomera & Mutambara, 2020).

Post-Adoptive Influences

Relationships within families are reciprocal, even though the majority of research has focused on the way that the parent influences the child. Highly aggressive children tend to have adoptive parents who display higher levels of interparental-conflict, and there is no clear answer as to whether the child's behaviors are the primary influence over the conflict, or whether the conflict between parents is the primary driver for the child's behaviors (Ramos et al., 2022). Those children who experience harsh parenting strategies from their parents, including aversive discipline methods, display delays in cognitive, language, and social development, where non-aversive or "positive" discipline methods actually show an improvement in these developmental areas (Fatima et al., 2022). Additionally, supportive, encouraging, and positive parenting tends to encourage the growth and development of social-emotional competence, and children who are parented

by sensitive parents tend to be able to display appropriate social skills. In contrast, those children who are parented in a harsher manner, or whose parents are not focused on social or emotional competence, tend to struggle with these skills (Lind et al. 2020).

There is a positive correlation between the stress level of the adoptive parents throughout the placement of the child and increased behavioral and emotional regulation difficulties in the child (Hornfeck et al., 2019).

The relationship between adopted children and their adoptive parents seems to vary based on a variety of factors, although it has been shown that RAD can continue to be present, even when the child is placed into a loving, nurturing, and supportive home (Nelson et al., 2020; Van der Voot et al., 2013). Adoptive mothers express less positive regard for their adopted children (over their biological children) and display more intrusive behaviors during free-play time (Dalen et al., 2020). No differences have been identified based on the sexuality of the parents who have adopted the child (Farr et al., 2019). However, the attachment style of the parents does have a significant impact on the child's future behavior and mental health issues (Gambin et al., 2018; Pace et al., 2019). Matching refers to the process of ensuring that the parents' personality and parenting style, and the child's personality and behaviors are a good match. Matching between the parent and the child is vital for the child to be successful, but this is studied very rarely (Haysom et al., 2020; Rolock et al., 2017). Family cohesiveness and expressiveness have been seen to be positive for children who were adopted from institutions and predicts increased growth toward meeting developmental milestones. In contrast, parental focus on rules and increased family conflict are associated with greater risk for executive dysfunction and less success in meeting milestones (Keil et al., 2022). Parental harshness

and negativity are seen as key specific environmental influences for conduct issues, even after controlling for genetic influences or gene-environment correlations (Marceau et al., 2019). Maternal warmth provides support for children to develop inhibitory control as they age, while those children who are adopted and do not experience the same level of warmth have a more difficult time with inhibitory control (Cioffi et al., 2020). Maternal warmth additionally reduces the level of externalizing and internalizing behaviors that are seen in children who have four or more ACEs at the time of their placement (Anthony et al., 2019).

While the motivation for parents who choose to adopt is important, fewer baseline attachment difficulties, fewer baseline externalizing and internalizing behaviors, and larger family size were the primary predictors for children being successful in placements, rather than the religious motivation of the parent, whether or not they used firm parenting practices, or the interaction between the two (Helder et al., 2020). How the parent or caregiver views the child's behaviors also influences the way that the parent engages with the child, particularly with regard to children with DSED (often seen as "victims") when compared with children with RAD (often seen as "problematic"), although both are considered attachment disorders that negatively impact the child's development (Guyon-Harris et al., 2019). Interestingly, those foster parents who had identified their own ACEs were more likely to have foster children with emotional problems, conduct problems, and hyperactivity-inattention than foster parents who identified fewer than two ACEs. Certain ACEs related more strongly to child outcomes than others, which creates some question as to whether the child's behaviors were triggering the parents' reactions or whether the parents own historical trauma may be

impacting and triggering an increased level of behavior in the child (Adkins et al., 2020). It has also been found that children who are placed in an adoptive home with siblings seem to fare better, both based on self-reports and based on the reports of others. It has been noted that children who are placed alone in a foster/adoptive home, particularly if they do have biological siblings but are placed separately, have more difficulty with utilizing healthy emotional regulation strategies (Hillman et al., 2023).

While the age of the child at the time of adoption clearly influences the intensity of behaviors, there seem to be additional domains that influence the behaviors of the child, the relationship with their adoptive parents, and the rate at which the child is returned to the care of the system, termed an “adoption disruption.” It appears that the child’s aggressive or violent behavior, in coordination with parents’ dissatisfaction with their own parenting abilities, and an inability to engage appropriate and successful professional interventions are often factors that are noted during adoption disruptions (Barbosa-Ducharme & Marinho, 2019). There are several additional parent-factors that can influence adoption disruption, including disruption that occurs prior to the adoption being finalized, resulting in the child being placed into a residential treatment facility. The parents’ age, education level, and attachment style are all significant predictors for the likelihood of being placed in a residential treatment facility (Antle et al., 2020). Gender also appears to play a role in the way children function in the adoptive home, particularly with regard to psychosocial functioning and psychopathology. While females and children who are adopted older tend to display more psychosocial functioning and attachment-related difficulties initially, these struggles are more able to resolve in

females, whereas the functioning of male children and adolescents tends to remain stable over time (Smith et al., 2021).

The manner in which families talk about a child's adoption and their biological family influences not only their immediate behaviors, but also the way that they view adoption, in general, when reaching adulthood. Those individuals who reported having access to their biological history, an absence of abuse, and open communication about adoption were more likely to identify having a positive adoption experience (Langenhoven & Greeff, 2022). Additionally, the way in which adoptive parents are able to integrate their child into their own racial or ethnic group, if the child is adopted transracially, can create difficulty or success with identity creation. If the child is not able to create a healthy identity both as a member of their adoptive family and a member of their ethnic group, they may become stymied in identity diffusion and have ongoing issues with attempting to find who they are (Marcelli et al., 2020). Families may also experience racial microaggressions when there is a racial disparity between adoptive parents and the adopted children, although the frequency of these racial microaggressions decreases as the diversity of the community increases (Baden et al., 2023). Internationally adopted children who reside with parents who are of a different ethnicity do report experiencing discrimination, and discrimination predicts higher levels of depression and externalizing symptoms, particularly in those youth who had not been prepared for the possible experience of discrimination (Schires et al., 2020).

There is a specific group within adopted children, international adoptees, who have often been told lies about their pre-adoptive experiences, particularly those who were placed in orphanages prior to their adoption. When these lies come to light, it

creates significant difficulties with relation to identity for the child, adolescent, or adult (Hernandez, 2022). Children who maintain contact with biological family members even after they are adopted tend to display age-appropriate adjustment and strong relationships with both their adoptive parents and their biological family members (del Pozo de Bolger et al., 2021). Even children who are adopted at birth or during infancy benefit from maintaining contact with their birth/biological family members, particularly given that this tends to increase the level of openness in communication within the adoptive family about the adoption and about the lived experience of the child (Smith et al., 2020).

Interpersonal Relationships

Adopted children often struggle in engaging with prosocial behaviors, making it difficult for them to build and maintain friendships with peers (Guyon-Harris et al., 2019). Cuyvers et al. (2020) found that children who were adopted had significantly poorer prosocial skills as identified by both teachers and parents when compared with their non-adopted peers. Children who are adopted may have difficulty engaging with peers in the same manner as their non-adopted counterparts, both emotionally and in terms of cortisol production, which relates to their ability to engage appropriately with peers (Depasquale & Gunnar, 2019; Johnson et al., 2019; Pitula et al., 2019). Those children who were adopted with biological siblings appear to develop emotionally and behaviorally on a faster trajectory than those adopted children who are adopted alone, often leading to the child utilizing inappropriate coping skills to manage their emotions. These findings may suggest that placing children as part of a sibling set will create a moderating effect to some of the trauma that they experienced before adoption (Hillman et al., 2023). Maintaining relationships with biological family members after the adoption allows the child to have

healthy and appropriate relationships with both their adoptive parents and their biological parents (del Pozo de Bolger et al., 2021).

The ability to create a healthy attachment during childhood impacts an individual's ability to engage in healthy relationships in adulthood. Early childhood security often leads to healthier attachment security in adopted children, even if the current level of sensitivity shown by the parent is lower than previously. Attachment quality tends to remain relatively stable over time, although with intervention, there may be improvements to attachment security (O'Connor et al., 2019). Late-adopted children who have additionally experienced maltreatment prior to their adoption display more disorganized, avoidant, and negative representations of attachment figure, although placement in an adoptive home does increase the likelihood that the disorganized and avoidant representations decrease (Hillman et al., 2020). An adopted child's happiness is largely dependent on school success, parent-child relationship, and having a positive relationship with the community at large (Jaejin & Woonsum, 2022). Children and adolescents who experience a feeling of ease with regard to having discussions with their parents about their adoption also experience an increased sense of identity, improved self-esteem, and an increased ability to create future goals for themselves when compared to those adopted children who did not feel comfortable having conversations with their parents about adoption (Ranieri et al., 2021).

Unfortunately, the biological children who reside with adopted children and their biological parents often have their own difficulties when adjusting to the adopted child being in the home. Many of these siblings report their own mental health issues, and also report feeling resentment toward the adopted child, which creates significant difficulties in the relationship between the siblings (Hunsley et al., 2021). It has also been found that late-adopted adolescents tend to display higher rates of hostility toward siblings than non-adopted

children, which could be impacting the way that the siblings experience their interaction with their adopted sibling (Muzi & Pace, 2022).

Reflective functioning refers to an individual's ability to be aware of their own internal state, along with the states of other people, and also understand internal narratives about specific concepts. Those individuals who have poor reflective functioning and insecure attachments are more likely to engage in violent behaviors (Kiesling-Carver, 2018). This inability to recognize and understand the behaviors and motives of others, both peers and parental figures, increases not only the likelihood of the individual engaging in violent behavior, but also the likelihood that the individual will be unable to engage in meaningful connections with other people.

Later relationships are often impacted by an individual's upbringing and experience; however, it has been found that many people in adulthood who were adopted as children maintain healthy relationships with partners both in marital relationships and as co-parents of their children (Despax et al., 2020). However, it is noted that there do not appear to be consistent findings in this area, with much research showing that the relationships of adopted adults are not stable. Indeed, there is some question about whether the adopted partner has a secure attachment to their partner, or if their own insecurities are mediated by the secure attachment style of their non-adopted partner (Despax et al., 2020). Similarly, it has been found that social support systems act as a mediating factor for those youth who have behavioral issues in childhood and adolescence, decreasing the likelihood of taking those behavioral issues into adulthood (Sanchez-Sandavol et al., 2020).

Behavioral Difficulties in Childhood and Adolescence

Children who have experienced early life institutionalization often display significant behavior problems both in early childhood and later in adolescence. These

children tend to display more hyperactive and impulsive behaviors, struggle with expressive and receptive language skills (which may increase behavioral outbursts), display poorer academic skills than their non-adopted counterparts, and have difficulty with both working and verbal memory (DeMartino et al., 2018). These children additionally struggle to engage in age-appropriate interactions with their peers, both with regard to their affective matching as well as inappropriate cortisol production, leading many to question whether or not addressing a child's behaviors independently of their interactions with others is the most helpful approach (Depasquale & Gunnar, 2019). Children who are raised in institutions tend to display significant difficulties with communication and motor skills, and also struggle in general adaptive behavior skills in many domains when compared to children who were adopted into families (Naumova et al., 2019). Children who experience maltreatment in early childhood display more externalizing behaviors in adolescence than their non-maltreated counterparts. Non-violent behavior and substance abuse behaviors appear to increase in frequency and intensity over time in maltreated children, although violent behavior appears to increase in adolescence before stabilizing in adulthood (Tung et al., 2019).

International adoption brings about additional stressors both on the child and the family, particularly given the amount of time and the costly nature of international adoption, and difficulty with communication given the language difference. Many young children who are adopted internationally are not able to communicate their emotions effectively with language, because they do not have the language to use, but instead display significant behavioral difficulties to express their distress (Steenrod, 2022). Internationally adopted children often exhibit signs of special needs, and many of the

families who adopt these children tend to report feeling more isolation and exclusion than adoptive parents whose children do not have special needs. These special needs often create ongoing behavioral difficulties that are difficult for the child or parent to manage, which may be creating some of the difficulty that parents have with attaching to these children (Miller et al., 2021).

Behavioral difficulties continue to escalate as children grow older, as they experience more Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), and as they are moved from one placement to another, often without warning, and are then less likely to be adopted (Tregeagle et al., 2019). Children who are adopted at a relatively later age, no matter the path through which the child is adopted, display more externalizing and internalizing behaviors than non-adopted children (Julian et al., 2019). Parental stress regulation difficulties also influence the behaviors of children, with children's behavioral and emotional regulation difficulties increasing as the stress level of the parent increases (Hornfeck et al., 2019). Adopted children who exhibit externalizing behaviors and a negative temperament tend to benefit from mothers who can display emotional availability, but for those children where emotional availability of a mother is not present, the difficulty with managing externalizing behaviors is increased (Barone et al., 2019).

Relationships with peers also influence the ways in which adopted children manage and regulate their behaviors, with those children who experience bullying at schools having serious difficulties with emotional and behavioral regulation, often leading to externalizing and acting-out behaviors (Ferrari et al., 2022). Unfortunately, these behavioral and emotional difficulties do not resolve quickly. Often, symptoms of

PTSD are present in children for years after the traumatic event occurred and are often seen comorbidly with behavioral difficulties (Forresi et al., 2020).

Social and Emotional Development

The ways that early childhood trauma, particularly early institutionalization, impacts social and emotional development in children has been well-researched. Children who were institutionalized in infancy tended to display poorer general social functioning and poorer social competence, even once they have been removed from the institutional setting (Guyon-Harris et al., 2019). Additionally, these children often struggle with emotional expression and with understanding the emotions of others, which causes them to have difficulty in their interactions with other peers as well as with adults (Lind et al., 2020). Adopted children, particularly those who are adopted internationally and were raised in institutions, tend to show more indiscriminately friendly behavior, which is of serious concern for those who are attempting to keep children safe in new homes (Julian et al., 2019).

Children who experience maltreatment often display a lower percentage of gaze fixation for the human face/eye area and lower salivary oxytocin levels when compared to the typically developing group. It is posited that lower endogenous oxytocin levels in maltreated children lead to atypical development of their visual attention to eyes as a social cue, which results in significant social-emotional development problems, as well as impacts their current social-emotional functioning (Suzuki et al., 2020). Internationally adopted children who are given little to no intervention during their time in institutions display poorer attachment security, difficulty with both externalizing and internalizing

problems, and poorer general social competence than those children who were exposed to social and emotional developmental interventions in their institutions (Julian et al., 2019).

Education and Developmental Delays

Children who are adopted both internationally and domestically show lower success in high school education settings, particularly if they were adopted after they were one year old. Additionally, Andermann et al. (2022) note that internationally adopted children attend four-year universities less frequently than their non-adopted counterparts. Adopted children in elementary school tend to display performance differences when compared to their non-adopted counterparts, are more likely to receive special education services and require more support from parents in order to be successful educationally. It is also noted that language difficulties and hyperactive behaviors are likely influencing the success of children who are adopted (Dalen & Theie, 2019). Children who have a clinical diagnosis of reactive attachment disorder tend to display more behavioral difficulties in the classroom, and struggle to engage in positive relationships with their teachers, although those teachers who have been able to engage students see more success in academic pursuits (Bsomans et al., 2020).

The strategies parents use with their children also tend to either enhance or delay a child's development. Children who are parented in a harsh manner tend to display cognitive and language delays, along with delays in their social skills (Fatima et al., 2022). Children who have been diagnosed with FASD show significant difficulty with educational development, although children with shorter stays in institutions and longer placements in adoptive families do tend to be more successful at meeting developmental

milestones and educational milestones, and generally have higher IQ/DQ scores (Koren & Ornoy, 2021).

Children with FASD show significant deficits in motor ability and coordination, generally display lower IQ scores than children who were not exposed to alcohol and have trouble with sustained attention. These children tend to display less efficient behaviors and make more errors when compared to same aged peers (Mattson et al., 2019). These children additionally have difficulty with problem solving and planning, concept formation and set shifting, working memory, language, learning and memory, visual perception and visual construction, as well as adaptive functioning and academic performance (Mattson et al., 2019). FASD is identified as the leading cause of preventable developmental disability worldwide.

There are additionally lifelong impacts of adoption when considering education. Adopted children who have adopted parents with higher IQ's are more likely to attend and be successful in college, as are children who have parents who engage with their children in an open manner. However, children whose parents are more passive or agreeable with their children tend to have children who are less likely to be successful in a college setting (Soh & Tan, 2020).

Mental Health Difficulties

Those children who experience maltreatment and must enter the care of the state are highly vulnerable to physical and mental health comorbidities. Some research has shown that as much as 91% of children who are being “looked after” outside of their biological family experience at least one neurodisability or other related neurodevelopmental, emotional, behavioral, and intellectual problems (Ogundele, 2020). Children with attachment issues also tend to display difficulty with executive functioning, but attempting to address the executive

functioning does not appear to address the attachment difficulties (Davies & Reed, 2022). Children who experienced maltreatment are also significantly more likely to experience ADHD or PTSD (DePasquale & Gunnar, 2019; Dowdy-Hazlett & Boel-Studt, 2021), and are also significantly more likely to experience learning difficulties (Bosmans et al., 2018; Embury et al., 2020), as well as low self-esteem (Seim et al., 2021) and co-occurring psychopathology and psychosocial problems (Seim et al., 2022). The type of maltreatment that these children experience early in life, along with their age and gender at the time of adoption, all seem to play a role in predicting the possibility of a child receiving a clinical diagnosis of RAD, PTSD, or ADHD (Dowdy-Hazlett & Boel-Studt, 2021). These children additionally tend to display externalizing behaviors, difficulty with overall behavioral regulation, and poorer executive functioning abilities (DePasquale & Gunnar, 2019). Additionally, adopted children tend to display and implement the same coping skills that are used by their non-adopted counterparts; however, they appear to be less useful, and cortisol reactivity was not observed in adopted children who were assessed in adolescence (Johnson et al., 2019).

There is some question about the resolution of difficulties, as parents report that symptoms decrease or increase at a rate different than that of professional observers (Bruce et al., 2018). Children who are more aggressive tended to be more likely to have their adoptions dissolved during the adolescent period (Sattler et al., 2020), often well after the actual adoption took place, further confirming difficulty with resolving symptoms related to attachment disorders in general and violence (Lyttle et al., 2021; Palacios et al, 2018; Paniagua et al., 2019). Adults adopted as children were more likely to engage in aggressive, violent, or delinquent behavior than those who were not adopted, and males were more likely to engage in the violent behavior than females (Cote et al., 2020; Yang & Perkins, 2020), which could be due in part to the fact that attachment disordered individuals have more

difficulty relating to others and caring for their feelings (Kiessling-Carver, 2019). Adopted children are more likely to murder their adoptive parents by as much as 15 times (Hubbell, et al. 2019; Kirschner, 2006; Kirschner, 1992), but this does not appear to be due to post-adoption abuse, nor does it appear to have any relationship with the child's attachment style (Hubbell et al., 2021). The disorganized state in an adult, which can result from early childhood abuse that is not resolved, is very frightening for young children, and there is some research that shows that unresolved early childhood abuse is repaired with great difficulty (Jacobvitz & Reisz, 2019).

Co-occurring issues are of serious concern for adopted children. Children who have been diagnosed with FASD often display attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder, oppositional defiant disorder, depression, and conduct disorders (Koren & Ornoy, 2021). Alcohol exposed children have higher rates of psychological disorders in comparison with typically developing children even when matched on age, gender, and socioeconomic status (Mattson, et al. 2019). It is unlikely that these co-occurring issues will completely resolve in adulthood. It has been found that many of those adoptees struggle with profound mental health issues in young adulthood (21-34 years of age), and these struggles are often associated with the challenge of constructing a sense of identity, a general lack of a sense of belonging, and grieving for adoption-related losses that they are unable to resolve, for a variety of reasons (Satish, 2022). Disorders like FASD often increase in their intensity with age, not decrease. It has been found that individuals diagnosed with FASD see a decline in their IQ score as they age, their growth continues to stagnate, and many show gross motor coordination abnormalities. More than 50% of those with FASD in adulthood rely almost solely on social support and are generally unable to care for themselves, and more than 97% of these individuals experience ophthalmological abnormalities that continue to get worse as time goes on (Landgren et al. 2019).

Criminal Activity

While not all criminal activity is related to violence, there is ample evidence that those people who are victimized as children, particularly experiencing sexual or physical abuse, are more likely to experience criminal justice involvement, both as the perpetrator and also as the victim (Edalati et al., 2019). Female prison inmates, and male inmates who have been convicted of sexually violent crimes, reported the highest degree of trauma and the highest number of ACEs when a prison population was studied (Stensrud et al., 2019). The juvenile population has even higher rates, with 93% of children entering the system having at least one ACE, and 50% of juveniles in the system having six or more ACEs (Williams, 2020). The majority of chronic juvenile offenders experienced at least one type of child maltreatment, particularly when compared to one-time offenders or recidivists (Yao et al., 2022).

Although the validity of the numbers presented is somewhat in question due to a lack of transparency with which the information was gathered, Kirshner (2006) reports that adopted children are more than 16 times more likely to murder their adoptive parents when compared with their non-adopted counterparts. Hubbell et al. (2020) note that adopted children tend to murder their adoptive parents for reasons that are qualitatively different when compared to biological children who murder their family members, and it was only in rare instances that post-adoption abuse was cited as the motivator for the murder. For example, this research identified financial motives as being the primary motivator for adopted children to murder adoptive parents, where biological children tend to murder their biological parents for reasons related to abuse or historical neglect.

Biblical Foundations of the Study

As Jesus hung on the cross, he gave comfort to one of the men who was dying beside him, although he was a thief. “The other thief, in his agonizing hours hanging beside Jesus, realized the error of his ways, trusted in God, repented, and was promised by Jesus: ‘Truly, I say to you, today you’ll be with me in paradise’” (Luke 23:43, *New International Version*, 2011). Jesus did not solely surround Himself with those who were “good,” and, in fact, He often sought out those who were ignored and driven out by others. Jesus did not only love those who did good, He loved all people, and God did not save only those people who were sinless, but sent His only son, the only sinless person, to save all people. Attempting to identify the origins of violent behavior allows one to not only to try to address these violent behaviors in the future, but also, hopefully, to provide some measure of comfort and support to those who engaged in these behaviors. This may be a somewhat unpopular view; however, it is important that all people are cared for, not just those who are considered “okay” to be cared for by society at large.

James 1:27 states “Pure and undefiled religion before God is this: visiting orphans and widows in their troubles and to stay unspotted from the world” (*New International Version*, 2011). The Bible frequently discusses the importance of caring for those who are orphans, and for those who cannot care for themselves. Matthew 25:40 says, “The King will reply ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me’” (*New International Version*, 2011). Adopted children may certainly fall into the category of the “least of these.” Adopted children experienced the loss of a biological family, and for many of them, they lose an identity that was already built, depending on the age at which they are adopted and the level of identity

that their adoptive family allows them to maintain. Many of these children have, literally, had nothing. Yet once an individual turns 18 years old, and sometimes even younger, there is a perception that suddenly people are responsible for their own behaviors, and there is much less focus on what happened to them when they were younger. But adults who were adopted as children may still be orphans, particularly for those who engage in violent behavior, and Jesus calls on his followers to care for all people, not just those who are “easy” to care for. Dr. Karen Purvis, a leading expert in the treatment of traumatized children prior to her death, has said “those who are the hardest to love are the ones who need it the most” (personal communication, September 2014), and the statement is, perhaps, doubly true for those children who lack attachment and engage in violent behavior both as a child and later as an adult.

The Bible also speaks to those traumatic experiences that people experience throughout their lifetime. The Bible is clear that there is no promise that Christians (or others) will avoid trials or tribulations throughout the lifespan. Instead, 1 Peter 4:12 states “Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange was happening to you” (*New International Version*, 2011). These trials are not a punishment, and they are not intended to cause a person to experience pain and suffering solely for the purpose of experiencing pain and suffering. Instead, trials should drive people to lean only on God and on His knowledge and understanding (1 Proverbs 3:5-6, *New International Version*, 2011). Finally, 1 Peter 5:10 states “And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you” (*New International Version*, 2011). Traumatic experiences are not intended to cause

an individual to never be happy again, nor are they a “death sentence” meaning that an individual can never be happy or healthy. In leaning on the understanding that God gives people, the trials are experienced and an opportunity to learn and grow closer to God is created.

Summary

There are a variety of pre-adoptive influences that impact the growth and development of the child throughout childhood and adolescence. Children who have physical or neurological difficulties, such as fetal alcohol spectrum disorder, tend to have more difficulties with finding appropriate adoptive homes, and additionally have difficulty with forming strong relationships and attachments with others. These individuals struggle to make positive progress throughout the lifespan and experience severe impacts to brain development and activity (Mattson et al., 2019). Female children, and children who are adopted at an older age, tend to enter adoptive homes with more psychosocial functioning difficulties, difficulties with attachment, and a higher frequency of psychopathological diagnosis (Smith et al., 2021). There are additionally genetic influences over the way that children are able to function in the future, although it has been difficult to completely separate the difference between genetic and environmental influences over children’s outcomes. Children who are adopted by parents who have a higher education level and also encourage their adopted children to succeed academically tend to do well academically (Domingue & Fletcher, 2020); however, children who have biological parents who have learning disabilities or have been diagnosed with mental retardation tend to show more difficulties in education (Neil et al., 2020), showing the interplay between genetic and environmental influences. The Bible calls on Christians to

care for the “orphans and the widows” (James 1:27, *New International Version*, 2011), and never promises that Christians (or anyone else) will avoid trials and tribulations throughout their lives. However, the Bible also is clear that trials and tribulations must be identified, and in those trials, people gain endurance in their ability to be followers of Him (Romans 5:3, *New International Version*, 2011).

Adopted children experience a variety of difficulties throughout their life, including traumatic experiences prior to their adoption (Paine et al., 2021; Roman et al., 2022), educational and developmental delays even after the adoption (Anderman et al., 2022), struggles in their interpersonal relationships with both peers and with parents and other family members (Depasquale & Gunnar, 2019), increased mental health difficulties (Dowdy-Hazlett & Boel-Studt, 2021), social and emotional delays (Suzuki et al., 2020), and neurological differences that impact their ability to grow and develop in a neurotypical fashion (Johnson et al., 2019). While there has been limited research about how adopted children function in adulthood (Despax et al., 2020; Hubbell et al., 2020), there does continue to be a lack of research that explores the way that childhood adoption impacts an individual throughout the life span or considers the developmental perspective of how adoption alters an individual’s ability to function. Research has shown, for example, that those individuals who are the victim of abuse in childhood are more likely to be engaged with the criminal justice system in adulthood, both as victims and as perpetrators (Edalati et al., 2019). Additionally, adopted children are more likely to murder their adoptive parents than their biological counterparts (Kirshner, 2006; Hubbell et al., 2020), which is of great concern.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHOD

Overview

This qualitative research identified demographic information and life experiences that are represented within the group of those who commit murder after their adoption, including whether or not this would be considered parricide. A number of areas of interest were identified, and this information was obtained through publicly available records from each appropriate state or county. Appendix A offers a list of categories that were utilized in order to identify and track demographic information. The final research question utilizes Heide's (2012) typology of parricide offenders, and all individuals included in this research will be placed into one of the three categories, utilizing Heidi's (2012) outline of each type of offender. Reliability of my category placement was ensured by having an additional researcher, with a commensurate education level, review the information provided to confirm or disconfirm my placement in each category.

Research Questions

RQ 1: What qualities and demographics do individuals who were adopted prior to the age of 18 years and later committed murder have?

RQ 2: What experiences do individuals who were adopted prior to the age of 18 years and later committed murder have in common?

RQ 3: Why do individuals who were adopted prior to the age of 18 report that they have committed this crime, and what do court records identify as the motivation for their crime?

RQ 4: Utilizing Heide's 2012 seminal work, what parricide typology do these offenders fall into (for those participants who murdered one or both parents)?

Research Design

For this qualitative and phenomenological research, a narrative design was utilized in order to identify appropriate information. Utilizing a narrative research design for the qualitative portion will provide information related to the lived experience of those individuals who were adopted as children and who committed murder at a later time (Cresswell & Poth, 2018). This research specifically looks at the characteristics of a population and explores variations in characteristics between individuals (Siedlecki, 2020). Utilizing this methodology allowed the research to identify characteristics that are seen frequently within the identified population of adopted individuals who committed murder after their adoption. This information will provide support to future researchers, law and policymakers, and those who are providing care and treatment for both children and adults who were either adopted or in out-of-home care.

Utilizing a narrative research design allowed me to gather a wide array of information from a variety of individuals who meet set criteria of being incarcerated for murder and were also adopted prior to the age of 18 years old. Information that is gathered during the research was coded by me to identify themes throughout the identified documents, and these codes were independently confirmed by a peer review to seek intercoder agreement and ensure reliability (Cresswell & Poth, 2018). Appendix B shows the parricide typology spreadsheet that was utilized by researchers. The following steps were implemented in order to ensure intercoder reliability: establish a common platform for coding and create a preliminary code list, develop and share the initial codebook, apply the codebook to transcripts, assess and report intercoder agreement

among coders, and revise and finalize the codebook to inform any further coding that is necessary (Cresswell & Poth, 2018).

All information was placed into a Microsoft Excel table and all information was confirmed to be accurate. Information was analyzed using IBM SPSS software, when appropriate, and outcomes will be provided.

Participants

Twenty-six individuals were identified utilizing a Google website search utilizing the phrase “adopted individual” and “murder.” Each of these individuals is currently over the age of 18 years, although some were under the age of 18 years at the time of the crime, they were all tried as adults, and each has been convicted in a court of law or pleaded guilty. Adequate information was gathered on 19 of the identified individuals. Different states and counties have different allowances for what information is publicly available, and certain individuals were removed from the final discussion due to a lack of necessary information.

Study Procedures

After identifying the participants, the state and county of each crime and subsequent trial was identified. The details of how each state and county allows for public court and police records to be retrieved was determined. I gathered all available information regarding the trial and appeals of each participant and utilized those records to identify the specific characteristics and details needed to answer the research questions. As I reviewed records, I utilized the Excel spreadsheet to document answers to each of the categories that were identified and documented where that information had been gleaned from. Additionally, notes were made regarding additional information of

interest. I also utilized the information to place each participant in a parricide category, utilizing the Parricide Typology Spreadsheet (see Appendix B). Data were entered into an Excel spreadsheet, and another researcher confirmed the specific parricide category each offender is placed in with regard to their typology. The additional researcher is an individual with a commensurate and appropriate education level, with experience in the field of mental health assessment and treatment of individuals with serious mental illness and behavioral difficulties, who is a retired tenured professor at a California State University. This information was then transferred to SPSS software, at which time appropriate descriptive statistics were generated, including tables.

Instrumentation and Measurement

Qualitative Demographic Information

Demographic information, along with information related to characteristics of the individual around the time of the murder or related to the murder that they have committed was gathered from public court and police records. Additional narrative information was retrieved during the research that did not neatly fall into demographic/characteristic information. This additional information was utilized separately, in more of a case study manner, although the information will remain confidential and the majority of the research will remain within the overall research strategy. The information gathered from the court records was assumed to be accurate but may be limited in what information can be accessed. Offenders may or may not agree with all of the information that is located within the court records, but I made every effort to identify as many court records and transcripts as possible.

Data Analysis

All data were initially entered into a detailed Excel spreadsheet, which indicates both the answer to the identified question as well as the location where that information was identified from. This information was then entered into SPSS software, which was utilized to provide descriptive statistics, creating tables and charts. Please see Appendix C for the full and complete spreadsheet, with identifying information redacted. These descriptive statistics provide support and information for the results and discussion portions of this paper.

Delimitations, Assumptions, and Limitations

There are assumptions that have been identified in this study. First, the manner of identifying individuals who are appropriate for this research was conducted using a search engine, which requires that there be articles, books, or websites about the crime that specifically identify the offender as adopted. This research also assumes that the information that is contained within court and police reports is accurate and relatively complete.

Limitations to this study do include the lack of ability to engage directly with identified individuals, and thus, all information comes from court records, arrest reports, psychological reports, and court exhibits. Sample size is additionally limited given the number of individuals who meet the requirements of being identified as adopted and having engaged in and been convicted of homicide. Data in this study are also limited to information that is contained within publicly available records, which may or may not provide a holistic view of either the offender(s), the victim(s), or the crimes themselves.

Delimitations do exist in this research, including limiting all participants to those who committed their crimes within the United States, were adopted prior to the age of 18, and were tried as adults. These delimitations are meant to ensure that adequate court records are available, as juvenile records in the United States are generally sealed.

Summary

This qualitative research was conducted and presented using a narrative model, focusing on the demographic information and characteristics of individuals who were adopted prior to the age of 18 years and then committed murder. There are a variety of identified individuals, including some who engaged in the crimes alone, some who engaged with other associates, some who were actively engaging in substance use, and some who were identified as having serious mental illness. The identified individuals who qualified for this study included those who were located through Google search, but publicly available court records will be utilized to verify and confirm all information. Heide's (2012) typology was utilized in categorizing the data, and the reliability of my categorizations will be confirmed by an additional researcher. This research provides a wider array of qualitative information that has not previously been discussed in the context of parricide related to the adoption community, and also will provide a wealth of information for those who are currently providing treatment to and parenting adopted children. By utilizing these qualitative methods, the research is able to provide a comprehensive overview not only of the way in which specific variables may be linked, but also offer a narrative overview of the experiences of particular participants in the research. The strategies identified for data gathering, as well as data analysis, ensure that

the information that is gathered and the outcomes that are identified are reliable and valid.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

Overview

This narrative, qualitative research sought to identify specific characteristics seen among a group of individuals who were adopted prior to the age of 18 years old and later committed murder. All individuals who were identified in this research were tried as adults; however, there were a number of those individuals who did commit their crimes prior to the age of 18 years old. Information was gathered from 19 counties in 16 states, Supreme Courts in two states, and the websites www.casetext.com, www.scribd.com and www.law.justia.com, which post full court records. Additionally, the text written by David Kirschner (2006), an expert in the field of those individuals who were adopted and committed murder, particularly using the theme of the “adopted child syndrome” was additionally utilized.

Pre-adoption abuse and post-adoption abuse were noted when the information was available, as well as a variety of other specific characteristics that are of interest to research. This research was able to identify a variety of common themes and also was able to categorize those individuals who engaged in parricide (the murder of one or both parents). Results showed that only five identified individuals killed people who were not their parent (either biological or adoptive), and in two of those cases, they killed their adoptive parent and others. Other characteristics were identified as being of great interest when considering these individuals, including several individuals who were reported as having serious behavioral difficulties beginning around the age of four or five years old, and in multiple cases the murders were precipitated by the victim telling the offender that they were going to be “just like” their biological parent. Please see Appendix C for the

full, final spreadsheet, which has been redacted to ensure the anonymity of this research and the identified individuals.

Descriptive Results

This research began with 26 possible participants, and there was enough available information on 19 of the participants. These participants are from 16 states, and although there are two states that had two individuals identified, the identified individuals are relatively evenly spread throughout the United States, including Western states, Eastern states, and states throughout the Central portion of the US, as well as Hawaii. Participants range in age from 14 years of age to 39 years of age at the time of the murders, and both males and females are included, although the bulk of the identified individuals are male. These crimes occurred between 1974 and 2019, and the year of the crimes were utilized to confirm the ages of the individuals at the time of the crime. As might be expected, different information was available for crimes that were more recently committed. Individuals included those who were adopted through “planned adoption,” as well as children adopted through the foster care system, and internationally adopted children. Additionally, some participants were adopted by biological family members, where others were adopted by those with whom they had no biological relationships. Unfortunately, some information was not able to be located, including information about the biological parents for all but three of the participants, and it is not clear in court transcripts or police reports if the “siblings” that were identified were biological siblings, were the biological children of their adoptive parents, or were non-biologically related,

adopted siblings. Please see Appendix C for the spreadsheet of responses to posed categories.

Study Findings

In an attempt to identify specific characteristics that might have been noted in these identified individuals, a variety of categories were identified, including information related to the age of the individual at the time of adoption and at the time of crime, whether or not they engaged in these crimes with others, history of substance use and abuse, mental health treatment and diagnosis, plea, sentence, motivation, education status, and relationship status. Additional themes that were noted during this research included behavioral difficulties noted in the offender as a very young child, multiple cases where the parents were reported as having told the offender that they were going to be “just like” their biological parents, planned versus unplanned crimes, engagement in sexual assault when the offenders killed strangers, and many parents who simply did not appear to be prepared to support a child with the mental and behavioral health issues that their child displayed.

The following outcomes address the first research question that was posed: what were the demographics and qualities that were seen in individuals who were adopted as children and later engaged in murder?

Gender

Of the 19 identified individuals, only two were identified as being female, with the remainder of the individuals being male. Please see Table 1.

Table 1
Gender of Offender

Gender		
	N	%
Male	17	89.5%
Female	2	10.5%

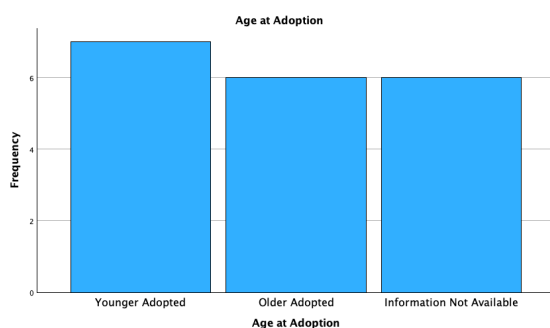
Age and Type of Adoption

One area that was not thoroughly explored in much of the available information was the age at the time the offender was adopted, nor was it always clear what type of adoption occurred (domestic or international adoption). For those where the information was available, seven of the individuals were adopted prior to their first birthday. As noted previously, most research would identify these individuals as being “early adopted” when compared with the other six individuals, who were adopted between the ages of two years old and nine years old, who would be considered “older adopted.” Information was not available for many of the identified individuals, which does provide some evidence that the age at time of adoption and type of adoption may not be considered “important” when considering their crimes; however, this does appear to be a major contributor to the level of trauma that a child experiences prior to their adoption and also is a contributing factor to how the child feels about the adoption itself, which shows that it may be something that needs to be considered in the future. Please see Table 2.1 and Figure 2.1.

Table 2.1
Age at Adoption

Age at Adoption		
	N	%
Younger Adopted	7	36.8%
Older Adopted	6	31.6%
Information Not Available	6	31.6%

Figure 2.1
Age at Adoption

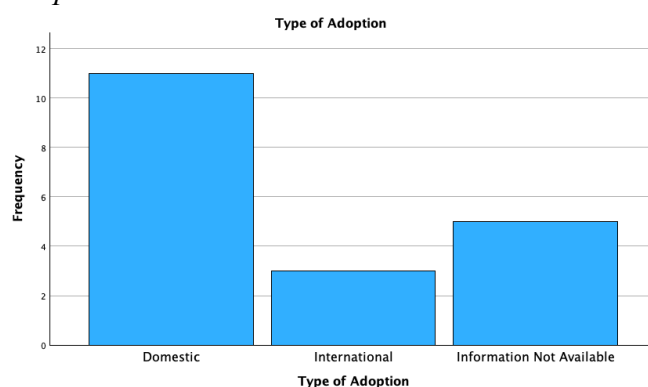


There were two categories for consideration regarding “type of adoption.” These included international adoptions, which included any time that an individual was adopted from a country outside of the United States, and domestic adoption, which included planned adoptions and adoptions through the foster care system. Unfortunately, it was not possible to differentiate between planned adoption and adoptions through the foster care system due to a lack of information. In cases where the information was available, of the 19 offenders, 11 were adopted domestically and three were adopted internationally. No information was available for five of the participants. Please see Table 3.1 and Figure 3.1 for additional information.

Table 3.1
Type of Adoption

Type of Adoption		
	N	%
Domestic	11	57.9%
International	3	15.8%
Information Not Available	5	26.3%

Figure 3.1
Type of Adoption

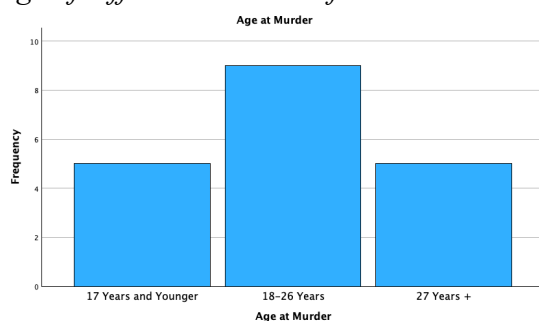


Two identified individuals were 14 years old at the time of their crimes, three were either 16 years old or 17 years old at the time of their crimes, and the remainder were between 18 years old and 39 years old. It is of interest that only five of these individuals were over the age of 26 years old at the time of their crimes, particularly since this is the age at which an individual is often deemed to have reached psycho-social maturity (Barnet et al., 2017). This information is of particular interest and importance as all of these individuals were charged, tried, and found guilty as adults, even though five of them were under the age of 18 years old, and two of them were only 14 years old at the time of their crimes. Please see Table 4.1 and Figure 4.1

Table 4.1
Age of Offender at Time of Murder

Age at Murder		
	N	%
17 Years and Younger	5	26.3%
18-26 Years	9	47.4%
27 Years +	5	26.3%

Figure 4.1
Age of Offender at Time of Murder



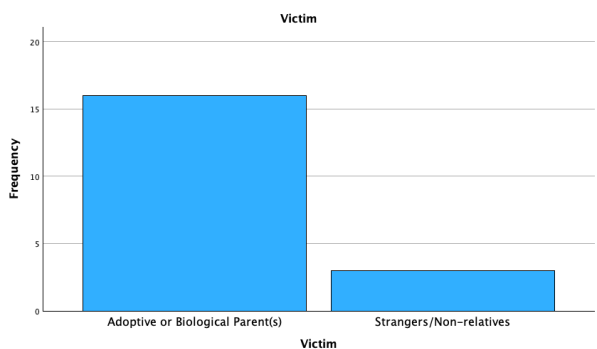
Victimology

As has been previously noted, the vast majority of those who were included in this study killed either their adoptive mother only (seven), their adoptive father only (two), both adoptive parents (six), or their biological mother (one). In three cases, the victim(s) were strangers, and in one case, the individual killed both their biological mother and three past spouses. Please see Table 5.1 and Figure 5.1

Table 5.1
Victim Type

Victim		
	N	%
Adoptive or Biological Parent(s)	16	84.2%
Strangers/Non-relatives	3	15.8%

Figure 5.1
Victim Type



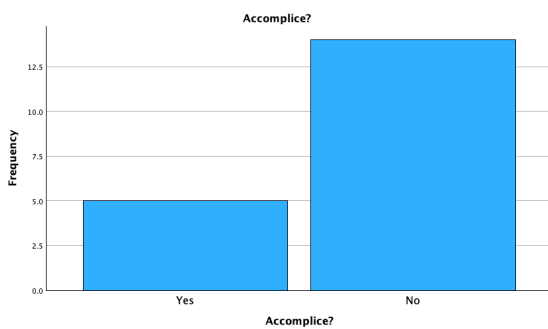
Accomplice

In only five cases was there an identified accomplice, and in these cases, either money or sexual assault was the primary motivating factor. In many of these cases, the crimes were more planned and calculated when compared with those individuals who committed their crimes alone. Please see Table 6.1 and Figure 6.1.

Table 6.1
Was an Accomplice Present?

Accomplice?		
	N	%
Yes	5	26.3%
No	14	73.7%

Figure 6.1
Was an Accomplice Present?



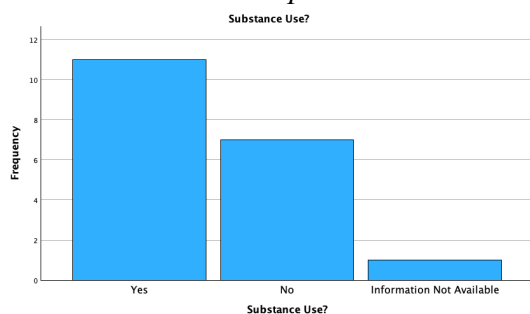
Substance Use

History of substance use and abuse was available regarding 18 of the participants, and of those participants, 11 of the individuals had a history of substance abuse or were actively using substances at the time of their crime. In six of these participants, money for drugs was the identified motive, either by the prosecutor or the offender or both. It is interesting to note that individuals who engaged in substance use were of commensurate age with those who did not engage in substance use. Please see Table 7.1 and Figure 7.1.

Table 7.1
Was Substance Use Reported?

Substance Use?		
	N	%
Yes	11	57.9%
No	7	36.8%
Information Not Available	1	5.3%

Figure 7.1
Was Substance Use Reported?



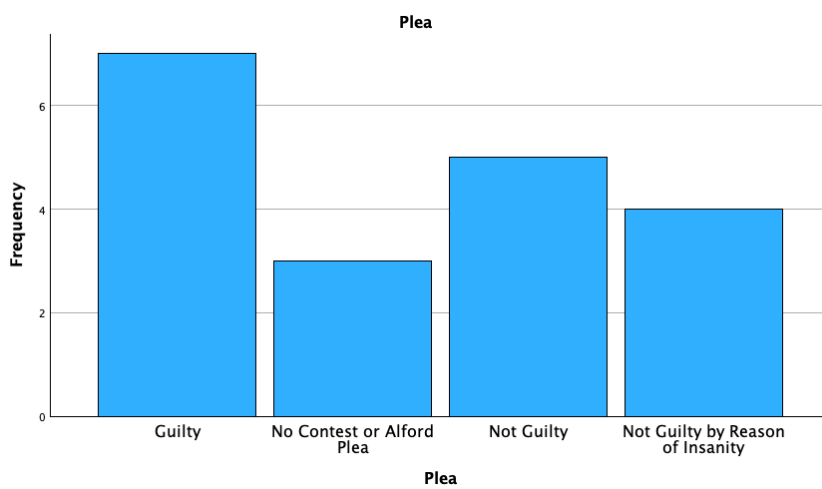
Plea

The “plea” category was particularly interesting in that many of the individuals plead guilty and then (1) would not explain the crime or (2) would try to appeal, stating that they wanted to withdraw their plea for a variety of reasons, including that they were not “sane” enough to make the deal or that they felt forced into it by their attorneys or

others. Three individuals entered a plea of “no contest,” or provided what is identified as an “Alford” plea, which indicates that although they are not pleading guilty, they acknowledge that if this case went to court the prosecution could prove their case. Seven individuals plead guilty, five individuals plead not guilty (but were found guilty by a jury of their peers), and four plead not guilty by reason of insanity. This plea did not work for three of the individuals who claimed insanity, and the fourth individual was found guilty by two juries, but upon a second overturned verdict, the prosecution allowed the individual to plead not guilty by reason of insanity in exchange for a 20-year sentence (which the individual had already served). Please see Table 8.1 and Figure 8.1.

Table 8.1
Plea

Plea		
	N	%
Guilty	7	36.8%
No Contest or Alford Plea	3	15.8%
Not Guilty	5	26.3%
Not Guilty by Reason of Insanity	4	21.1%

Figure 8.1*Plea***Sentence**

As might be expected in circumstances such as these, there was a wide variety of sentences that were handed down in these cases, ranging from seven years (to life) in prison to death. Three individuals were initially sentenced to death; however, one of those sentences was overturned when their state outlawed the death penalty, and instead the individual was given a sentence of 999+ years. Additionally, eight individuals were given life-without parole sentences, and a further five individuals were given a minimum sentence with a maximum sentence of life in prison. Only four individuals were given a number of years that they must serve prior to being released, and in those cases, those individuals will only have to serve that much time before they are released. In the cases of those who were given a minimum sentence, they must, when they reach their minimum number of years, prove to the parole board in their state that they are no longer a threat to others and deserve to be released. Sentencing in these cases was often reviewed after they were given for a variety of reasons, including a recent ruling that indicated that a juvenile (under the age of 18 years old) could not automatically or

mandatorily be given a life-sentence, and could only be given that sentence if they were considered to be “permanently incorrigible” (Miller v. Alabama).

Mental Health and Insanity

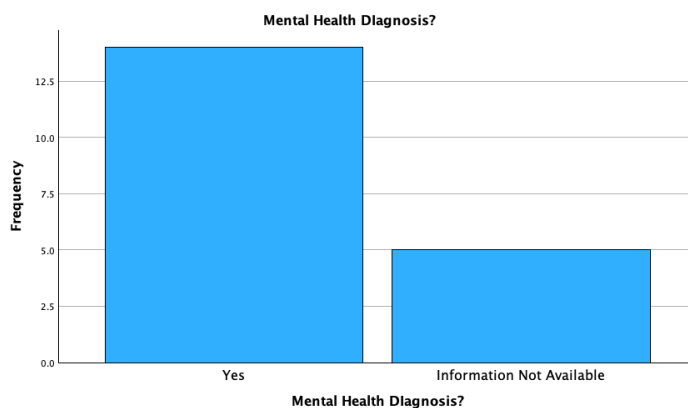
To address the second research question, this research sought to identify common experiences the offenders experienced prior to their adoption and prior to the murder. According to the U.S. Department of Justice, insanity is considered an “affirmative defense” in which the individual admits to committing the crime, but indicates that at the time of the crime the defendant, “as a result of a severe mental disease or defect, was unable to appreciate the nature and quality or wrongfulness of his acts. Mental disease or defect does not otherwise constitute a defense” (U.S. Department of Justice). In other words, an individual may certainly be diagnosed with a mental health condition or personality disorder and may still be found responsible for their crimes. As was noted in this research, of the 14 individuals where the information was available, all were identified as having a mental health diagnosis but only one individual was found to be not guilty by reason of insanity. In that case, it was not until the individual had their original verdict overturned by the supreme court that they were identified as having suffered from insanity at the time of their crime. It should be noted that 100% of those individuals where the information was available were reported to have at least one diagnosable mental illness. Please see Table 9.1 and Figure 9.1.

Table 9.1
Mental Health Diagnosis at the Time of Crime

Mental Health Diagnosis?		
	N	%
Yes	14	73.7%

Information Not Available	5	26.3%
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Figure 9.1
Mental Health Diagnosis at the Time of Crime

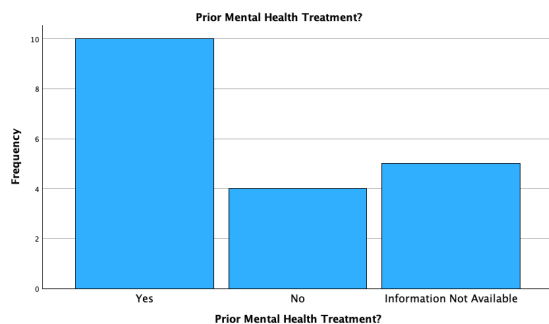


With that being said, as noted, 14 individuals were identified as having a diagnosable mental illness; however, only 10 of those individuals received mental health treatment prior to their crime, and in many cases the treatment that they received was deemed to either be ineffective or unhelpful as reported by family members or by the individual themselves. This was often reported during the punishment or sentencing phase of their case. Please see Table 9.2 and Figure 9.2.

Table 9.2
Mental Health Treatment Prior to Crime

Prior Mental Health Treatment?		
	N	%
Yes	10	52.6%
No	4	21.1%
Information Not Available	5	26.3%

Figure 9.2
Mental Health Treatment Prior to Crime



Pre- and post-adoption abuse

The information regarding pre- and post-adoption abuse was relatively limited, except in cases where the offender identified one or both as the reason for their crimes. This information was not available for six participants, and of the remaining 12 participants, pre-adoption abuse was identified as having occurred to six of the identified individuals, and post-adoption abuse was identified as having occurred to six individuals. In only two cases was there reports of both pre- and post-adoption abuse as having occurred.

This category was particularly difficult, as abuse is often under-reported and emotional or psychological abuse is largely considered not to be an adequate “motivator” for a crime and is considered to not be “as bad” as sexual assault or physical abuse. Additionally, there was limited information available on other settings in which abuse might have occurred, such as sexual assault by a known, similar aged individual, often identified as “date rape,” or when non-life-threatening abuse occurred, such as a child being bullied at school. Finally, there seems to be little, if any, consideration for how the individual experienced their interactions with their parents. For example, in one case, the

father of the offender was extremely frustrated that the individual was a relatively “sickly” child, who was not athletic and was relatively unmotivated to do things. He was additionally “doted” on by his mother. While there do not appear to be any reports of physical abuse, it is likely that these interactions between this individual and his father did impact his mental health and his future choices.

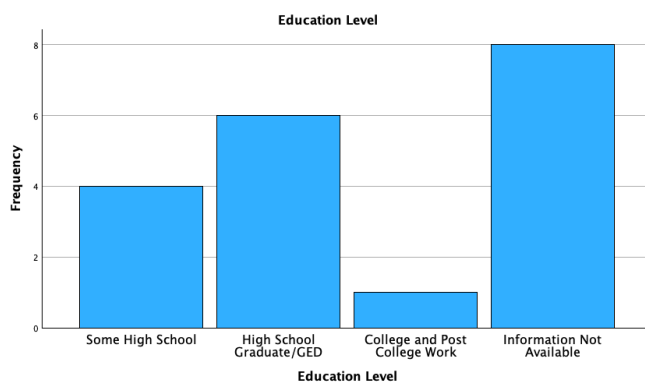
Education

Two categories of identifying information were added after the research began, and one of these categories was the education level of the individual (the other being the individual’s relationship status). Information was available regarding 11 of the individuals. In the cases of those individuals who were over 18 years old, five were high school graduates, and of those five, one was finishing a master’s program at the time of the crimes, having already finished their bachelor’s degree. In one case, the individual had a 9th grade education, but in most cases, even those who had not finished school had at least an 11th grade education and/or earned their GED upon their incarceration. Please see Table 10.1 and Figure 10.1.

Table 10.1
Education Level Prior to Crime

Education Level		
	N	%
Some High School	4	21.1%
High School Graduate/GED	6	31.6%
College and Post College Work	1	5.3%
Information Not Available	8	42.1%

Figure 10.1
Education Level Prior to Crime



Relationship status

There did not appear to be consistency among the relationship status of offenders, with some being single, some being in a relationship, and others being married and/or divorced. The relationship status was particularly of interest in a few cases. In one case, the offender indicated that their partner had had an abortion shortly before the crime. In another case, the offender murdered three of his past wives along with his adoptive mother, and in another the offender had been dating prior to the crime but became obsessive when the person “broke up” with him and it appears that this also negatively impacted his ability to think rationally.

Motives

The third research question attempted to identify the motives for the crimes that these offenders committed (including murder, sexual assault, and robbery). Identifying motives for an individual and the crime that they committed was particularly difficult, which is why this category was split into two, one in which the prosecutor/police identified motive, and (if available), what the individual reported their own motive was, and these two reports were similar in only six of the identified cases. It is interesting to

consider that while there was a triggering event which caused these crimes to occur, there were also events that led up to these murders that occurred for significant amounts of time prior to the actual crime occurring. Offenders often identified their motive as having to do with psychosis, rage, rejection, and money, particularly money for drugs. On the other hand, prosecutors/police alleged the motives had to do with sexual assault, “laziness,” an individual being a “sociopath” who wanted to “see how it felt,” and in one case, there was “no reason” for the crime to have occurred, that the individual received no benefit from the crime, outside of the individual’s desire to set the fire that ultimately killed their adoptive parent. It is impossible for any researcher to be able to completely and confidently understand the motive for crimes, for a variety of reasons, but it is particularly difficult to understand motives when there is no direct contact between the researcher and the individual who committed the crime, as was the case in this research. However, it is still important to understand that there was the immediate motive that caused the crime (i.e. money or rage), and there were many things that led up to the point that the murder was committed.

Parricide Typology Category

The final research question sought to categorize those individuals who committed parricide based on Heidi’s (2012) typology categories. There were three parricide typology categories that were included for this research: the severely abused offender, the severely mentally ill offender, and the severely antisocial offender. These categories are defined in Heidi’s (2012) seminal work on typing parricide offenders. The severely abused offender is defined as an individual who kills one or both parents after a lengthy history of physical, sexual, or emotional abuse. These individuals have come to believe

that their wellbeing and life (or the life and wellbeing of another) are seriously at risk and the murder is the only way to maintain safety. The severely mentally ill offender is one who has typically suffered from a long history of serious mental illness that is known to family members and friends. Although there does not need to be a diagnosis prior to the crime, it is reported by others that the individual behaved in “odd” ways or in ways that are reflective of a serious mental illness or psychotic disorder. The dangerously antisocial parricide offender is identified as an individual who kills for selfish reasons, particularly as they tend to view the parent who they kill as an obstacle standing in the way of something that they want, such as money.

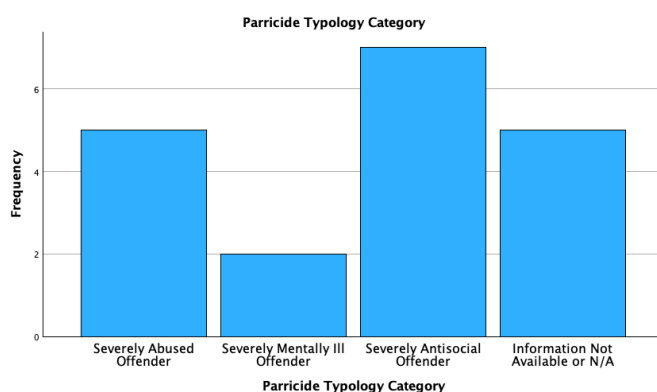
The primary concern when identifying the typology category that was chosen had to do with the impetus or motive for the crime. For example, an individual might be mentally ill, but if that had nothing to do with their crime, such as those who murdered for money for drugs, then that would not be the category chosen. I utilized the spreadsheet in Appendix A, as did the co-researcher who offered support to ensure the reliability of the categories that were chosen. Those individuals who did not kill their parents (three individuals) were not categorized, and there was one individual who did kill his adoptive father; however, there was not enough information to adequately and appropriately categorize him. Thus, there are four individuals who were identified as n/a or enough information was not available. Please see Table 11.1 and Figure 11.1.

Table 11.1
Parricide Typology Category

Parricide Typology Category		
	N	%
Severely Abused Offender	5	26.3%

Severely Mentally Ill Offender	2	10.5%
Severely Antisocial Offender	7	36.8%
Information Not Available or N/A	5	26.3%

Figure 11.1
Parricide Typology Category



My co-researcher and I reviewed all of the materials available separately and made notes and categorized the individual on our own. This information is not available publicly to ensure appropriate privacy for those individuals who were identified and utilized in this research (as well as their victims); however, it is available to the dissertation committee, if requested.

Additional themes noted

Throughout the course of this research additional themes were noted that contribute to all the research questions, particularly attempting to understand the

experiences of the identified offenders. These themes also contribute to understanding the motives behind these crimes and why these murders occurred.

Behavioral Difficulties

There were two major themes noted when considering early childhood behavioral issues: odd behavior and serious behavioral difficulties. Individuals who later were found to have serious mental illnesses (particularly those diagnosed with schizophrenia) were reported as having shown very “odd” behavior as a very young child, such as speaking to the television or believing that the radio was speaking directly to them. These behaviors were noted by parents and others, these individuals were considered “weird” by those who met them, and this was noted in four individuals who were “typed” as the crimes being directly related to their mental illness. Alternatively, nine of the individuals whose information was reviewed were reported to have “serious behavioral difficulties” in childhood, beginning around the age of four years old. These behaviors included aggressive and violent behaviors toward others, harm to animals, fire starting, defiance and refusal to respond directly to directions, and general irritability and anger toward others. In the six who were identified as having treatment, it does not appear that behaviors were responsive to therapeutic treatment in those who did receive treatment as children.

“You are Going to be Just Like Your Parent”

In three cases, the crime was immediately preceded by the adoptive parent telling the offender that they were going to be “just like” their biological parents, and while this was not necessarily the “motive” for the crime, it was clearly the impetus for something happening at that moment. In two cases, this statement seemed to be made to encourage

the offender to do something (i.e. to take their medication that they did not want to take), while in the other case it appeared that this was done to put them down.

Kicked Out and Alone

In at least three cases, the offender had been kicked out of the family home and was extremely low on money, largely due to substance abuse issues. These substance abuse issues appeared also to be the impetus for the person being kicked out of the family home in the first place.

Planned Versus Unplanned

Twelve individuals were identified as having planned their crimes prior to executing the crime, although it is interesting that in two of those cases the individual simply planned to “murder someone,” and their victims were chosen because they were the first individual that the offender met with. There were five cases where the individual appeared to have engaged in the murder when they were in an enraged state and the murders occurred in what appears to be an impulsive fashion. There were cases of enraged individuals in all three of the typology categories (the severely abused offender, the severely mentally ill offender, and the dangerously antisocial offender).

Sexual Assault and Intense Violence

Of the three individuals who focused only on “stranger” murders, two committed violent sexual assault on their victims multiple times prior to murdering them. Most disturbingly, both committed these violent sexual assaults on pre-pubescent girls (aged 11 and under), even though both were over the age of 18 years old themselves. Both of these individuals later recounted their sexual assaults to other people in a manner that reflected that they had enjoyed both the assault and then, later, killing their victims. One of the two

individuals did deny actually killing the child, stating that he only sexually assaulted the child and that his co-conspirator had actually killed them by starting the fire, but the conspirator stated that the individual had actually committed the crime and he was convicted by a jury in the murder of this child along with an older sibling and her mother.

In the case of the individual who killed strangers but who did not commit sexual assault, the crime was incredibly violent, and the individual was eventually sentenced to death. In this case, the individual chose two elderly individuals, both of whom had serious health issues, including one who was in a wheelchair. He stabbed, slashed, and shot these individuals, even when they had repeatedly asked him to stop, and reported that he had intentionally “dulled” the knife that he used in order to cause “more pain” to the victims. This individual did not take anything from his victims and had apparently been planning this for some time, because (in his own words) he wanted to see what it felt like to kill someone. He indicated to police that he had no feeling about the pleas of his victims or the fact that he had caused them pain. He also reportedly stated that this was “practice” for when he did go and kill his adoptive parents, although he was caught prior to actually attempting to kill his adoptive parents.

Prenatal Trauma, Prenatal Drug Exposure, Traumatic Brain Injuries

As has been discussed in previous literature, the influence of biological parents and what occurred during the prenatal time period cannot be understated. Themes that were noted about this time period included individuals being exposed to drugs and alcohol in-utero, which causes alterations both in brain functioning and structure. Prenatal alcohol exposure, in particular, can cause significant changes to the structure of the brain, leading to intense cognitive and behavioral difficulties that persist into

adulthood (Fischer et al., 2021). There was evidence that two individuals who engaged in pre-planned murders had been exposed to alcohol in-utero prior to their birth, although neither was previously diagnosed with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD).

Additionally, there were reports that multiple individuals who committed murder had parents who had severe mental illnesses (including two individuals who were born within a mental health, locked down facility where their biological mother was being held), and also who showed signs of having relatively severe traumatic brain injuries (although there were no reports of how those injuries occurred). Unfortunately, information about the biological parents was not available in the vast majority of the cases that were reviewed, and in some cases, the information was very vague (such as just stating that the mother was hospitalized for schizophrenia but failing to provide other information).

Poor Parental Preparation and Expectations

In many of the cases discussed here, the parents appeared to have been poorly prepared for the care of their adopted children. In some cases, the parents sought out treatment for themselves and their children, but these cases were rare, and the treatment appeared to be unhelpful. In one case, after the murder occurred, the adoptive parents sued the county from which they adopted their son, claiming that they were not aware that their son's biological parents were both mentally ill, and would "not have adopted" him had they been aware of his predispositions toward mental illness. In one case, the motive for the murders was due to rage at being returned to the state, as the parents were not capable of caring for the child due to his out-of-control behaviors. This seems to have occurred in many of the relationships that are discussed here that the parents simply were

not well prepared to handle their child's behaviors, and they often had their own issues that they were not able to manage.

Lack of Information

It was, perhaps, the lack of information that was most concerning when reviewing all available information. Even during sentencing hearings and mitigation hearings, it was rarely brought up that the individual was adopted, and pre-adoption abuse was mentioned in only one case. It continues to appear as though there is a belief that once an individual is adopted, then they are "starting over," and in many cases, judges and prosecutors made comments about how the individual should have been "grateful" for having been adopted rather than addressing the entirety of the trauma that has been experienced by the individual.

Summary

This study addressed four research questions, including a focus on identifying demographics and qualities of individuals who were adopted at birth and later engaged in murderous behaviors, identifying common experiences both prior to and after their adoption, attempting to identify the motive behind these crimes, and to categorize individuals who engaged in parricide using Heidi's (2012) seminal work. Significant information was gathered during this research, particularly being able to note that the majority of those who committed the murders were male, had displayed behavioral issues prior to the crime, and (where the information was available) all had a diagnosable mental illness at the time of their crime. It is also of interest that there was a wide array of ages, education levels, motives, and the parricide typology categories. All of this information provides additional information to those who are creating laws and

regulations regarding adoption, for those who treat adopted children and their families, and also for those who are considering adoption. The information that was gathered does offer some significant insight into how these situations developed and if there are periods of time where intervention might be most helpful. The findings of this research provide important information for law- and policy-makers, treatment providers, and adoptive parents, particularly in terms of assessing for risk factors or attempting to predict the possibility of later violence.

Unfortunately, the intensity of the difficulty of locating this information, and the ways in which adoption was spoken about (or avoided) during the trial and/or sentencing reflects an ongoing erroneous belief that, somehow, once a child is “adopted,” then all that happened before they were adopted is no longer applicable. There is a similar belief that if an individual was adopted at birth, then they have “no trauma.” There is clear evidence that prenatal and early childhood trauma do impact an individual throughout the life span, even when the child experiences positive familial experiences later in life.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

Overview

This research sought to identify common characteristics and demographic information when considering a group of individuals who were adopted prior to the age of 18 years old and later committed murder. Although some individuals were under the age of 18 years old at the time of their crimes, all individuals included in this research were tried as adults or the information is now publicly available. This research seeks not to provide “excuses” for the behavior of the individual who committed the crime, but instead to try to understand the background of the individual and to identify how, if at all, attachment and adoption impact the individual’s ability to engage in socially appropriate behaviors. Unfortunately, research regarding the impact of adoption largely stops when the child reaches the age of 18 years old, with researchers focusing on the behaviors of children who were adopted, while ignoring that the individual continues to live after the age of 18 years old and ignoring the way in which early childhood development impacts adulthood.

Summary of Findings

This research found that the majority of those who were adopted and engaged in murder were male, and the bulk of those committed parricide (killing one or both adoptive parents, and in one case, a biological mother). Due to the population size of this research, no inferential statistics were utilized, and it was impossible to compare the findings from this research to individuals who engage in parricide or homicide, in general. However, interesting information was found with regards to the gender of the offender (male), and there was a relatively even split between those individuals who were

considered “early adopted” when compared with “late adopted.” Additionally, the bulk of the individuals who were reviewed here were adopted domestically versus internationally, and there was a wide range of age at the time of the offense, ranging from 14 years old to 39 years old. All individuals who were assessed were diagnosed with a mental illness at the time of the crime, although only one individual was ultimately found not guilty by reason of insanity. Evidence of pre-adoption abuse was relatively limited, although it is likely that some form of abuse or neglect was experienced, even by those individuals who were adopted at birth. Alternatively, there was evidence of post-adoption abuse in only six cases, and in all but one of these cases, the abuse that was suffered post-adoption was the primary motivator for the crime.

There was additionally a variety of parricide typologies for those individuals who committed parricide, and the behaviors and qualities of these individuals was generally in line with the original parricide research conducted by Heidi (2012) with regard to the motives for the crimes, the ages of the individuals, and the use of accomplices by each gender. Additional themes were noted throughout this research, including noting serious behavior problems from a young age by many of those individuals who killed their parents for selfish reasons, “odd” behaviors were noted early on in childhood for those individuals who engaged in parricide due to mental illness, and there was well documented and well known abuse that children suffered prior to engaging in parricide behaviors for those individuals who committed their crimes because of abuse and fear of future difficulty.

Discussion of Findings

Research Question 1

Gender

Most of those individuals who were studied in this research were male, with only two of these individuals being females. When considering parricide, in general, these findings align with historical research, which notes that only 15% of parricide offenders are female, both when considering parricide offenders and step-parricide offenders (Heidi, 2012). When considering the danger or risk of an individual, gender must be considered, although females should not be ruled out as possibly engaging in parricide or other violent offenses. It is also interesting to note that female parricide offenders often had male accomplices, and this was true in one of the two cases of females committing parricide.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) Crime Data indicates that women are responsible for only approximately 10% of murders committed in the United States annually, and this research similarly found that the bulk of the offenders were male. It is not possible to statistically compare the findings of this research with nationwide research; however, all three reports of offenders (adopted parricide offenders, general parricide offenders, and murder offenders in general) indicate that males are significantly more likely to engage in violent and murderous behaviors. While there will certainly be questions about “why” this might be, for those providing mental health assessment and treatment, the gender of the individual must be considered when assessing for the likelihood of violence. These findings, in general, also point to a need for more in-depth research to identify how socialization of individuals as children impacts their behaviors

later in life (i.e. if differences in socialization between males and females impact their manner of handling intense feelings).

Age at Adoption

Seven of the individuals reviewed in this research were adopted prior to the age of one year, generally considered as the accepted age of being “early adopted.” Information on an additional six individuals was also available, and they were adopted after the age of one year (ranging from ages two to age nine). Information was not available for five of the individuals who were chosen for this study. While it is not possible to statistically compare this information with information that has been researched historically, these characteristics do not match what has been found in previous research. In historical research, children who were “early adopted” were less likely to have mental health issues, behavioral health issues, and relational issues (Paine et al., 2021). This is critical for understanding the level of intervention that needs to be provided to children and their adoptive families and how the age at which they were adopted may indicate the likelihood of a higher number of ACEs. It is important to note, however, that children who are adopted at birth may have suffered from a number of prenatal traumas, so it is not possible to say that children adopted at birth had “no trauma.” Ingestion of alcohol or the use of other drugs during pregnancy, as well as malnutrition, failure to receive adequate medical care, and the likelihood of the biological mother experiencing trauma and mental health issues of her own are high and will impact the child throughout the lifespan (Paine et al., 2021), even though the offender will obviously have no clear recall of what happened that created difficulties for them.

Type of Adoption

There were two categories utilized to distinguish the type of adoption for this research, domestic adoption and international adoption. Domestic adoption refers to any adoption that occurs within the country of birth of the child and can include “planned adoption” and adoptions through the foster care system. International adoption includes those adoptions where a child was born in a foreign country and then was moved to the United States at some point in their childhood for the purposes of being adopted. Historical research has shown that children who were internationally adopted show poorer outcomes and have more emotional and behavioral health issues than children who are adopted domestically and with non-adopted children (Rushton et al., 2020). The bulk of children who are adopted from international countries to the United States come from orphanage-like institutions, and this early deprivation of attachment to a primary caregiver does contribute to lifelong difficulties with emotional and behavioral health (Mounts & Bradley, 2019).

This research found that a very small number of these offenders were internationally adopted (three total), with the majority being adopted domestically. This research does serve as a stark reminder that, while there is plenty of evidence that international adoptees may engage in violent behavior (Caceres et al., 2021), the classification of type adoption should not be a final determinate when assessing for risk of violence. Understanding the origin of the child is imperative and gaining information from international sources is incredibly difficult. Even within the United States it can be difficult for children to locate any information about their biological family members to try to gain a better understanding of the pre- and perinatal time.

Age of Offender at Time of Murder

Three categories of age were used for this research, which included those who were legally juveniles at the time of their crime (under 18 years old), those who were between the ages of 18 years and 26 years old (the age at which there is an assumption that the brain has reached peak performance), and those who were over the age of 27 years old. This research found six individuals who were under the age of 18 years old, eight who were between 18 and 26 years of age, and five who were 27 years old and over. The range of these individuals was 14 years of age (male) and 39 years of age (male). Historical research on parricide has shown that approximately 20% of the offenders were under the age of 18 years old, approximately 30% of the offenders were between 18 years of age and 26 years of age, and the remaining were over the age of 27 years old (Heidi, 2012). This research found a very small difference between the groups of offenders by age and found that those who were 27 and older were the smallest group (although only by one number).

Heidi (2012) did break down the ages in a similar fashion, but into smaller groups, which provides a more specific break down; however, in comparison, Heidi (2012) noted that a significantly higher group of those over 27 years old was present, which presents the question of how the attachment of the child and the adoption impacted the choice to commit parricide. For those who are providing treatment or assessment of children and adults who were adopted, the age of the individual is an important characteristic to consider, and the age at the time of the crime is often used as a mitigating factor in sentencing decisions, as younger individuals are often deemed to have less developed brains and thus their ability to connect with rational thought is less

pronounced. In individuals who were adopted or experienced high levels of trauma, this may be even more important, as the chronological age of an individual may not “match” with the emotional or developmental age, and understanding how adoption and attachment impacts those areas of development will be of the utmost importance.

Victimology

As has been previously noted, Heidi (2012) found that only approximately 2% of murders that occur within the United States are incidents of parricide, and this number is similar to most other developed countries, including Japan and Australia. In this case, most individuals who were studied were found to have engaged in parricide, either by killing one or both of their parents. This may be due to the ways in which I was able to identify these individuals (by using phrasing such as adopted child and murder), when many newspaper articles may not have identified that people were adopted and later committed murder unless it was directly related to the crime, which is a limitation of this research. According to FBI statistics, approximately 54.3% of individuals who were murdered were killed by those that they knew, and an additional 24.8% were murdered by family members, leaving a very small percentage of those individuals who killed strangers (Federal Bureau of Investigations, 2023).

However, for the purposes of understanding how to treat and support these individuals, it is important to consider whether individuals are at risk of engaging in violent behavior in general, and parricide in particular. Given that 84% of the individuals reviewed in this research did engage in parricide, additional research regarding how attachment impacts the frequency with which adopted individuals engage in parricide would be helpful. It is helpful for treatment providers and those providing assessment to

also understand that parricide happens with some frequency among the adopted population, although it is not possible, at this time, to have a firm grasp on the actual frequency.

For those individuals who killed non-relatives, they murdered strangers. In all three cases that were reviewed, the individuals murdered individuals they had never met, and in two cases, murdered two or more victims. These crimes were all incredibly violent, and in two cases included the violent sexual assault of pre-pubescent children prior to their death.

Accomplice

Five of the 19 offenders engaged in their crimes with accomplices, with four of these individuals killing one or both parents, and in the final case, killing a mother and her two children, who were strangers to them. It is interesting to discuss accomplices, as there are certainly questions about whether an individual would have engaged in these crimes if it were not for their accomplices. In two cases, the adopted individual blamed their accomplice for the entirety of the crime and denied that they had planned the murder, although both were convicted of these crimes.

Heidi (2012) provided interesting information about her findings with parricide and step-parricide offenders. There were important age and gender differences when considering what she identified as “multiple-offender killings,” or situations in which an accomplice was present. She indicated that juveniles were significantly more likely to have an accomplice than adults, and that daughters were more likely to employ the help of others than their male counterparts, no matter their age. In the five cases where an accomplice was present, all but one of those individuals was between the ages of 18 years

old and 22 years old, which does not qualify them as juveniles, but does indicate that younger individuals may be at a higher risk to engage in crimes with other people.

Additional research about “why” this occurs would be helpful.

Substance Use and Abuse

Eleven of the 19 offenders reviewed in this research had previously or were actively utilizing substances at the time of the murder. However, it is clear in only four of the cases that the individual was actively intoxicated at the time of the crime. Although it is possible in other cases, it was discussed in only four individuals. Understanding how substance use and abuse impacts an individual’s ability to maintain emotional and behavioral regulation is imperative, particularly when considering how these individuals have already been impacted by issues such as rejection by the biological family members, historical trauma, and mental health issues that are exacerbated by substance use.

The research is clear that there is a link between substance use and criminal behavior, including behaviors such as robbery or violent crimes in an attempt to gain money for substances (called an acquisitive crime); however, there are a variety of reasons that an individual who is actively using substances may engage in violent behaviors (Sarkar et al., 2021). Effective treatment of substance use issues has shown to be an effective strategy to avoid further law enforcement contact; however, one study found that only 14% of those who admitted to having substance abuse issues were in treatment in the year preceding their arrest for criminal behavior (Sarkar et al., 2021). Many of the individuals who were reviewed in this research did indicate some type of mental health treatment prior to their arrest or incarceration; however, none were identified as having been specifically directed at substance use treatment. For those who

are providing assessment about risk of violence, having a true and honest account of the individual's current and previous substance use and abuse history will be paramount to ensure that the entire individual is receiving treatment to address all of the issues that they are experiencing.

Plea

The research area of the offender's plea was particularly important, as it does give some insight into the remorse of an individual as well as their willingness to accept responsibility for their behaviors. There were four categories of plea options for this research, which included being not guilty, not guilty by reason of insanity, nolo contendere or an Alford plea, and guilty. Nolo contendere (NC) or an Alford plea references that, while an individual is not admitting guilt, they do accept that the state could prove to a jury that they were guilty, should it have gone to trial. There is an important distinction between pleading guilty and pleading NC. In a plea of guilty, the offender must describe to the judge the reason that they are pleading guilty, and the judge must accept that they are doing so because they are guilty of the crime. In a plea of NC or an Alford plea, this portion of the hearing is not included, and the offender does not have to describe the circumstances of their crime.

Of the 19 participants studied, seven pleaded guilty, three pleaded NC, three pleaded not guilty, and the remaining four pleaded not guilty by reason of insanity. All three of the individuals who pleaded not guilty were ultimately found guilty, and only one of the individuals who pleaded not guilty by reason of insanity was found by a jury to be insane at the time of crime (after he was found guilty by two other juries, whose verdicts were overturned by higher courts), the other three individuals being found guilty.

According to the Pew Research Center, only 2% of federal criminal defendants went to trial, with the remaining 98% of federal criminal defendants making plea bargains with the state, or simply pleading guilty, even without the benefit of an agreement with the state. They additionally report that State courts average approximately 3% of criminal defendants going to trial, although some states are significantly less than that, noting, for example, that in 2017, Texas had only 0.86% of offenders going to trial.

It would not be appropriate to statistically compare frequencies of guilty pleas compared to the public, but it is of interest that over half of the offenders reviewed in this research either pleaded guilty or NC. The remaining 48% of participants pleaded not guilty in one way or another. There has been some discussion in research regarding the frequency of plea deals, and whether offenders are being encouraged to plead guilty by overworked public defenders, and in this case of these individuals, particularly those who committed parricide, it is likely that they had public defenders (Wilford et al., 2021). In only one case reviewed was there a reported privately hired attorney, who also encouraged their client to take a plea deal.

Sentencing

Sentencing is particularly concerning when considering individuals who killed one or both of their adoptive parents, which might mean that they have “no one” on the “outside” who they can eventually return to. Consider the case of an individual who was 19 years old at the time of their crime and then is incarcerated for 50-60 years, only to be released to a world that they have never “lived in” as a freed person. If they have no adoptive or biological family members to return to, the only connections that they would likely have would be those that they have made while in prison. However, those who are

on probation or parole are not allowed to be in contact with anyone who has a history of criminal behavior, and thus, they are unlikely to have connections with someone in the outside world who could help them to successfully be released from prison, particularly since it is a requirement that you obtain housing and employment prior to being paroled in many cases.

While there are certain situations in which the judge has no discretion regarding sentencing (called mandatory sentencing), much of the time there are minimums and maximums that are applied by judges, and thus it is to their discretion to decide how much time an individual will be incarcerated for. In the case of one individual who pleaded guilty to killing a parent, there was the possibility of anywhere from 20 years (which the defense requested) to 60 years (which the prosecution requested), and the judge sentenced the offender to 40 years in prison. Every state has its own rules about the way in which sentences are completed, with some requiring an individual to only complete 50% of the sentence before being reviewed for parole, while others require the entire sentence to be completed.

There is question about what influences a judge's decision, particularly when there is a possibility of an offender being released at some point in their life. Some research has found that the judge's moral beliefs have little to do with sentencing decisions, although they do note that institutions and states that focus on the value of "fairness" tend to increase the leniency that they offer to offenders, while those who focus on the value of "sanctity" tend to offer lower levels of leniency (Silver et al., 2023). This was noted partially in this research, noting that California, which focuses more on "fairness," did sentence an individual to 15 years to life, meaning that they will be

eligible for parole relatively young. On the other hand, Texas, which would be considered more focused on “sanctity,” sentenced the offender to death. It is interesting to note, however, that one offender from California was sentenced to death, and remains on death row, convicted of murdering three former spouses and his elderly adoptive mother, indicating that this formula does not necessarily hold true in every situation.

When the judge has discretion in sentencing, they generally consider the seriousness of the crime, the likelihood of re-offending, as well as the need to maintain the safety of the community (Vo & Plachkinova, 2023). Judges do consider an individual’s background, including whether or not they have previously engaged in criminal behavior, as well as traumatic things that may have happened to the offender prior to the crime. In only three of the cases reviewed was there a discussion of the individual being adopted as an influence on their crime, and in one of those, the judge rejected the individual’s argument that they engaged in the murder because of abuse, and that individual was sentenced to life in prison. Research clearly shows, however, that early childhood trauma can significantly impact an individual’s ability to function in the world as an adult, and thus it should be considered in sentencing decisions. Judges do additionally consider an individual’s age; referencing the two California cases discussed previously, the individual who was given 15 years to life was only 14 years old at the time of her crime, while the individual who was sentenced to death was 32 years old at the time of his final murder and incarceration.

There is significant discussion about the importance of having fair and appropriately applied sentencing to all individuals, particularly when considering racial and ethnic disparities in sentencing considerations, and also how prison overcrowding

impacts a judge's sentence for an individual (Vo & Plachkinova, 2023). In considering this, adoption and early childhood trauma should also be considered a major mediator with regard to punishment and sentencing, including death sentences, which three offenders were given in this research, although one was overturned to 1,000 years in prison after the death penalty was abolished in the state in which he committed his crime.

Research Question Two

Mental Health, Diagnosis and Insanity

As previously noted, there are two separate and distinct categories for discussion here; one is the mental health of the individual offender, and the other is whether or not they qualify under the legal definition of suffering from insanity at the time their crime was committed. Adopted individuals are at a higher risk of experiencing mental health issues throughout the lifespan than the general public, and this has been found both in the United States as well as in other countries (Coulter et al., 2022). Of the 19 identified individuals in this research, information about their mental health diagnosis was available for 14, and all individuals were identified as having a mental health diagnosis at the time of the crime. This finding has also been noted with the general public, finding that the mentally ill are overrepresented in the criminal justice system, often being incarcerated in prisons, rather than in hospitals, even for those with serious mental illnesses (Lemieux et al., 2020).

The legal concept of insanity is separate and distinct from the concept of having a mental health diagnosis. When an individual, either because of severe mental disease or defect, is unable to appreciate the nature and quality or wrongfulness of the act, then they would be considered legally "insane." The US Department of Justice stresses that just

because an individual has a mental disease or defect does not necessarily constitute a defense. Four individuals who were reviewed here pleaded not guilty by reason of insanity, although in only one case was this found to be true, and only after two juries' verdicts of guilt were overturned by higher courts. Finding recent rates of nationwide pleas of not guilty by reason of insanity was difficult, although sources indicate that only it is only approximately 1% of felony cases and the plea is only successful in 15-25% percent of cases (Wendzel, 2020). The current study found similar rates of conviction, although more individuals appear to have pleaded not guilty by reason of insanity than the general population, which does indicate that it may be helpful for future research to identify if adopted individuals are (1) more likely to plead not guilty by reason of insanity and (2) be found not guilty by reason of insanity compared to homicide offenders in general.

Treatment Prior to the Crime

Treatment prior to the murder was documented in 10 of the 14 cases in which the information was available; however, the efficacy of the treatment was in great question. In multiple cases, family members reported that, although the individual attended treatment regularly, it was not helpful. Additionally, there was question about whether or not substance abuse treatment was provided (it was only identified in two cases), and if it was, how successful it was in addressing the substance abuse issues given the number of individuals who were actively using drugs or alcohol at the time of their crimes.

Substance use and abuse disorders were present in several individuals who engaged in violent criminal behaviors. For those individuals who were adopted, substance use is often viewed as a strategy for "self-medication," to compensate for

lacking strategies to connect with other people (Schindler, 2019). This information is important for those who are providing mental health and substance abuse treatment to those who have attachment difficulties, as it may require that the interventions look different than those for the “average” individual who is in need of support for substance use and abuse. Substance use treatment was identified in only two individuals, one during childhood and one in adulthood. One individual was actively using drugs and alcohol at the time of their crime, and the other was sober at the time of their crime. Given the number of individuals who were actively using substances at the time of their crimes, it is clear that having a strong understanding of how substance abuse treatment must be modified to fit this population is of great importance.

A primary issue regarding this population is the question about how to provide mental health and substance abuse treatment in a way that will support these individuals. While there have been research studies regarding specific treatment strategies that are effective with children, such as Theraplay®, which was created by the University of Chicago, the published research is actually relatively rare and the outcomes are somewhat limited, although it does provide some evidence of “promising” outcomes when considering children under the age of 12 years old (Money et al., 2020). A primary issue identified by clinicians such as Vinke (2020) and Van Der Kolk (2014) is that there is no appropriate diagnosis that addresses the origin of the behavioral difficulties displayed by adopted children in the DSM 5, which instead focuses on behaviors that are exhibited by these children (such as aggression, hoarding behaviors, etc.), rather than focusing on the developmental and relational trauma that triggered these behaviors. This, then, creates a significant problem for clinicians who are attempting to utilize the most “evidence based

treatments,” are bound by the need to have a diagnosis in order to meet “medical necessity,” and are operating under an assumption about how to address these behaviors, rather than attempting to address the underlying issues that are causing these behaviors.

Pre- and Post-Adoption Abuse

Pre-adoption abuse was noted in five cases, and the information was not available in six cases. In the other cases, pre-adoption abuse was not noted, largely because the individual was adopted at birth; however, research does show that even children who are adopted at birth may experience some form of trauma related to their adoption and may also have experienced trauma in utero (Paine et al., 2021). The victim of one offender was their biological mother, who had allowed significant abuse to occur toward the offender prior to her adoption at age three years old. Historical research has indicated that maltreatment and multiple placements prior to adoption were the main predictors of other problems, specifically social problems, thought disorders, and identity difficulties. Additionally, it was noted that international adoption was a primary predictor for both externalizing behaviors and total problems overall, particularly if there was an institutionalization (Pace et al., 2022). Adopted children are at a greater risk for a variety of developmental, behavioral, and attachment difficulties, which may also cause them to be at even higher risk of being maltreated both before and after their adoption (Lietor et al., 2021). The information regarding pre-adoption abuse was relatively limited in the research that was conducted, and in some cases, it was not discussed at all. In cases where the information was available, the pre-adoption abuse was often considered to be relatively unimportant, often failing to be considered when discussing sentencing.

Post adoption abuse was reported in six cases and denied in 10 cases (in the other three cases, the information was not available). All of the individuals who experienced post-adoption abuse murdered their adoptive parent or parents, and each was categorized as being a severely abused offender, which clearly indicates the need to identify and address when children are being abused in order to protect them from harming themselves or others. There are situations in which children are abused when parents feel that they have no other options for how to address the behaviors of the child. In one case, the sibling of an offender was removed from the care of the adoptive parent because of abusive behaviors, such as tying him to furniture in his room, but she claimed that he was unsafe and would try to harm others or himself, and she did not feel that she had the skills to find alternative strategies to help keep him safe. While the other child was removed from her care, the offender remained in her care, and although he denied that he was abused at the time of his brother's removal, he did later claim that he was abused by her.

Many researchers and adult adoptees argue that the adoption itself acts as a trauma, arguing that it may be a source of trauma, rather than simply preventing future trauma (Merritt, 2022). For many children, particularly those who are older, the change of their name is difficult, and ending a relationship with biological family members can also be incredibly difficult. In the cases of internationally adopted children, the adopted child must terminate their status as citizens of their birth country and become citizens of the United States, which is often complicated with language barriers, ending in children losing all language, as they begin to lose their home language prior to learning English (or the language of their family). It is also important to note that adoptive parents who struggle with their own mental health issues or who have difficulty regulating themselves

overall, even if their behaviors do not rise to meet the criteria for child abuse, often put their children at risk of more adjustment and behavioral difficulties (Hornfeck et al., 2019).

Education

Research has consistently shown that communities with higher educational attainment experience a lower level of violent crime, although the time period studied and type of community does matter when considering this relationship (Adam et al., 2023; O'Brien et al., 2021). Information about educational levels was available for 11 of the participants. All of the juveniles who were reviewed in this research (five) were in high school at the time their crimes were committed, although some did finish high school or obtain a high school equivalency diploma while incarcerated. For the remaining six individuals, only two had not completed at least high school at the time of their crime. This comes as some surprise, given research that has shown that there is an inverse relationship between education level and violent or criminal behavior (Adam et al., 2023). This should be researched further, to identify if this information is accurate for the bulk of adopted individuals who committed violent crimes, or if this was specific to this small population.

Relationship Status

Relationship status proved to be an area where very little information was available. There were two cases where the relationship status of the individual was important, the first being the individual who killed three previous spouses; he was married to them at the time of their murder. The second was an individual who had been “dumped” shortly before the murder and had been stalking the ex-partner before he

engaged in the killing of his adoptive parent. While it may be of interest to conduct research on the relationship status of an adopted individual, generally speaking, very little information was available in this research.

Research Question Three

Motive

Research regarding motives and why any individual commits a crime is difficult because it requires that someone be able to clearly, articulately, and honestly identify “why” they engaged in such violent behaviors. In the case of this research, the motives were identified from two different sources, including the police/prosecution and the offender, if the offender identified a motive either in an initial interview with police, or during a later court hearing. In six of the 19 identified cases, both the prosecutor and the offender agreed on the motive for the crime, which included three individuals who committed the crime due to a desire for money and revenge, one who was angry about the possibility of being returned to the state and his adoption being dissolved, one in which the parent was threatening the offender with possible loss of her own biological daughter, and the final individual identifying that they simply wanted to see what it felt like to kill someone. Seven out of the 19 identified cases were reported by the prosecution as being related to a desire for money. In four cases the offender stated motive was psychosis; however, the prosecution and police argued that it was for very different reasons. Sexual assault was identified as the primary motivator in three of the cases.

Research regarding parricide that has occurred in the past 20 years displays that mental illness plays a major role in parricide occurrences, with a higher percentage of

individuals convicted of parricide given a “hospital order” with regard to their mental health, as well as a lower percentage of parricide offenders receiving prison time when compared with the general homicide offenders (Miles et al., 2022). This research was not specifically addressing whether or not an individual was identified as being mentally ill or insane at the time of the murder; however, it is similar to the findings here that these individuals were struggling with mental illness at the time of the crime and that did play a role in the crime or crimes that they committed. Additional research found that money or insurance policies were the primary motivator for parricide (citing 34.8% of those they reviewed) with a fight or conflict being the second highest motivator for parricide (citing 26.1% of those that were reviewed) considering those individuals who were adopted (Hubbell et al., 2019). The outcomes of this research did show that money was a motivator for the murder; however, the motives were relatively even between a desire for money, abuse that was suffered, sexual assault, or a desire to “see how it felt.”

Research Question Four

Parricide Typology

Heidi’s (2012) seminal work regarding parricide typology identified three types of parricide offenders. The first typology is the “severely abused” parricide offender, which refers to individuals who commit their crimes because they feel that their safety or the safety of another is in danger and there is a relatively lengthy and well documented history of abuse. The second type is the “severely mentally ill” offender, which refers to individuals with a long-standing history of mental health issues that are well known to family and friends. Additionally, these individuals engage in their crimes because of their mental illness, often feeling that they are in danger of some kind or because of psychosis.

The final type is the “dangerously antisocial” offender, and these offenders kill for selfish reasons, often because their parent is “in the way” of something that they want, such as money or more freedom. Some researchers have added a category of the “enraged” type; however, that was not included in this research. It is important to note that an individual having a mental health issue in the past or having experienced abuse in the past does not necessarily decide what category they fall in; instead, the decision for what typology they are classified as is directly based on the impetus for the crime and the reason for which the crime occurs. This is particularly important to consider for individuals who are adopted, because they may have experienced abuse and are more likely to have mental health conditions than the public, both in adolescence as well as later adulthood (Rushton et al., 2020).

Heidi (2012) focused her research (and the bulk of additional research has focused on) those who killed their biological father or mother (or both) or stepparents but has not specifically discussed how these typologies apply to adopted individuals. Hubbell et al. (2021) explored the concept of parricide with adopted individuals through the lens of attachment theory and also looked at the differences between those individuals who were “late adopted” and those who were “early adopted”; however, their research utilized only newspaper articles, which creates some question about the veracity of the information that was gathered. As Heidi (2012) herself identified, the media is increasingly compassionate toward those offenders who were victims of abuse; however, other offenders are seen in a very negative light. A quick search of the names of the offenders discussed here found terms like evil, satanic, barbaric, and other such negative terms.

This research found five individuals who were identified as falling in the severely abused category, two who were identified as falling in the severely mentally ill category, and seven who were identified as falling in the dangerously antisocial category. One individual who did commit parricide was not categorized based on a lack of information, and the three individuals who killed strangers were not categorized as these are not considered parricides, and thus the categorization would not be appropriate. While all these categories are of serious concerns, the largest two categories (the severely abused offender and the dangerously antisocial offender) will be discussed further here.

In those individuals who were identified as being severely abused, all suffered at least some form of abuse at the hands of their adoptive parents, although the severity and type of abuse differs among cases (including one in which there appears to be little abuse at the hands of their adoptive parents prior to the murder; however, the parents had threatened to return the child to the state as they could not care for them). There are four primary types of abuse that are considered, including physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, and neglect. In some cases, the abuse appears to be more in terms of omission, in failure to provide appropriate or necessary care for the child, rather than an intentional act of harm to the child. It is of particular interest to note that there was no reported post-adoption abuse in the cases reviewed, except in those who qualified as “severely abused” offenders, even though abuse did not automatically mean that an individual would be categorized as having committed their crimes due to this abuse.

In terms of those individuals who were identified as being “dangerously antisocial,” all but one of the individuals who was qualified in this category were reported as having committed the crime for the purpose of gaining money, either for

drugs or simply to avoid having to work. In the final case, the individual killed their adoptive mother after sexually assaulting her, and there was a question about whether or not she rejected his advances when he attempted to start a sexual relationship with her. This idea of money being a primary motivator for individuals identified as being “dangerously antisocial” is of great concern, and additional research into how well these individuals were attached to their adoptive parents may be of interest in the future. However, the influence of drugs in the cases of murder is common among the general public (Wentzlof et al., 2021), and this does also appear to be true for these adopted individuals. In two cases, there was no reported substance abuse, but in the other five cases, money for substance abuse was identified (at least by the prosecutor and police) as the primary motivator for the crime. Those individuals who are engaging in assessment and treatment for adopted individuals and their families should note, then, if substance use or abuse is an issue, and if so, may choose to make that a priority in terms of treatment in order to avoid this type of violence, as individuals who are actively engaged in substance abuse may engage in behaviors that would otherwise be out of character for them. Additionally, having a better understanding of how attachment impacts the dangerously antisocial offender would be beneficial for treatment providers and for parents.

Additional Themes Noted

Behavioral Difficulties

Children who are adopted traditionally exhibit more behavioral and mental health problems than children who were not adopted, particularly children who experienced a high number of ACEs or significant early childhood trauma (Caceres et al., 2021).

Information was available on seven of the offenders discussed here, with specific relation to serious and severe behavioral difficulties beginning in early childhood, often being reported as having begun before the age of four. Historical longitudinal research found that children with high levels of externalizing behaviors in early childhood were more likely to be convicted of a crime in early adulthood (Kassing et al., 2019). They found that at least 55% of the individuals being assessed and displaying high levels of externalizing behaviors had at least one conviction prior to their 25th birthday after having been identified by teachers or parents as having behavior problems in first grade.

Additionally, there is evidence that behaviors continue to escalate throughout childhood and often become evident or severe in adolescence (Pedro-Viejo & Rosser-Liminana, 2021). Of the five juveniles who were reviewed, two of those individuals had been identified as having displayed behavior problems in early childhood and into adolescence. Recognizing that early childhood behavioral problems may lead into adult behavioral problems does indicate the need for early and effective intervention to attempt to mediate any future issues. This is also true for adopted individuals, although adopted individuals have a number of things to contend with regarding required treatment. It is important to note that information was not available on all participants, so it is also possible that other offenders did display behavioral difficulties.

“You are Going to be Just Like Your Parents”

There is ample evidence that there are heritable traits that an individual gains from their biological parent, even when they are raised by others, such as intellectual disabilities, substance abuse issues and mental health issues (Hillman et al., 2024, Kendler et al., 2021). Specific studies have found, for example, that a child’s ability to

read is more reflective of their biological parent's ability to read, rather than their adoptive parent's ability and reading level (Leve et al., 2022). There is also evidence that certain behavioral issues are reflective of a biological parent's behaviors, including poor social functioning and difficulty with romantic relationships (Tikkanen et al., 2020), and criminal behaviors (Anker & Andersen, 2020). It is understandable, then, that adoptive parents may be concerned that a child is going to have behaviors similar to their biological parent, and this may be of great concern to them. However, in all but one case, these statements appear to have been made in the context of putting the offender down and making them feel badly about themselves. In the other case, the adoptive mother was trying to convince the offender to take a medication so that she would not be re-hospitalized, as her biological mother had been.

Verbal abuse is one component of emotional abuse, which is traumatic for children, although it may not leave the same type of mark that physical abuse leaves. There are clear associations between caregiver stress and child verbal abuse and corporal punishment (Jeharsa et al., 2022). As noted previously, parents may be experiencing high levels of stress due to their inability to support their children, even into adulthood. Just prior to their murder, one adoptive mother told her son that he was just like his birth mother, when he came to their home to steal money from them, as they had kicked him out for substance use. There was a history of verbal and emotional abuse in the home, and this appeared to be the "last straw" for the offender. This affirms the need for clinicians to be able to adequately assess for in-home stress when assessing for mental health difficulties or attempting to identify the likelihood of future violence.

Kicked Out and Alone

There were multiple cases in which the offender, as a young adult, had been kicked out of the home, usually for their use of drugs or alcohol. This was often the impetus for the murder, as the offender was seeking money from their adoptive parents for more substances. Adopted children already face a variety of stressors related their attachment and relationship with others, and being kicked out of their home, possibly the only real home they have ever known, is incredibly stressful. While adoptive parents generally express high levels of concern about their children and verbalize a desire to support their children, they also acknowledge feelings of desperation and hopelessness with regards to how to help their children (Hillman et al., 2024). Families already struggle to address substance use and the accompanying behaviors (such as theft), but when these issues are compounded by mental health issues, behavioral health issues, and attachment issues, then it is likely that the experience of being “alone” and no longer having “any” parents, particularly for those between 18-20 years old, would likely cause a high level of stress.

Planned Versus Unplanned

Whether a crime was planned or unplanned is an important distinction, not only for legal or criminal purposes, but also to identify specifically what lead to the murder of these individuals. For the purposes of this research, I define a planned crime as being one in which the individual prepared prior to the offense, although in some states, even thinking about the offense for one second before the crime would qualify as “planned.” Based on the research that was found, 12 of the 19 identified individuals would have qualify as having “planned” their crimes under this definition, although there were three

individuals who were in an “enraged” state at the time of the crime. An individual may be considered as enraged when they feel as though they are experiencing a level of feeling or emotion that they are incapable of controlling (Pontedeira, et al., 2020). Historical research has indicated that homicides are relatively even with regards to frequency of those offenses that are “reactive” when compared with “planned/instrumental,” which is somewhat confirmed in this research (Hachtel et al., 2021). More than half of the individuals in this research were found to have premeditated their crime before committing it, but a number of those individuals were enraged at the time of the crime.

Sexual Assault and Intense Violence

Three of the cases that were reviewed were incredibly violent, and two included the sexual assault of pre-pubescent children. These three cases were cases in which the offender killed strangers and did not kill their adoptive parents, although one indicated that the initial crime was to “prepare” to kill their adoptive parents. These murders were incredibly violent, including setting fire to the room the individual was in while they were tied to their bed, but still alive, and utilizing multiple weapons to slowly murder someone while laughing when they begged not to be harmed. While there were a number of cases in which individuals were classified as “dangerously antisocial,” it is clear that the individuals here (who were not categorized as their crimes were not parricide) had some serious mental health issues that inhibited them from having empathy and compassion for their victims. Historical research has shown that adoptees display higher levels of negativism, hyperactivity and hostility, and note that individuals who are adopted after the age of 6 months old were also more likely to engage in aggressive behaviors (Hubbell et al., 2019). Research has consistently shown that attunement and

co-regulation by the parent (either biological or adoptive) are important for the development of healthy relationships and the ability to engage appropriately with others (Purrington et al., 2023). In adopted children it is difficult to know how well children were attuned to their primary caregiver in infancy, which begins the process of caring for the other and attempting to connect with the parent on a deeper level, which then transitions to future relationships. Future research could focus on parental attunement and later criminal behavior in adopted children to assess if this lack of attunement contributes to the individual's criminal behaviors.

Prenatal Trauma, Prenatal Drug Exposure, Traumatic Brain Injuries

Previous research has shown that even in the general public, there does appear to be significant gray matter differences in the brains of individuals who have engaged in homicide when compared with those individuals who have engaged in non-violent crimes or violent crimes that have not risen to the level of murder (Sajous-Turner et al., 2019). It has been noted that children who have been adopted, particularly those who experienced institutional care such as orphanages, or who were adopted internationally, often have altered functioning in the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) axis (Raby et al., 2020). Additionally, even "minor" traumatic brain injuries (identified as mTBI) increase an individual's risk of having emotional and behavioral problems in children (Lopez et al., 2022).

Prenatal drug exposure increases an individual's likelihood of having poor physical and mental health, experiencing maltreatment, and experiencing significant academic failure (Lawler et al., 2024). According to the US Department of Health and Human Services, in 2022 (the most recent year available), 62% of children were removed

from the care of their parents due to neglect, and an additional 33% were removed due to drug abuse. Finally, the lack of appropriate nutrition or high levels of early, chronic stress impacts the ways in which the brain both functions and develops, including the speech with which it develops and the areas that become strongest (Tooley et al., 2021). Children are adopted when their biological parents are unwilling or unable to care for them, sometimes being removed by the state due to abuse that they suffered, due to neglect, or due to a parent's unwillingness to care for their children. Thus, it is important to consider if prenatal trauma, prenatal drug exposure, and TBI may have impacted an individual's ability to make rational, healthy, and safe decisions.

There were multiple cases that were reviewed where there was evidence of prenatal trauma, prenatal drug exposure (including alcohol exposure), and traumatic brain injuries that occurred prior to and after their adoption. Fetal alcohol spectrum disorder (FASD) was suspected in at least one case, and for the six known "older adopted" children, there was reported poverty for each of them, which was discussed during their sentencing hearings. A strong understanding of what occurred during the prenatal time period is of the utmost importance, and understanding if there are any traumatic brain injuries will be important. Even for those individuals who are adopted prior to the age of one year, they have already been influenced by their biological parents and understanding all of these things is important. This is particularly difficult, as children are often adopted with little or no knowledge about what has occurred prior to their birth, and even when information is available, it is difficult to ascertain the veracity of the information pending who is providing that information (i.e. a hospital versus a biological parent).

Poor Parental Preparation and Expectations

Although parents are required to participate in some level of training prior to the adoption of any child, there appears to be some significant gaps between the expectations of the parents and the reality of what occurs. In one case, a sibling was returned to the care of the state because the parent (who was the ultimate victim) could not care for the child's behaviors and ultimately became abusive. In another case, the adoptive parents sued the county of adoption following their son's murder of a seven year old girl, claiming that the county lied to them about the prenatal time period and they would not have adopted him had they been aware that both biological parents were substance users and had been diagnosed with schizophrenia, and the offender was actually born while his biological mother was institutionalized. In the case of one of the younger offenders, he killed his adoptive parents after they told him they were going to return him to the state due to his violent and out of control behavior, which was not helped by therapeutic intervention. Finally, as previously discussed, multiple adoptive parents made derogatory comments about the offender becoming "just like their parents," which was, understandably, a trigger for the offender. It is also important to note that the evidence about the efficacy of certain treatment strategies has shown mixed outcomes, and often parents will indicate that the treatments were helpful but did not produce the behavioral changes that they were desiring (Downes et al., 2022).

Historical research has shown that 41% of parents indicated that their adoption was going "really well," 38% had challenges but were managing, 18% had faced "severe challenges," and an additional 3% had experienced disruption or adoption dissolution, with some parents reporting that the adoptive process was "exhausting and

overwhelming” (Neil et al, 2020). While it is not possible for this research to claim any particular “percentage” of how adoptive parents felt about their choice to adopt and how well prepared they felt, the outcomes that are seen here, including parents kicking out adopted children, indicating that they “give up” on the children, or engaging in violent or abusive parenting strategies to try to control behaviors display that there should be additional support offered to adoptive families. This is also important to consider for treatment providers, particularly when assessing for the possibility of future violence by the adopted child.

Lack of Information

Utilizing publicly available court records and police reports did present challenges with regard to finding specific information for each of the participants. This should be assessed during future research to address the difficulty with accessing information, which is vital to ensure that treatment providers and law- and policymakers have the most accurate information.

Implications

For clinicians, this research reflects the need for there to be a more comprehensive understanding of the way in which early childhood trauma and relational trauma impact an individual throughout the lifespan and create behavioral issues that must be addressed in a way that nurtures and reflects the trauma that was suffered. Currently, there is no diagnosis related to adoption outside of reactive attachment disorder, which is often not an appropriate diagnosis, so instead children are given diagnoses such as oppositional defiant disorder, conduct disorder, major depressive disorder or an anxiety disorder. Ultimately these children and their families are often not given the most appropriate

treatment as there is an attempt to utilize the most “evidence-based treatment” based solely on the diagnosis. This research also confirms the need to include adoptive parents/family members in treatment in order to ensure that the child is able to focus on attachment and work on building those relationships, but also so that parents can (1) gain skills to interact with these children in a trauma-informed way, and (2) have more appropriate expectations for the ways in which these children can be successful throughout the lifespan. Group treatment has been effective in helping support parents in understanding that they are not alone, and also in being supported as they identify alternative strategies for supporting their children (Downes et al., 2022).

Additionally, this research displays the need for effective and accurate evaluation of the likelihood of future violence when assessing an individual for treatment, and this would also be important for individuals who are entering the criminal justice system (either as a child or an adult) for the first time, even if their initial crimes are not violent in nature. Avoiding calling it “excuses” when an individual shares what has driven them to certain behaviors is also helpful, as it gives people the opportunity to try to avoid those situations in the future, so having a strong understanding of how adoption and attachment impact an individual and their future likelihood for violence is important.

Substance abuse treatment is often provided to individuals who engage in criminal behaviors, given the number of individuals who engage in substance use and engage in criminal behaviors. In the case of those individuals who were adopted or who suffered significant relational and early childhood trauma, it is important that treatment providers understand that there are issues happening “under” the substance use that must be addressed, thus, it is important that mental health treatment providers work in

collaboration with substance abuse treatment providers to ensure holistic and effective treatment.

For those individuals who are creating laws and policies regarding adoption, having a stronger understanding of the needs of adopted children and their families is clearly paramount. This research displays the need for additional training to ensure that families are adequately prepared for their adopted children and have addressed their own issues so that they are not triggered by their child's behaviors. It additionally supports the need for trauma-informed, competent post-adoption support for the family and for the child. Policy and lawmakers should also consider ways to fund research about the ways in which prenatal trauma impact an individual, as well as ways that early childhood behaviors are indicators of later behaviors and how negative cycles can be interrupted.

For researchers, this research provides additional proof that attachment and early childhood trauma impact the way an individual functions throughout the life span and additional, larger scale research on the ways in which violence is perpetrated by adopted individuals is necessary. It is also important to research ways in which to help individuals resolve the struggles that they endured when they were young and compare with those individuals who were adopted and successfully experience life.

Limitations

As previously noted, limitations to this study do include the lack of ability to engage directly with identified individuals, and thus, all information comes from court records, arrest reports, psychological reports, and court exhibits. Sample size is additionally limited given the number of individuals who meet the requirements of being identified as adopted and having engaged in and been convicted of homicide. Data in this

study are also limited to information that is contained within publicly available records, which may or may not provide a holistic view of either the offender(s), the victim(s), or the crimes themselves.

Additionally, given the small sample size, it was not possible to utilize any inferential statistical testing, so only descriptive results were available. This does lead to the inability to identify if one group is statistically larger than the other. It is also not possible for us to compare this population with the general population, for example, of other parricide offenders in a way that is statistically accurate.

Individuals who killed their adoptive parents due to abuse may not have been identified in this research, as they may not have been charged in these cases, which limits the number of individuals who were abused as children and engaged in parricide behaviors. Additionally, individuals who were deemed to be unfit for trial because of mental illness would also likely not have been located in this research. Thus, it is difficult to ascertain exactly how many individuals engage in parricide due to abuse or mental illness, given the difficulty with identifying these individuals. In some cases, names were identified through online searches, but no information was available either through police records or through court records, indicating that they may not have ultimately been tried for the murder.

It was noted that accessing records regarding these cases was extremely difficult, and in many cases, the information that was most sought (such as whether or not there was pre- or post-adoption abuse) was not available. Although I sought to use a variety of sources, some states and counties are more open with their records and others are much more closed, with some states requiring court approval before records could be released,

while other states have all information available at no cost online. Thus, I was not able to gather information on all categories for all identified individuals.

Recommendations for Future Research

There are a variety of areas that should be considered for future research, particularly increasing the sample size and identifying a wider variety of personal themes that are identified by participants in order to ensure that adopted individuals and their families are adequately able to access resources prior to these tragedies occurring. Additionally, future research may seek to identify more pre-adoption information, since much of this information is limited when considering court records and may not be as available. Research regarding the ways in which attachment strength between the adoptive parent and the child would be helpful in assessing how poor parental-attunement or insecure or dysregulated attachment styles may contribute to violent behaviors. Research regarding the training and support that adoptive families receive, particularly in cases of those adopted individuals who showed violent or aggressive behavior in childhood, should be reviewed to assess if that support and training is adequate to help avoid future violent behavior.

There is ample evidence that many individuals who are adopted are able to resolve their difficulties and that the adoption itself acted as a mediator for the trauma that they experienced (Paine et al., 2021). Research regarding the pre-adoptive characteristics and post-adoptive characteristics of these individuals should be compared with those individuals who were adopted, but who have had ultimately negative outcomes, to assess for what is missing for the individuals who are not able to successfully resolve their trauma.

Additional research should be conducted regarding motives related to the murders, particularly identifying ways to compare these individuals with their non-adopted counterparts, to identify if the reason behind these crimes is qualitatively different for adopted individuals. It would also be helpful to conduct research regarding attachment and how well attached these individuals were with their adoptive parents, particularly if they did commit parricide. Finally, having a firmer understanding of life circumstances of these individuals (i.e. how many of them were employed at the time of the murder, what their education level was, and what their relationship status was) would be helpful. Although some of this research has been conducted already on the homicide offenders, in general, specifically understanding what life experiences adopted individuals have will be of vital importance.

Summary

Historical research regarding the way in which adoption impacts an individual and their interactions with other people has focused primarily on children under the age of 18 years old and has generally not attempted to identify the ways in which adoption impacts an individual into adulthood. This research intended to fill that gap, and to offer specific characteristics that treatment providers and families can utilize to identify if violence is a possibility either within the family or outside of the family.

This research found that the majority of the individuals who engaged in murder were male and killed one or both parents, with a much smaller sample of women who killed and men who killed non-family members. Although there have been some limitations with regard to finding information about these individuals prior to their crime, the information that was available showed clearly that there were serious signs of

behavioral and emotional difficulties prior to the murders. These findings showed many of these individuals had engaged in violence previously, had been engaged in criminal behaviors and substance use problems, and were emotionally dysregulated during the crime.

It should certainly be noted that understanding does not negate or mitigate the pain that victims and their families feel, nor does it mean that consequences or punishment should not be adequately applied. Instead, understanding allows for the identification of strategies to utilize with individuals in these positions to ensure that these tragedies are not repeated. The Bible identifies it as pure and necessary to care for orphans and widows, those individuals who are most neglected by society, and it is only through research such as this that anyone can truly hope to care for adopted children. Having this information provides a clearer picture of what occurs prior to and during murders committed by this population of adopted individuals, which allows people to provide appropriate intervention and, hopefully, avoid these situations entirely.

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Appendix A: Spreadsheet Categories

Name of participant

Court case number

State DOC ID number

Date of birth

Record number

State

County

Gender

Year crime committed

Age at time of adoption

Age at time of murder

Type of adoption

Who was murdered

Accomplice

Substance use

Previous mental health treatment

Previous mental health diagnosis

Plea

Sentence

Pre-adoption abuse

Post-adoption abuse

Prosecutor motive

Offender motive

Education level

Relationship status

Typology category (for both researchers)

Items highlighted in red were utilized for identification purposes only and will be redacted for manuscript.

Appendix B

Parricide Typology Spreadsheet

Primary question for consideration:

- What was the primary motivation for the crime?
- Individual's may fall into one or more of the categories, so motivation is the single most important factor when considering categorization.

The Severely Abused Offender	The Severely Mentally Ill Offender	The Dangerously Antisocial Offender
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extensive and long-standing history of abuse, corroborated by others. • Believe their well-being or the well-being of others is at risk. • Previously run away. • Previously attempted suicide. • Do not usually have a history of delinquent behavior. • Often display symptoms of MDD and PTSD, but not other mental health issues and no psychosis. • May not have clear recall of the actual event. • Often occurs when the offender is in adolescence. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diagnosis of severe mental illness and family and friends are aware of the behaviors. • Schizophrenia and psychosis are common. • Delusions or hallucinations are often the impetus for the crime. • The murder is directly related to and due to their mental illness. • History of treatment, medication, and hospitalization. • Crime often occurs when medication use terminates. • Crimes generally include multiple victims, extreme violence, or unusual weapons or type of murder. • Polysubstance use, often to control symptoms. • Brief psychosis is a possibility, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kill for selfish reasons, such as money or to gain things or freedoms. • History of criminal behaviors. • Under 18 – diagnosis of conduct disorder (before or after the crime). • Over 18 – diagnosis of APD (before or after the crime) – although not required. • Lack of emotional connection with others. • Poor insight and fail to learn from previous experiences. • Often appear polished and charming. • Do not express genuine remorse.

	<p>especially with relation to substance use.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• In some cases, the parents are ill or debilitated (such as with Alzheimer's) and the offender is caring for them.• The offenders are often in adulthood in this category.	
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***Individuals who engage in the offense while in an “enraged” state, may fall into any of the categories.**

Name of offender:

Offender research ID:

Category identified:

Notes/reasons for categorization:

Appendix C: Completed and Redacted Spreadsheet

Record #	State	Gender	Year Crime Committed	Age @ time of adoption	Age @ time of murder	Type of Adoption
1	Kansas	1	2013		18 years old	
2	Michigan	1	2012		20 years old	
3	IL	2	2017	3 years old	22 years old	1
4	Nevada	1	1997	2 years old	18 years old	1
5	New York	1	1987	Under 1 year old	19 years old	1
8	Florida	1	2019	4 years old	17 years old	2
9	Indiana	1	2017		16 years old	
10	Montana	1	2017		19 years old	1
11	Washington	1	2014	6 years old	17 years old	1
12	Idaho	1	2015		29 years old	
14	Florida	1	2011	9 years old	21 years old	2
15	Hawaii	1	2011	Under 1 year old	27 years old	1
17	New Jersey	1	1991	Under 1 year old	21 years old	1
18	California	2	2017	Under 1 year old	14 years old	1
19	Oregon	1	1999	Under 1 year old	39 years old	1
21	Texas	1	2011		19 years old	2
22	Connecticut	1	2007		27 years old	
25	New York	1	1984	3 years old	14 years old	1
26	California	1	1976	Under 1 year old	32 years old	1

1 = male
2 = female

1 = domestic
2 = international

Who was murdered?	Accomplice?	Substance Use?	Mental Health dx?	Previous mental health tx?
Adoptive Parents	1	1		
Adoptive Father	1	1		
Biological Mother	1	1	1	1
Stranger/7 year old girl	2	1	1	1
Adoptive Parents	2	2	1	2
Adoptive Mother	2	1	1	1
Adoptive Father	2			
Adoptive Parents	1	1	1	1
Adoptive Mother	2	2	1	1
Adoptive mother, others	2	2	1	1
Adoptive Mother	2	1		
Adoptive Mother	2	2	1	2
Adoptive Parents	2	1	1	1
Adoptive Mother	2	1	1	1
Adoptive Parents	2	1	1	1
Strangers/1 man and attempted to kill 1 woman	2	2		
3 women	1	1	1	2
Adoptive Parents	2	2	1	1
Wives and adoptive mother	2	2	1	2

1 = yes 1 = yes 1 = yes 1 = yes
2 = no 2 = no 2 = no 2 = no

Offender Motive	Education Level	Relationship Status	Typology Category (VS)	Typology Category (RS)
Same	HS Graduate		3	3
Same			3	3
Same		Married	1	1
Psychosis	11th Grade	Single		
Psychosis	HS Graduate	Single	3	3
Abuse	11th Grade	Girlfriend	1	1
Did not know				Not enough information to
Money	Some HS	None	3	3
Psychosis	Finishing HS	None	2	2
Paranoia and Anger	College Grad.			
Denied			3	3
Psychosis	9th grade	Single	2	2
Rejection	GED	Single	3	3
Rage/rejection	Certificate	Girlfriend	1	1
Rage	HS Graduate	Divorced/GF	1	1
Same		Single		
Same		Single		
Same		Single	1	1
Denied		Married	3	3

1 = Abused Offender
2 = Mental Ill Offender
3 = Antisocial Offender