MOTIVATIONS FOR LATE ADOPTION: BETWEEN THE IMAGINED CHILD AND REALITY [1]

Débora da Silva Sampaio [2], Orcid: http://orcid.org/0000-0001-5697-0856
Andrea Seixas Magalhães [2], Orcid: https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2992-9844
Rebeca Nonato Machado [2], Orcid: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9465-1570

ABSTRACT. The present article is part of a broader research on the parent-child bond in late adoptions. This study aimed to investigate the motivations for late adoption, seeking to analyze the role of the work done by the Adoption Support Groups in the moment of choosing the profile. The authors interviewed ten independent subjects, three men and seven women, who adopted children older than two years, and they analyzed the interviews using the content analysis method. The desire to experience parenthood proved to be the imperative motivation in the moment of seeking for an adoption. In general, the motivations for late adoption presented themselves permeated by myths that are established as beliefs, producing impeditive or driving effects. Altruism as motivation for late adoption emerged in the present study as a complicating factor since what prevails is the desire to be the savior and not the desire to save. The authors highlight the work done by the Adoption Support Groups as a fundamental factor in the deconstruction of the myths and fantasies of the applicants, in raising awareness both on the true profile of the sheltered children and late adoption as a possibility.

Keywords: Motivation for adoption; late adoption; parenthood.

MOTIVAÇÕES PARA ADOÇÃO TARDIA: ENTRE O FILHO IMAGINADO E A REALIDADE

RESUMO. O presente artigo é parte de pesquisa mais ampla sobre o vínculo parento-filial nas adoções tardias. O objetivo deste estudo foi investigar as motivações para adoção tardia, buscando analisar o papel do trabalho dos Grupos de Apoio à Adoção no momento da escolha do perfil. Foram entrevistados dez sujeitos independentes, três homens e sete mulheres, que adotaram crianças maiores de dois anos e as entrevistas analisadas pelo método de análise de conteúdo. O desejo por vivenciar a parentalidade se apresentou como motivação imperativa no momento da escolha por uma adoção. De modo geral, as motivações para adoção tardia se apresentaram permeadas por mitos que se constituem como crenças, produzindo efeitos impeditivos ou impulsionadores. O altruísmo como motivação para adoção tardia emergiu no presente estudo como um complicador na medida em que prevalece o desejo de ser o salvador e não o de salvar. Destaca-se o trabalho realizado nos Grupos de Apoio à Adoção como fator fundamental na desconstrução de mitos e fantasias dos pretendentes, na conscientização sobre o real perfil das crianças abrigadas e sobre a adoção tardia como possibilidade.

Palavras-chave: Motivação para adoção; adoção tardia; parentalidade.

MOTIVOS PARA LA ADOPCIÓN TARDÍA: ENTRE EL HIJO IMAGINADO Y LA REALIDAD

RESUMEN. El presente artículo forma parte de una investigación más amplia sobre el vínculo pariente-hijo en las adopciones tardías. El objetivo de este estudio fue investigar las motivaciones para las adopciones tardías, buscando analizar el rol del trabajo de los Grupos de Apoyo a la Adopción en el momento de la selección del perfil. Se entrevistaron 10 sujetos independientes, 3 hombres y 7 mujeres, que adoptaron niños mayores de dos años y las entrevistas analizadas por el método de análisis de contenido. El deseo de vivir la parentalidad se presentó como motivación imperativa en el momento de optar por una adopción. De modo general, las motivaciones para la adopción tardía se presentaron permeadas por mitos que se constituyen como creencias, produciendo efectos impeditivos o impulsores. El altruismo como motivación para adopción tardía emergió en el presente estudio como un factor que complica, en la medida en que prevalece el deseo de ser el salvador y no el de salvar. Se destaca el trabajo realizado en los Grupos de Apoyo a la Adopción como factor fundamental en la deconstrucción de mitos y fantasías de los pretendientes, generando conciencia sobre el real perfil de los niños albergados y sobre la adopción tardía como posibilidad.

Palabras clave: Motivación para adopción; adopción tardía; parentalidad.

Introduction

The movement to encourage adoption as a way for parenthood and affiliation has been increasingly successful among the measures to enable the right of the child or adolescent to belong to a family. One of the consequences of this is the gradual increase in the adoption of children older than three years called late adoption. In the national scenario, this transformation is increasingly necessary, considering that the majority of available children are at this age group. The urgencies to change this situation make the achievements of the adoption culture seem insignificant. In the literature, it is stated that the preference of applicants for adoption is for babies and, for the most part, white color (Vargas, 2013; Peiter, 2011; Ladvocat, 2014).

In the national scenario, it can be said that, historically, adoption has arisen as the means by which the State and society seek to promote protection and surveillance for children from miserable families. This intention emerges from the old Code of Minors (Lei n° 6.697, 1979). In this context, sheltering in institutions represented the way out of the irregular situation of children socially appointed as needy, abandoned and offenders (Vicente, 2006). This stereotype persists today, which makes us think that the concern in the face of such vulnerability is historically camouflaged through false protection.

With the implementation of the Child and Adolescent Statute- ECA (Known in Brazil as Estatuto da Criança e do Adolescente) (Lei n° 8.069, 1990), asylum institutions for minors were practically extinct. However, the institutionalizing culture resists due to the slow processing that any change at this level imposes (Rizzini & Rizzini, 2004). The ECA creation shows a new paradigm in the assistance to children and adolescents and comes to prioritize

family life, offering rights to both children and families. The institution is no longer purely welfare assistance and starts to focus on offering subsidies for socialization and child development.

In 2009, ECA underwent its first reform. The implementation of Lei n° 12.010 (2009), known as the National Adoption Law (Known in Brazil as Lei Nacional da Adoção), represented a major legal step, consolidating a social transformation, both in the concept of family and also concerning children and adolescents care. Among the new designations introduced by this law are family power instead of parental power and family care instead of institutional care. Through these changes, it was sought to define the rights to life, health, family and community life, and fraternal ties in cases of custody of groups of brothers.

According to the changes established by the legislation, the care institutions are responsible for adopting the principle of preserving family bonds and promoting family reintegration. Thus, it is noted that the new law has as the main prerogative to assist origin families, aiming to promote the restoration of coexistence as soon as possible (Silva & Arpini, 2013). However, in many cases, reintegration is a difficult attempt to achieve, so children end up staying in shelters for a long time. When these efforts are exhausted, leading the child to become available for adoption, he is already at an advanced age, being his only alternative the applicants' acceptance for late adoption. Given this situation, most of the children who are on the national waiting list are over two years old, shaping a reality of immense demand forthe realization of late adoptions in Brazil (Vargas, 2013).

The mismatch between the demand of children and applicants requires intense work to raise awareness and demystify late adoptions. The specificities related to the condition and history of older children need to be addressed without stigma and prejudice, aspects that are still a strong presence in the social imagination. To that end, Adoption Support Groups appear as a fundamental resource in the preparation of applicants for adoption, providing a valuable space for exchanging experiences, enhancing reflections on the theme.

This process of reviewing stereotypes about late adoption ends up helping applicants to change the children's profile they seek to adopt, making it more flexible and expanding the possibilities of inclusion. Amim and Menandro (2007) point out that the work carried out in these groups helps to change the profile chosen during registration. According to the authors' research, only 4% of applicants reach the group willing to adopt children over the age of four, and by the end of the meetings, that number has reached 20%.

These groups are non-profit civil society organizations, which started to organize themselves from adoptive parents who identified the need to come together to exchange experiences, living mutual help. Subsequently, the groups started to count on the help of professionals interested in the theme and to make partnerships with the Child and Youth Courts (Levy & Gomes, 2017).

Families that make themselves available for this type of adoption have to deal with the unique experiences of children who have remained for a variable period in shelter care institutions. Therefore, it is impossible to deny the adopted child's rupture history, which can be made up of abandonments in different dimensions and possible experiences of violence and abuse. Most of these children followed the environmental failures of their origin family, as well as the construction and deconstruction of bonds in the shelters, creating a path of fragilities that will have an impact on the construction of new family bonds.

It is worth mentioning that every child puts up for adoption, even if it is a baby, has mnemic and affective marks of his history. For this reason, both in early and late adoption, thinking that the adopted child will not bring with him the records of his origin story is an illusion. However, when it comes to an older child, mainly because language acquisition

already exists, they position themselves before adoptive parents in a more complex and explicit way in relation to their demands and conflicts (Costa & Rossetti-Ferreira, 2007).

In late adoptions, the child can negotiate affectivity and the construction of filial love, characterizing specific vicissitudes to the construction of the bond. Therefore, in these adoptions, parents must make themselves emotionally available to deal with their children's previous life, composed of specific meanings both from the family culture of their parents and from their past experiences, which are more clearly verbalized (Machado, Féres-Carneiro, & Magalhães, 2015).

In this context marked by ruptures, the beloved child will be able to test the love of the new parents to make sure that they will be able to remain despite the circumstances. For this, regressive movements may appear, understood by some authors as indispensable for the resumption of development, enabling the rescue and elaboration of previous experiences (Vargas 2013; Otuka, Scorsolini-Comin, & Santos, 2012; Zornig, 2008). To be sure that the new family will be able to exercise the function of care and protection, the regressive movement represents the importance of putting themselves in place of babies again, presenting themselves in a logical and not chronological time (Zornig, 2008).

The option for late adoption, in general, comes from couples who have had parental experience, single, divorced and widowed individuals who have no availability or desire to care for a newborn. In general, the preference for choosing babies is justified by the illusion that they are easier to be molded (Costa & Rossetti-Ferreira, 2007; Ebrahim, 2001).

Literature has identified infertility as the main motivation for adoption (Giacomozzi, Nicoletti, & Godinho, 2016; Gondim et al., 2008; Levinzon, 2004). However, some authors bring other relevant aspects that demarcate the search for adoption. According to Gondim et al. (2008), the main motivations that lead to adoption are: the desire to raise a family, the desire to have a child, to help a child and difficulty to become pregnant. Riede and Sartori (2013) also highlight as a motivation for adoption the need to fill the loneliness, to be accompaniedto an only child, the possibility of choosing the child's sex, replacing a deceased child, among others. Ebrahim (2001), on the other hand, points out altruism as characteristic in the motivations of those who choose late adoption. Whatever the motivation, it brings itself the search for some type of narcissistic satisfaction that deserves attention and care.

Parents' motivations to adopt a child influence the development of bonds (Cardoso & Baiocchi, 2014; Ladvocat, 2014; Trindade-Salavert, 2010), serve as a basis for the preference for a type of adoption and are subsidized by fantasies that will give the outline to the type of bond construction (Machado et al., 2015). Therefore, reflecting on the fantasies involvedcontributes to the prevention of frustrations in the face of what may have been designed about parenting and affiliation.

According to Ghirardi (2015), every affiliation project, be it adoptive or biological, is par excellence narcissistic since parents deposit their aspirations, frustrations and renunciations on their children's lives. The biggest problem arises when the child to be adopted occupies the solution place to the parents' frustrations. The fantasies and doubts that run through the imaginary of applicants for adoption, in addition to the fantasies created by children about the adoptive family, point to the need for preparation work so that the insertion of the child in the substitute family and the construction of the parent-child bond takes place most favorably and possibly. Some of these fantasies are based on myths that permeate adoption, for example, the baggage that the child will bring with him being determined by the 'bad blood' of the biological family (Levy & Gomes, 2017; Luz, Gelani, & Amaral, 2014; Vargas, 2013).

Given this context, this study aimed to investigate, from the narratives of parents who adopted children older than two years, what were the motivations for late adoption, seeking to analyze the role of Adoption Support Groups at the time of profile choice.

Method

Participants

Ten independent subjects were interviewed (belonging to different families, thus, with no kinship ties between them), three men and seven women living in the State of Rio de Janeiro. About family configuration, one man and two women with single-parent families, four women with heteroaffective families, two men with homoaffective families and one woman with a homoaffective family, all with higher education, with provisional custody of the child/ren or with the adoption process completed.

Among the interviewees, five were, at the time of the interview, with the adoption process completed, and the others were only with provisional custody, waiting for the completion of the process. The children were welcomed by families with ages ranging between two and half years and 11 years old, configuring the so-called late adoption, before the adolescence period. Besides, another aspect that makes up the interviewees' profile is the beginning of the adoption process with the provisional custody, at least six months before the research was carried out.

A characteristic common to allwas the fact that the participants, when they started the adoption process, already intended to adopt a child older than two years. However, during the initial phase of the process, the interviewees themselves reported that they had a certain fear of having little chance of adopting children under two years old. About this, six interviewees indicated that they increased the age of the initial profile, due to the meetings in Support Groups for Adoption. In the presentation of the results, the subjects received fictitious nominations specified in Table 1, which contains the biographical data of each of the subjects in more detail.

Instrument

As a research instrument, an individual interview was conducted with a semi-structured script, containing open questions, composed of the following thematic axes: motivation for adoption; previous experiences, family and network; subjective parenting experiences, bond-building experience, fantasies related to the imagined child.

Table 1. Biographical data of the participants

Participant	Age	Profession	Familiar Configuration	Child's age whenadopted	Child'scurrent age
Ana	35	Lawyer	Heteroparental	2 years 3 years 6m (brothers)	4 years 5 years 6m
André	47	Civil Engineer	Single parent	11 years	15 years
Mario	39	Accountant	Homoparental	11 years 2 years 6m 1 year 6m 3m (brothers)	13 years 5 years 3 years 2 years
Claudia	50	Teacher	Heteroparental	6 years/ 8 years (brothers)	7 years/8years
Lucas	38	Designer	Homoparental	6 years/ 9 years 11 years (brothers)	7years/10years 11 years
Sara	44	Accountant	Heteroparental	7 years	10 years
Fernanda	45	UniversityTeacher	Heteroparental	4 years 10 years (brothers)	5 years 11 years
Julia	37	BeautyConsultant	Single parent	2 years6m	6 years
Vânia	45	Lawyer	Homoparental	6m 5 years 12 years	27 years 12 years 16 years
Laura	46	Social Assistance	Single parent	9 years	15 years

Source: The authors.

Procedures

After approval of the research project by the Research Ethics Committee of the university where it was developed (protocol number 20/2016), the participants were recruited from contact with the Adoption Support Groups and also by informal contacts in different researcher's social networks. The interviews were carried out in the interviewee's preferred location, recorded on audio, with the participants' proper authorization, by signing a Free and Informed Consent Term and lasted an average of one hour.

The material was transcribed and submitted to the content analysis method, in its categorical aspect, to investigate, from the discursive material, the meanings attributed by the interviewees to the phenomena (Bardin, 2011). Through the categorical technique, thematic categories were highlighted, organized based on the similarity among the elements contained in the collected material. To this end, a 'floating reading' was carried out, grouping significant data, identifying and relating them, until the analysis categories were highlighted.

The saturation point considered the repetition of the themes that led to the categories; therefore, no new information emerged, and the cycle of data collection and analysis could be interrupted.

The present article is part of a broader research, in which the general objective was to investigate the construction of the parent-child bond in late adoptions. From this investigation, seven categories emerged from the participants' narratives: 'parenting experience, motivation for the adoption, network participation, fantasies and expectations in late adoption, child's luggage, stones in the way of late adoption and mutual adoption'. In order to achieve the objectives of this work, the 'motivation for the adoption' category was highlighted, with the remaining categories being discussed in other works.

Results and discussion

Motivations can be categorized in different ways, having infertility, the loss of a child, family transmission, philanthropy, among other sources. These motivations are interspersed with unconscious desires that underpin the demand for a child (Machado et al., 2015).

One of the most common motivational factors for choosing to adopt is the presence of infertility in one or both spouses. Nevertheless, for the interviewed subjects, infertility was not the original source as a choice criterion. It was observed, in the narrative of most of them, that the desire to experience parenting proved to be imperative, being that it was rendered impossible not only by infertility but by other issues such as, for example, some diseases that would make pregnancy difficult. In addition, some expressed the desire to have a child without necessarily having a partner, with a greater desire to establish a family composed of exchanges between different generations than to follow the model of a traditional family, corroborating the data presented by Gondim et al. (2008).

> It has always been a dream since I was a child. [...] Moreover, after I found out I was gay, that was my only concern, how am I going to have children? Moreover, then, I already knew about the adoption issue, so it was something that was kind of right for me (Mario, homoparental).

> I always thought about it, if one day I were going to be a mother I would prefer to be an adopter because I always thought that there weremany children in the world and that it is not necessarily the biology to have a family bond [...] One day that I decided to be a mother, I also happened to be unable to have my own child (Claudia, heteroparental).

> Moreover, it happened that in the four years after my son was born, I again had a disease that ended up taking my uterus out. The decision to undergo that surgery was conditioned on me to have another child. I talked to my husband, I wish I had another child to see if a girl was coming, but as my uterus is not working, I will take it out, but do you commit me to adopt a girl? (Laura, heteroparental).

Specifically, regarding the motivation for late adoption, the interviewees highlighted that they did not feel the need to have a baby. Among the main justifications of the interviewees for not preferring a baby, the work and dedication that it requires, or the previous experience of parenting with a newborn, in the case of participants with biological children, were stated.

> I have no patience with baby, I find it very cute, very cute, until the first two seconds when it starts to cry, and they don't sleep at night. So, for that reason, and because of the life I already have, which is very busy, I have hundreds of thousand commitments, I did not want to give up either one thing or the other, so I opted for a little more independent child (Vânia, homoparental).

> I have a little difficulty talking to a small child [...] I never had that thing related to the need forchanging diapers. I preferred older children, even today, even at my current age; a baby is something that takes a lot of work (Claudia, heteroparental).

There are myths about late adoption, which contribute a lot to the children's stay in shelter care institutions. The fears of the most common claimants relate to the child's past, involving the myth of 'bad blood', in addition to the fantasies that the child if he is a minor, will be easier to be molded within the customs of the adoptive family (Luz et al., 2014; Vargas, 2013).

From the participants' statements, it was noticed that there are not only myths that hinder the choice for late adoption; there are also those that drive to this profile option. In the interviewees' statements, the presence of the myth 'not taking care of a baby' was observed, related to the fear of experiencing the laborious primitive baby-caregiver relationship. Thus, there is a belief that some difficulties in parenting would be overcome, which parents imagine being complicated to manage, such as changing life too much, especially when they are advanced old, as well as facing the arduous process of deciphering the demands of a baby (Sampaio, Magalhães, & Féres-Carneiro, 2018).

It could be noted that the interviewed subjects do not identify that even in the case of older children, they carry with them the baby's internal experiences (precocious anxieties, primitive demands for love, security, restraint and search for meaning), which are updated in the building process of the adoptive parent-child bond. Even though it is a late adoption, parents are faced with the children's early childhood, which requires an affective availability for tender care.

> Wow, it is much work! I thought it was easier. (laughs) People, I swore it was just giving love, I thought that [...] everything I thought was wrong, not only that, there is the part that he does not want to obey you, there is the part that he does not want to listen to you, there is the part that he wants to be so ill-bred, people of the heavens, it's a lot of work [...] so being a mother is very very very very laborious, but I like it, at the end it's worthwhile (Vânia, homoparental).

One of the important aspects of late adoption is the child's regression, which presents himself in the relationship and which is part of the movement to repair what may previously have been shown to be flawed, negligent or at fault. Levy and Bittencourt (2013) highlight that the initial phase of affiliation is marked by several regressions, and it is common for the child to make maternal claims in an attempt to seek contact and exclusivity in the face of parents' love. For the authors, this movement is moving towards the repair of a good primary attachment object.

According to Vargas (2013), the process of late adoption only becomes complete when the child resumes his development, that is, the mental process of regression will be fundamental for the implementation of the adoption. The child will report to an imaginary state of a newborn, experiencing a second birth from which he will go through important stages of his development.

From the data collected, it was realized that, differently from what the parents previously imagined, the child's behavior was not defined by his chronological age, but influenced by his desires, fantasies and early demands. Zornig (2008, p. 77) states that "[…] the child challenges the logical reason by constructing his own truth at his own logical time, and not chronologically". Late adopter children ended up showing their parents how important it was to feel like babies in an 'absolute dependency' to make sure that parents could occupy the role of being continents and safe references. The author states that there is a permanent child in the adult, who ends up being influenced by the conflicts, traumas and early desires of life.

It is understood that the demand linked to regressed behaviors seems to be a resource for the establishment of the parental function in a solid way, connected to the attitude of sustaining the need for basic care, and of experiencing sexuality, so that the feelings of being loved and belonging are consolidated. It is noteworthy that the regression of the children of late adoption is more than a test, it has a structuring role for the parent-child bond, since it leads to a time of 'subjective retroaction' (Zornig, 2008), seeking to rebuild subjectivity in the time of the close relationship with the other until he moves towards the symbolic appropriation of the bond.

Although the interviewed parents highlighted in their statements that, before adoption, there was a certain fear related to taking care of a baby, it should be noted that all of them were available during times of regression and sensitive to the most basic needs of these children. This was fundamental for the establishment of a sufficiently good environment, favoring the construction of the parent-child bond. In this sense, the narrative highlighted below exemplifies such availability.

> She misses the mother a lot because the mother died, so she misses the mother a lot. Therefore, these are shocking experiences (previous experiences of the child). I am not going to say that they are not shocking, they complement our coexistence so that I can understand some things, some of their demands, I can, from there, manage what I'm going to do. [...] look, do not forbid your child to talk about the past, so that you can understand what happened to him and work with it in the future. [...] So, their previous experiences even serve to understand their dynamics today (Vânia, homoparental).

The motivations for late adoption were bathed in myths that were constituted as beliefs, having impediment or driving effects. It is observed that the interviewed parents were able to renounce their belief that they would not deal with a baby when they were faced with the regressed attitudes of their children. Britton (2003) states that the ability to renounce lost objects, as well as beliefs, is associated with the ability to tolerate the distinction between the subjective and the objective. Therefore, we understand that parents who can support their children's regression may have a greater chance of tolerating the difference between expectations and the reality that the adoptive parent-child bond imposes.

Still, concerning the motivation for late adoption, it was possible to verify the awareness about the characteristics involved in this type of adoption and about the real profile of the sheltered children, mostly children older than three years. From the narratives, it is clear that this occurred, mainly, due to work carried out in the Adoption Support Groups, as illustrated by Sara's speech:

> Our first profile would be from one to four yearsod, but in the Adoption Group, they said that the children were still in the shelters after a certain age, that nobody wanted them, and that argument moved us a lot, especially my husband. […] Then, we decided to increase this age to give a bigger chance to a child. So our initial profile was from zero to four years, right, then we changed from zero to seven (Sara, heteroparental).

Among the ten interviewees, five reported that they changed their profile from the meetings in the Adoption Support Group, emphasizing the relevance of the information on the profile of the majority of the children that make up the list of the national adoption register to the detriment of the profile initially designed by the applicants. This not only increased the parents' awareness of the reality of these children but also made them interested in them.

The awareness of the participants regarding the children's profile available for adoption promoted in the adoption groups was also pointed out in a survey conducted by Queiroz and Brito (2013). The authors affirm that the profile change is due to the awareness and clarifications given to the applicants, which favor the understanding of the adoption

process. In addition to the information, the feeling of belonging and the possibility of sharing feelings and fears are favored in the group, which is configured as collaboration and mutual welcome space among applicants for adoption.

Parents who decided to increase the age group associate that the initial profile was based on fears, fantasies, prejudices, especially in relation to the child's past:

> At that time, reproducing all the preconceptions, I chose until four years old, I even think it was because of an issue linked to the child's story, which is something that I understand today from all the experience I have already with my boys, which is [...] it does not matter anymore. They can arrive in our lives with a year, with two years, their history will always be present, won´t it? (Ana, heteroparental).

> One of the things that worried us was the luggage that the child brought. However, we went through one of the Adoption Groups, and that helped a lot to open up our view of problems. Ah! Which child has no problem? Which child does not have luggage? Even being biological, sometimes the parents' quarrel, there are family problems and this child brings it forward and gives problems to the parents, doesn´t he? (Mario, homoparental).

Therefore, it is noted the recognition of these parents regarding the myths that involve adoption was decisive for the acceptance of the children along with their history, opening space for new meanings of the past, without having to deny it, on the contrary, legitimizing it and being able to build a new story together. Besides, the fear of parents and the insecurity of having to deal with the problems that would come together with the experience of parenting, present in the statements of the participants, stand out. As they share stories and understand that challenges are inherent in the process of becoming a mother/father, they feel safer to face the idiosyncrasies of parenting.

André's speech refers to this encounter of stories and the mutual respect present in the construction of the parent-child bond:

> I learned a lot from him so that I cannot impose only my will. This is the difference of late adoption because when you get a little one, you teach what you like, and little by little, he notes that he likes. In this case, it is different. He already comes with a bag of what he likes; I need to respect that. An important and interesting fact, he loves horror movies, he loves them! Furthermore, I hate horror movies and forbade him to watch. When he was watching them, I went to the TV set and repeatedly turned it off. Then one day, he said, that's not fair! When you met me, I already liked a horror movie, so you don't want to see it, go to your bedroom, and I see it in the living room. So I can see, can I? So, I stopped and said, you are hypercorrect, of course, you can see them from now on (André, single parent).

The fear of facing the unknown and the inapprehensible in late adoption is another element present in the parents' statements, which is expressed in fear of dealing with the children's 'terrors', which in no way resemble the fictional character of the films. André mentions his disturbing observation about his son's fascination with horror films. This genre of the film presents more repulsive features of reality in the form of entertainment, causing people to face strong emotions of strangeness, anxiety and fear. André's son seems to need to feel the emotions of terror in a controlled and distant manner, for him, the characters die; they are quartered and attacked, but in the films, somehow relieving the internal tension that causes displeasure. Perhaps this is a way of understanding, facing figures and threatening internal experiences, possibly linked to his life story.

To the father remains to witness and accompany his son, realizing that he cannot deprive him of this need, as this would be to prevent a way to deal with internal terrors. This narrative points to the importance of parents being emotionally connected to their children and looking for ways to support what more scares them in the parenting experience: seeing

the suffering of his child, whether due to the past or the present. In this way, it becomes possible to build a future capable of repairing what may have been bad and legitimizing what may have been good (Silva, Guimarães, & Pereira, 2014).

As it is the adoption of an older child, above all, it is understood that this new bond construction will take place as a two-way street, a mutual adoption capable of reframing the past, without having to erase it, before that, to build the possibility of a new integrative history. Considering the importance of mutuality in the construction of parenting and affiliation (Levy & Bittencourt, 2013), it is understood that even in the terrifying experiences, the child can help parents to take care of him. The children emit signals that will be decoded by the parents, and it is necessary to be attentive or ask for help to identify them. Some parents mentioned that the mutuality of bond construction is essential for the construction of the parent-child bond.

> Because we learn to be a father and mother with the children [...] I think they teach us to be better fathers and mothers. They teach me little by little to take better care of them. I was nauseous just thinking about seeing a cartoon, today I already like to see cartoons. I also learn with him (Claudia, heteroparental).

Another relevant aspect of motivation for late adoption concerns altruism and has emerged directly and indirectly for some participants:

> We realized that we had some difficulty getting pregnant again, you know, and then we decided [...] the doctors recommended us to do artificial insemination, but we decided that it was better to do the adoption. [...] even because of our religion, which always encouraged, you know, to do [...] things like this, in this case, to try to help others (Sara, heteroparental).

> My whole life, I have always been very concerned with these children, teenagers, who sometimes have no chance in life. Moreover, I was able to help one. That was not a help, I looked for a child, and I got one [...] I think that gave a chance to a child to have a family and a better future (André, single parent).

Ebrahim (2001) finds that late adopters are mostly more altruistic than conventional ones and that the motivation for this type of adoption is directly linked to the personality of the adopting parents. This motivation is mainly due to the concern to meet the needs of others, according to data from the same research. However, attention is needed when altruistic motivation is presented through the limited need to become a child's 'savior' in a purely narcissistic attitude.

It is understood that in these cases, it is not an altruistic attitude, in fact, but a pseudo-altruism based on the desire to be the savior and not the desire to save. In an attempt to 'help' the abandoned child, the establishment of laws and limits can be weakened, intensifying conflicts. Most of the time, parents expect their child to be grateful for their good deed, that is, that the adopted ones meet parental narcissistic demands creating unrealistic expectations for the child's behavior (Ghirardi, 2015). This frustration was evident in Laura's speech:

> I was a poor girl helped by someone, and I had a desire to help another poor child. I wanted to help, but the child did not want to be helped. [...] in fact, I created a very high expectation for me because I am a Social Worker at the Childhood Court at the Supreme Court, responsible for the adoption program in my city. Nevertheless, at the same time, I feel very victorious, you know, because I think that anyone in my place would have given up sooner (Laura, single parent).

Among the ten interviewees, Laura's case was the only one in which the conflicts in the relationship intensified in order to weaken the mother-daughter bond. This fact points to

the need for attention to adoptions that happen when the motivation is given primarily by pseudo-altruism.

Final considerations

The children that make up the National Adoption Register are mostly over the age of three. Thus, the choice of late adoption, by the applicants, ends up becoming the only alternative for these children to have the family life to which they have a right. The search for applicants for adoption does not always correspond to the real profile available and, therefore, many children remain in shelter care institutions. At the same time, parents wait for the idealized child. Therefore, it is essential to reflect on the motivations for choosing applicants for adoption, especially in the form of late adoption.

There has been a certain transformation in the motivation for adoption over the years, no longer corresponding, mostly, exclusively to the infertility of one or both spouses. It was possible to notice the desire to experience parenting as an imperative factor when choosing adoption. Besides, new forms of family settings also favor adoption as one of the means by which applicants choose to experience parenting. Examples of this can be highlighted in cases where the desire for a child emerges without necessarily having a partner, setting up a single-parent family, and in the search to build a family with children in cases of homosexual couples. These are examples of contemporary motivations for adoption related to new family configurations.

With regard specifically to the motivation for late adoption, we found that the desire not to be faced with the necessary care for the development of a baby emerged as the main justification. From the statements, it is highlighted that in addition to the impediment myths for choosing late adoption, there are also myths that favor the option for this profile, such as the myth that dealing with an older child will be easier than dealing with the demands of a baby's dependency.

It should be noted that, when adopting an older child, parents also adopt the baby that constitutes him, and that is part of his history. Thus, moments of regression on the part of the child are evidenced in an attempt to reestablish the care that may have previously been shown to be lacking or insufficient. In addition, it is understood that this regression can be a structuring resource of the bond so that it is based on primitive emotional exchanges.

Thus, it is clear that the motivations for late adoption are permeated by myths that are constituted as beliefs, producing impediment or driving effects. To the extent that parents can renounce the idea that they do not have to deal with a baby, it becomes possible to accept the regressed attitudes of their children, offering space for important elaborations for the construction of the parent-child bond.

Fears and fantasies related to the child's history emerged in the statements, configuring the main impasse when deciding on the child's age in the adoption profile. This fear is related to what is not known for sure how to deal with, that is, the past life that the child carries with him and that will demand the presence and permanence of the new environment, making himself available and entire to build the parent-child bond.

Besides, altruism as a motivation for late adoption emerged in the present study as a complicator as it becomes pseudo-altruism, that is, what prevails is the desire to be the savior and not the desire to save. The altruistic concern is important for parents to be available internally to build the parent-child bond and to be attentive to the care demands

that may arise from the child. However, when the said altruistic attitude appears as a primarily narcissistic motivation, that is, adoption is sought exclusively to supply the satisfaction of offering care to a child, there is a risk of encountering the frustration of the expectation of being the 'savior'.

From the results of this study, the work carried out in the Adoption Support Groups stands out as a fundamental factor in deconstructing the myths and fantasies of the applicants, raising awareness about the real profile of the sheltered children and late adoption as a possibility. The group's space presented itself as a powerful tool for the encounter of stories, favoring the feeling of belonging, welcoming and exchanges among the applicants.

It is important to highlight, as the main limitation of this study is that the interviewees, in general, presented themselves as militants of the new culture of adoption. Therefore, the possibility of a bias in the composition of the investigated subjects group is considered. It is proposed that further studies need to be carried out, covering other profiles of participants, especially those involving withdrawal during the period of coexistence test, configuring unsuccessful adoptions. This topic is still little discussed in the literature. It is believed that by better understanding the motivations that involve adoption, interventions can be thoughtto reduce the failures in the adoption processes.

It is noteworthy that based on the understanding of the choices vicissitudes of those who are ready to adopt an older child, new forms of intervention can be built, helping in this process, which often does not happen easily. Despite the advances, there is still a long way to go in search of guaranteeing the right of every child/adolescent to live in a family environment propitious to his physical and psychological development.

References

Amim, I. D., & Menandro, P. R. M. (2007). Preferências por características do futuro filho adotivo: manifestadas por pretendentes à adoção. *Interação em Psicologia, 11*(2), 241-252.

Bardin, L. (2011). *Análise de conteúdo*. Lisboa, PT: Edições 70.

Britton, R. (2003). *Crenças e imaginação: explorações em psicanálise.* Rio de Janeiro, RJ: Imago.

Cardoso, V. L., & Baiocchi, A. (2014). Preparação para adoção: o começo de uma nova família. In C. Lavocat & S. Diuana (Eds.), *Guia de adoção: no jurídico, no social, no psicológico e na família* (p. 53-64). São Paulo, SP: Roca.

Costa, N. R., & Rossetti-Ferreira, M. C. (2007). Tornar-se pai e mãe em um processo de adoção tardia. *Psicologia: Reflexão e Crítica, 20*(3), 425-434. Recuperado de: http://www.scielo.br/pdf/prc/v20n3/a10v20n3.pdf

Ebrahim, S. G. (2001). Adoção tardia: altruísmo, maturidade e estabilidade emocional. *Psicologia, Reflexão e Crítica, 14*(1), 73-80. Recuperado de: http://www.scielo.br/pdf/prc/v14n1/5208

Ghirardi, M. L. A. M. A. (2015). *Devolução de crianças adotadas: um estudo psicanalítico.* São Paulo, SP: Primavera Editorial.

Giacomozzi, A. I., Nicoletti, M., & Godinho, E. M. (2016). As representações sociais e as motivações para adoção de pretendentes brasileiros à adoção. *Psychologica, 58*(1), 41-64.

Gondim, A. K., Crispim, C. S., Fernandes, F. H. T., Rosendo, J. C., Brito, T. M. C. D., Oliveira, U. B. D., & Nakano, T. D. C. (2008). Motivação dos pais para a prática da adoção. *Boletim de Psicologia, 58*(129), 161-170. Recuperado de: http://pepsic.bvsalud.org/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S0006-59432008000200004&lng=pt&tlng=pt.

Ladvocat, C. (2014). Campo clínico da prevenção na adoção. In C. Lavocat & S. Diuana (Eds), *Guia de adoção: no jurídico, no social, no psicológico e na família* (p.149-157). São Paulo, SP: Roca.

Lei nº 6.697, de 10 de outubro de 1979. Institui o Código de Menores. Recuperado de: https://www2.camara.leg.br/legin/fed/lei/1970-1979/lei-6697-10-outubro-1979-365840-norma-pl.html

Lei nº 8.069, de 13 de julho de 1990. (1990, 13 de julho). Dispõe sobre o Estatuto da Criança e do Adolescente e dá outras providências. Recuperado de: http://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/leis/L8069.htm

Lei nº 12.010, de 3 de agosto de 2009. (2009). Dispõe sobre adoção; altera as Leis nᵒˢ 8.069, de 13 de julho de 1990 - Estatuto da Criança e do Adolescente, 8.560, de 29 de dezembro de 1992; revoga dispositivos da Lei nº 10.406, de 10 de janeiro de 2002 - Código Civil, e da Consolidação das Leis do Trabalho - CLT, aprovada pelo Decreto-Lei nº 5.452, de 1º de maio de 1943; e dá outras providências.. Recuperado de: http://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/_ato2007-2010/2009/lei/l12010.htm

Levinzon, G. K. (2004). *Adoção.* São Paulo, SP: Casa do Psicólogo

Levy, L., & Bittencourt, M. I. G. D. F. (2013). A delicada construção de um vínculo de filiação: o papel do psicólogo em processos de adoção. *Pensando famílias, 17*(1), 41-53.

Levy, L., & Gomes, I. C. (2017). Grupos de preparação à adoção: dos pretendentes às crianças. In T. Féres-Carneiro (Org.), *Casal e família:teoria, pesquisa e clínica* (p. 157-174). Rio de Janeiro, RJ: Prospectiva & PUC-Rio.

Luz, A. F., Gelain, D., & Amaral, L. M. (2014). Vivências das famílias na adoção tardia. *Revista de Psicologia da IMED, 6*(1), 52-57.

Machado, R. N., Féres-Carneiro, T., & Magalhães, A. S. (2015). Parentalidade adotiva: contextualizando a escolha. *Psico, 46*(4), 442-451.

Otuka, L. K., Scorsolini-Comin, F., & Santos, M. A. (2012). Adoção suficientemente boa: experiência de um casal com filhos biológicos. *Psicologia: Teoria e Pesquisa, 28*(1), 55-63. Recuperado de: http://dx.doi.org/10.1590/S0102-37722012000100007

Peiter, C. (2011). *Adoção, vínculos e rupturas: do abrigo à família adotiva.* São Paulo, SP: Zagodoni.

Queiroz, A. C. A., & Brito, L. (2013). Adoção tardia: o desafio da garantia do direito à convivência familiar e comunitária. *Textos & Contextos, 12*(1), 55-67.

Riede, J. E., & Sartori, G. L. Z. (2013). Adoção e os fatores de risco: do afeto à devolução das crianças e adolescentes. *Perspectiva, 37*(138), 143-154.

Rizzini, I., & Rizzini, I. (2004). *A institucionalização de crianças no Brasil: percurso histórico e desafios do presente*. Rio de Janeiro, RJ: Editora PUC-Rio.

Sampaio, D. S., Magalhães, A. S., & Féres-Carneiro, T. (2018). Pedras no caminho da adoção tardia: desafios para o vínculo parento-filial na percepção dos pais. *Trends in Psychology, 26*(1), 311-324.

Silva, M. L., & Arpini, D. M. (2013). A nova lei nacional de adoção: desafios para a reinserção familiar. *Psicologia em Estudo, 18*(1), 125-135.

Silva, M. P. O. Guimarães, F. L., & Pereira, S. K. R. (2014). Caminhos da adoção. In C. Lavocat & S. Diuana (Eds.), *Guia da adoção: no jurídico, no social, no psicológico e na família* (p. 271-280) São Paulo, SP: Editora Roca.

Trindade-Salavert, I. (Org.). (2010*). Os novos desafios da adoção: interações psíquicas, familiares e sociais.* Rio de Janeiro, RJ: Companhia de Freud.

Vargas, M. M. (2013). *Adoção tardia: da família sonhada à família possível* (2a ed.) São Paulo, SP: Casa do Psicólogo.

Vicente, C. M. (2006). Abrigos: desafios e perspectivas. *Boletim Uma Família Para Uma Criança – ABTH,* (12/13).

Zornig, S. M. A. (2008). As teorias sexuais infantis na atualidade: algumas reflexões. *Psicologia em Estudo, 13*(1), 73-77. Recuperado de: https://dx.doi.org/10.1590/S1413-73722008000100009

Débora da Silva Sampaio: PUC-Rio, a doctoral student in the Department of Psychology, Rio de Janeiro - RJ, Brasil. UnigranRio, a Collaborating Professor in the psychology course, Rio de Janeiro - RJ, Brasil. Celso Lisboa, an Assistant Professor in the psychology course, Rio de Janeiro - RJ, Brazil

Andrea Seixas Magalhães: PUC-Rio,anAssociate Professor in theDepartmentofPsychology, Rio de Janeiro-RJ, Brazil.

Rebeca Nonato Machado: PUC-Rio, an Assistant Professor in the Department of Psychology, Rio de Janeiro-RJ, Brazil.