

## ADOPTIVE PROJECT'S CONSTRUCTION ON A TWO-WAY VIA

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**ABSTRACT.** The constitution of a family through legal adoption does not happen suddenly. Still, it results from a delicate construction of projects, dreams and expectations, which occur both with the adopters and the child and/or adolescent who waits for a new family. This study aimed to know how the adoptive project's construction arose from parents and children's perspectives for a family composed of a couple and four siblings who were adopted together. Data collection was conducted through interviews and observation with registered in a field diary. It was found that the primary motivation of parents to adopt was the desire to constitute a family and exercise parenthood. It was verified that there was openness concerning the desired profile and the encounter with the real child. Regarding children, there were difficulties for them to express how they experienced the adoptive project, which suggests the need for more actions aimed at preparing children and adolescents in the process of being adopted. In conclusion, it is highlighted the significance of the adoptive project's construction by all involved and that a little space is provided for the child to present his narratives and elaborations on this construction.

**Keywords:** Child; adoption; family.

## A CONSTRUÇÃO DO PROJETO ADOTIVO EM UMA VIA DE MÃO DUPLA

**RESUMO.** A constituição de uma família por meio da adoção legal não se dá de modo repentino, mas é fruto de uma delicada construção de projetos, sonhos e expectativas, que ocorrem tanto por parte dos postulantes à adoção, quanto da criança e/ou adolescente que aguarda por uma nova família. Buscou-se conhecer como ocorreu a construção do projeto adotivo, sob a perspectiva dos pais e dos filhos, para uma família composta por um casal e quatro irmãos que foram adotados juntos. A coleta de dados foi realizada por meio de entrevistas e observação com registro em diário de campo. Verificou-se que a principal motivação dos pais para adotar foi o desejo de constituir uma família e exercer a parentalidade. Constatou-se que houve abertura em relação ao perfil desejado e abertura para o encontro com a criança real. No que se refere às crianças, houve dificuldades para que expressassem como vivenciaram o projeto adotivo, o que sugere a necessidade de que haja mais ações voltadas para a preparação das crianças e adolescentes, em vias de serem adotados. Concluiu-se sobre a relevância da construção do projeto adotivo por todos os envolvidos e que é dado pouco espaço para que a criança apresente suas narrativas e faça suas elaborações sobre essa construção.

**Palavras-chave:** Criança; adoção; família.

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## LA CONSTRUCCIÓN DEL PROYECTO ADOPTIVO EN UN CAMINO DE DOBLE SENTIDO

**RESUMEN.** La constitución de una familia a través de la adopción legal no ocurre repentinamente, sino que es el resultado de una construcción delicada de proyectos, sueños y expectativas, que ocurren tanto por parte de los solicitantes a la adopción, como por el niño y/o adolescente que está esperando para una nueva familia. El objetivo era saber cómo sucedió la construcción del proyecto adoptivo, desde la perspectiva de padres e hijos, hasta una familia compuesta por una pareja y cuatro hermanos que fueron adoptados. La recolección de datos se realizó a través de entrevistas y observación con registro en el diario de campo. Fue verificado que la principal motivación de los adoptantes para adoptar era el deseo de formar una familia y ejercer la parentalidad. Se notó que había apertura con respecto al perfil deseado y la apertura para el encuentro con el niño real. Con respecto a los niños, hubo dificultades para expresar cómo experimentaron el proyecto de adopción, lo que sugiere la necesidad de más acciones dirigidas a la preparación de niños y adolescentes en proceso de adopción. Se concluyó sobre la relevancia de la construcción del proyecto de adopción por parte de todos los involucrados y que se ofrece poco espacio para que el niño presente sus narrativas y elaboraciones sobre esta construcción.

**Palabras clave:** Niño; adopción; familia.

### Introduction

Facing the challenges that adoption may present, the preparatory courses for adoption commonly focus on the issue of preparing postulants and thematize the importance of building a solid adoptive project by them (Bohm et al., 2019; Morelli, Scorsolini-Comin, & Santeiro, 2015; Silva, Silva, Lopes, & Frizzo, 2017). From this perspective, two essential reflections are presented. The first is configured as questioning concerning what an adoptive project is. And the second a wondering: should such a project be built only by the postulants or by the child and/or adolescent as well?

The Child and Adolescent Statute (Lei nº 8.069, 1990) addresses the issue of preparation for adoption in a two-way via by recommending the mandatory preparation of applicants (art. 50) and the need to prepare children and adolescents in relation to adoption (art. 28, paragraph 1). However, this legal indication is still not a guaranteed reality for all children and adolescents adopted in the Brazilian context (Alvarenga & Bittencourt, 2013; Contente, Cavalcante, & Silva, 2013; Gomes & Levy, 2016; Valério & Lyra, 2016).

From the standpoint of qualification for adoption, now, the Justice System has under its control only what concerns the capability of adults, since children and adolescents who are sheltered in foster care institutions or with foster families are submitted to decisions taken by the Executive and not by the Judiciary (National Council of Social Assistance) Orientações Técnicas: serviços de acolhimento para criança e adolescentes, 2009). Thus, the qualification conducted with adults follows the steps recommended by ECRAD (Lei nº 8.069, 1990), art. 197 A, B, C, D and E, which ensures that postulants undergo psychosocial preparation and evaluation before having their names placed in the waiting line for a child. However, the preparation of children and adolescents should be performed based on an integrated action between actors from the Judiciary and the Executive, which often does not occur (Content et al., 2013; Gomes & Levy, 2016).

In the performance sphere of psychosocial teams in the Childhood Courts (Varas da Infância), the term adoptive project is related to the parental project, a desire to have children and exercise parenthood in a non-biological way. Since the adoptive project's construction involves maturing the willingness to start parenting through adoption and preparing the arrival of the child and/or adolescent in the new family dynamics (Morelli et al., 2015; Silva et al., 2017). In addition to this new definition of places in the family, there should be an opening to work on the deconstruction of issues associated with the idealizations made by adopting parents, besides considering aspects related to legislation (especially about the rights of children and adolescents in the context of adoption), the child and/or adolescent's profile and the history that each member of the new family has (Paulina, Ferreira, Bobato, & Beker, 2018).

However, Diniz, Bloris, Alves and Moireira (2015) emphasize the care that must be taken with the term preparation. It can involve a hidden meaning; that is, prepared postulants would not encounter challenges during the child's insertion and/or in the new family context. By analogy, the same thing could be concluded concerning children and adolescents. Yet, the authors alert that the bond building between parents and children can be marked by encounters and disagreements in the game of expectations and realities present in parenting/affiliate relationships. They defend, therefore, that the idea of mutual construction of the adoptive project is more appropriate than 'preparation of postulants' since it considers both parents and children involved in the desire to initiate a bond, which must be permeated by reciprocal affection.

From the perspective of adults, Cecílio and Scorsolini-Comin (2016) point out that parenthood is a time of special attention in the life cycle, a period in which future parents need to make various adjustments for the arrival of their child, whether biological or adoptive. These adjustments involve material and routine aspects, structuring the psyche and constructing maternal and paternal identities precisely by assuming new social and family roles. As part of this discussion, Morelli et al. (2015, p. 177) analyze that the development of parenting, both in the case of biological and adoptive parenthood, also involves the "[...] subjective ability of parents to build an image of their child, create dreams and expectations about them, giving them family characteristics".

Even so, the parenting birth by the adoptive via presents some additional challenges for future parents, as unlike biological parenthood, in adoption, new parents will have to deal with the fact that their new son or daughter was initially a child of another person, besides facing aspects related to judicial complexities, which can make this form of parenting more stressful for postulants (Moyer & Goldenberg, 2015). Hamad (2002) highlights that, even if in the sphere of the adoptive project's construction by a couple, it should be built together, it is essential that each member can be listened to individually, since each of the applicants is marked differently by the desire to adopt, including expectations. In this regard, Hueb and Cecílio (2015) point out that, throughout the construction of adoptive parenting, the willingness of each member of the couple may be different or show disagreements regarding its construction. Such a view confirms the notes of Schettini, Amazonas and Dias (2006) and Hamad (2002), who considered that each member of the couple had in their private background their desires and fantasies, not always coincident, about the expected child.

From the point of view of children and/or adolescents, Law nº 12.010 (Lei nº 12.010, 2009) art. 28, paragraph 5, amended the wording of ECRIAD (Lei nº 8.069, 1990). It established as mandatory the gradual preparation of children and adolescents living in foster care institutions to enter a new family through adoption. Considering the context of adoption and its surroundings, changes in the regulatory framework reflect an increase in the

perception that it is imperative to listen to children and adolescents about their needs and fears to build a gradual adoptive project. Thus, it is assumed that the construction of the new family is marked by the maturation of choice not only for adults but also for the child and/or adolescent involved (Guimarães, 2015; Hueb & Cecílio, 2015).

In the same sense, Gomes and Levy (2016) emphasize that when it comes to constructing affective bonds, space for building an adoptive project on both parents and the child and/or adolescent is essential. But what would this construction consist of on the part of the child and/or adolescent? According to the authors, they should be allowed to develop a process of reframing their life stories. As already pointed out, this adoptee has experienced other affective bonds, other pains and joys, before being face to face with a new family. Therefore, the adoptive project's construction by the child and/or adolescent is related to offering a space for listening and welcoming to express their feelings, fears and expectations towards the new family.

In addition to the above, based on the assumption that every affective relationship is bidirectional, in the case of building a family through the adoptive via, it is essential to give the child and/or adolescent the opportunity to have an active voice concerning whether they wish or not, start a relationship with a particular family. ECRIAD (Lei nº 8.069, 1990) only grants this legal right to children aged over twelve (art. 45, paragraph 2). Studies also suggest that those from adoption waiting list should be informed about characteristics that will make up their new reality of life, starting with information related to aspiring parents, passing through details on the home and the community environment (Alvarenga & Bittencourt, 2013; Contente et al., 2013).

ECRIAD (Lei nº 8.069, 1990) agrees with such studies by highlighting that the purpose of adoption is to guarantee the universal right of children and adolescents to family interaction, thus shifting the centrality of attention from the adopter to the child and/or adolescent. However, Contente et al. (2013) lament that, when the issue comes to qualification for adoption, the Justice System has not dedicated to the child and/or adolescent the same attention as postulants. The authors attribute this position to the fact that the applicants' desires in the adoption line overlap over those of children and adolescents in foster institutions waiting for a family. Thus, it is argued that the adoptive project's construction, both by the adopters and the adoptees, is related to actions that should take place in the pre-adoption moment and is essential for the approximation, interaction and bonding between the members of the new family in the adoptive context (Guimarães, 2015). Such planning includes contacts between future parents and children, in different contexts, until both feel free to spend weekends together in the home that will house the extended family and can finally be together permanently. Pre-adoption involves moments in which the child and/or adolescent can get to know a little about the new reality they will experience, and the parents can, in turn, learn a little about their current reality.

Such an approach is defended as essential to the maturing of the adoptive project on both sides, as supported by studies on the subject (Gomes & Levy, 2016; Guimarães, 2015; Morelli et al., 2015; Peiter, 2011). Thus, in the process of getting closer to the child and/or adolescent, postulants would be encouraged, with legal consent, to visit the school where they study, the regular pediatrician, the small square in which they usually frolic or play. The child and/or adolescent, in turn, would be able to learn about their new home, the new community, some members of the extended family and other aspects of their new life that interested them. So that both sides can mature the adoptive projects that already brought with them before the real encounter made possible by the beginning of coexistence.

Given the above, this study aimed to know how the adoptive project's construction arose from parents and children's perspectives for a family composed of a couple and four siblings who were adopted together and experiencing insertion into a new family.

## Method

The present study was qualitative in nature, as it allowed the analysis of the participants' perspectives on a given phenomenon (Flick, 2013). The case study was chosen as a methodological strategy due to “[...] its ability to deal with a wide variety of evidence - documents, artifacts, interviews, and observations - besides what may be available in the conventional historical study” (Yin, 2001, p. 27). The participants were Cláudia and Antônio, who legally adopted four brothers, and their three eldest children, Lara, aged eleven, Gustavo, aged eight and Lucas, aged five. The youngest daughter was only one year old at the time of the research, making it impossible for her to answer the questions proposed by the instruments in this study. The children had been inserted into the new family for a year and three months. The legal process of adoption was still ongoing; at the time of the research, the parents had provisional custody of each of the children.

The material presented composes partial data from a master's thesis already defended. Data collection was conducted at the participants' homes from six meetings with the family, lasting four hours each. Semi-structured interview scripts were used, conducted with parents and children, in addition to observations during the visits, which were recorded in a field diary. For this work, questions directed to parents were used regarding planning, motivation, expectations and preparation for adoption. For the children, the questions addressed whether they were informed about the possibility of adoption, what they thought and felt about it, and the first contacts with the new family. The data analysis process was based on the Thematic Analysis, proposed by Braun and Clark (2006). The authors have detailed the steps of this modality of analysis in Psychology and have been recommended as a reference for researchers who seek to use this methodology (Joffe, 2011).

This study followed the ethical recommendations for researching human beings under the guidelines of Resolution No. 510/2016 of the National Health Council. It was approved by the Ethics and Research Committee of the Espírito Santo Federal University under the number 1,579,323. The names of participants presented in the study are fictitious.

## Results

### The adoptive project's construction: parents' point of view

Cláudia and Antônio started the adoption process after twenty-two years of union. Antônio, forty-two years old, worked as a master builder and emphasized that he built the house in which the family resided at the time of the research. Cláudia, aged thirty-eight, was a teacher at Elementary School I. The family did not have a domestic helper, and Cláudia was responsible for the main household chores. She worked the afternoon shift, the same shift the children studied, and Antônio worked both shifts.

As regards the adoptive project's construction, it was reported by Cláudia that after fifteen years of marriage, the desire to be a mother emerged. However, after the couple performed a series of medical examinations, the impossibility of having a pregnancy without resorting to an IVF (In Vitro Fertilization) was confirmed. According to Antônio's report, discovering the impossibility of having a biological child was not simple. "The doctor said

she could not get pregnant, then Cláudia spoke to me on the phone, and she was crying, and I still remember it today. Like, it wasn't easy for me, got it? When she called me like that, crying, but afterward everything was fine. In fact, over time, we discovered that the problem wasn't even with her. We went for the exam, and the problem was with me".

Cláudia said it was a shock to discover that she couldn't get pregnant, as there was a great family expectation about her motherhood. She emotionally stressed, "You can't get pregnant...when you discover something like this you want to disappear (crying). The family charges you all the time, people charge you, I come from a large family, you know that thing "you're not even good for having a child?".

The decision to adopt, after the revelation that they could not have biological children, was also motivated by the fact that Cláudia did not welcome the idea of having to undergo medical interventions (IVF) to have a biological child, " I did not fantasy myself on a bed, then yes, I found out that I didn't want to get pregnant, I wanted to have children". She added, "I was facing the exams, but the idea of adoption was born at that moment. I thought, 'gee, what if I don't get pregnant?' Then I discovered that I had no desire to have a belly, but I had to be a mother". The couple said they became eligible for adoption four years after they initially thought about the matter. The loss of Cláudia's father was evaluated as a decisive circumstance for her to reevaluate her life and not dedicate herself only to work, finally taking the initiative of initiating the formal procedures to become parents through adoption via.

From the beginning, Antônio e Cláudia qualified themselves for late adoption. The initial profile for which they were legally authorized was for a group of siblings composed of up to three children, with no definition of ethnicity or gender. As for the age, initially, Cláudia wanted to adopt children in the age range of five to ten years old, and Antônio wanted to be in the age group he called "smallest, as soon as he was born". After reaching a consensus, they decided to adopt a group of siblings made up of children from zero to eight years old.

In the year two thousand and fourteen, five months after the beginning of the procedures, the couple was duly qualified. Soon after, Cláudia conducted an active search in the adoption support groups and found those who would be her children. She described this moment saying that she was at work, using the computer when she came across the description of the age of a group of three brothers in need of a family. So, she told her colleague, "Oh, I found my kids!" During the conversation with her colleague, she added, "they are these here, the age difference is three years from one to the other, so there is no equal demand, a good difference". However, only later she was informed that there were four children and not three, as they had requested, as there was a small child that was not included in the initial description. Thus, Cláudia reported that she called her husband and said: "Oh my dear, I have four brothers to be my children" and that he replied, "but weren't there three?". The two laughed in the interview as they recalled that moment.

In the same year, on the twenty-ninth of November, they made the first visit to those who would be their children – in the children's State of origin. Thus, from a chronological point of view, the first contacts with the children were provided by the Host Institution team and took place in November and December in the city in which the children lived. After starting the process of adopting the children, Cláudia and Antônio were authorized to start the coexistence stage in December, which lasted five days, a period in which the couple moved to a hotel in the city with the children and was followed up by the technical team. After this time, on the tenth of February (2015), they received provisional custody and could bring home the four children, who were ten, seven, four and one year old at the time of adoption.

Regarding expectations, Cláudia explained that since the moment she qualified, she had not preferred the physical characteristics of the expected children, "I wasn't looking for a face, I wasn't looking for a color. I knew they were somewhere, and I knew they would be bigger. So, I didn't have specific expectations, I had the desire to be a mother, but the face of these children didn't exist. I can't explain it". Antônio, in turn, showed some difficulty in talking about his expectations, highlighting practical issues, such as the concern with the preparation of the house and adequate space to receive future children, attributing this to his professional performance.

### **The adoptive project's construction: children's point of view**

In presenting her perspective on how her adoption process happened, the eldest daughter, Lara, emphasized that she felt "very, very, very, very, very happy". She could not detail how she received the news that a family would like to meet her but explained that she was living in the host family's house when the shelter's psychologist sought her out to talk about the possible adoption. Lara said that she told the psychologist, "It's good," and that when she experienced this moment, she felt "normal", not extending herself to talk more about this feeling. When asked if she wanted to know details about her parents, she replied, "I'm not very keen on knowing someone's background, on knowing a lot about it". She said she didn't think much about his new family, she only saw Cláudia and Antônio's photograph in black and white, and the word she used to name what she thought of them was "normal". Lara detailed this saying that "they were... normal, except that my mother (referring to Claudia) had bigger hair, normal. And my father was normal" and said that when she saw the photo, she felt the same "normal" thing. When answering if she would like to leave a message for people who want to adopt, Lara excused herself, went to her room and returned with a T-shirt. She answered the question by reading the sentence written on the shirt in a smiling and emotional way: "The message I want to leave is this sentence: 'Foster child doesn't come from outside; he comes from inside'. This means that even if the child is not your biological, you still love him the same way you would love your child".

Talking about his perception of his adoption, Gustavo reported that he could not remember what he felt when he found out he would be adopted. He just said he was afraid of being adopted alone and not with his siblings. Like his sister, he did not remember how the actions related to pre-adoption were worked out with him. He said that the first thing he thought about his new family was that "they lived close to the beach" and that he was delighted when his parents took him to the beach for the first time.

Specifically, about the perception he built about Cláudia, he said, "I thought she was the way she was when she visited us (smiling). She was our aunt, but she became a mother, and with my father too... my feeling was the same way". When answering if he would like to leave a message for people who want to adopt, Gustavo said, "Adoption is good. Adopting is because .... because you never had a child in your life. The parents are happy, the child is happy... Because the child was in the orphanage a long time ago, when he is adopted, he gets joy, and joy is particularly good".

Lucas took a while to understand the reason for the interview, but to offer a little additional explanation about the research, he was told, "So what's the name of what your parents did when they came to pick you up and said, 'you are our children now! Now I'm taking you home to be with us. It is...? He completed by asking, "Do I love?" and laughed a lot.

Although Lucas expressed an intense desire to get closer to the researcher, he did not show much interest in answering the questions and endeavored to explore the box with items for the drawing. Faced with questions that explored his perception of adoption, he often responded with just silence. But he managed to expose a little of his thoughts about what he was experiencing in his new home. When asked when he found out that he would be adopted, he paused silently and then the following dialogue was introduced:

Researcher, "When did you know that you would be adopted with your siblings?".  
 Lucas, "Nobody told me anything that I would have a new family. I used to live with my mother, Luísa".

Researcher, 'Who is Luísa, Lucas?'

Lucas, "Luísa is my other mother, my mother, another".

(Silence, he didn't want to talk much about it anymore).

Researcher, "But you weren't with her when you came here, were you?"

Lucas, "No. I was in the shelter".

Researcher, "How did you know Cláudia would come to meet you?"

Lucas, "I miss... Luísa a lot".

Researcher: "Yeah? And do you say that to anyone?"

Lucas, "Never" (answered with a sad expression).

From that moment on, he silenced and engaged in playful activities. The matter has been put aside temporarily. He only added that his memory of the first time he saw Cláudia and Antônio was related to the idea that "they took me to very nice places". Explaining that his first memory referred to the moments when his parents took him for a walk in the park and on the beach.

Moreover, during visits to the family's home, it was also observed that parents talked about adoption in front of the children and with the children, expressing naturalness about the issue and that the family welcomed memories about the biological mother. It was noticed that the mother was involved concerning adoption, reporting feeling like a militant in this cause, speaking with conviction about how much she did not tolerate prejudice and considering adoption a legitimate way to build a family. The interaction between parents and children was also observed, and it became evident, on the first day of data collection, that Cláudia and Antônio presented themselves as a reference for the four children, concerning practical care and affective aspects.

## Discussion

Cecílio and Scorsononi-Comin (2016) highlighted in their study that when it comes to constructing the adoptive project by couples, the desire for adoption must be shared between the two members of the couple, and it must be consolidated even before the child's arrival. It was noted that in the case of Antônio and Cláudia, they experienced the adoptive project in diverse ways, which is analyzed by Hamad (2002), who emphasizes that despite the conjugality being sustained from joint projects, it is not possible to consider the couple as a 'diactical unit'. Schettini et al. (2006) complemented this idea by mentioning that each spouse has his background, expectations, and fantasies about the expected child.

Thus, the motivation for adoption is considered multifaceted, as in some cases, the postulants start an adoptive project based on the discovery of infertility (Giacomozzi, Nicoletti, & Godinho, 2015; Rinaldi, 2017), while in other cases, it appears as the primary motivation originated from altruistic or humanitarian reasons (Rinaldi, 2017; Young, 2012). The need to transmit the family name across generations is also, for some applicants, an



essential motivational component of the adoptive project, in addition to the belief that having a child contributes to the feeling of well-being and completeness (Gibbons & Brown, 2012).

However, about the researched couple, it was found that the main motivation for them to start an adoptive project was the desire to have children, to be able to be a father and mother. It derived from an agreement between the spouses when deciding to build a family with children, an aspect highlighted by Cecílio and Scorsolini-Comin (2016). Although it was observed that Cláudia was sensitive to the children's background, altruism did not stand out as an initial element in the couple's motivation in building the adoptive project. The participant's report also showed that the primary reason was not based on the attempt to erase the impossibility of having biological children but on the understanding that having children was not limited to consanguinity and pregnancy. Thus, it can be concluded that the adoption project of the couple in question also demonstrated multifaceted influences. Although the themes of infertility and altruism were explicit in their narratives, the project desires to have children and exercise parenthood as its primary foundation.

Still referring to the parents' construction of the adoptive project, it was observed that both converged in connection with the definition of the desired child characteristics, as they wanted a group of siblings composed of up to three children of any ethnicity or gender. However, there was a divergence in age because Cláudia wished to carry out a late adoption, while Antônio preferred to adopt younger children, if possible, newborns. Nevertheless, they agreed that they would desire to receive children between zero and eight years old, and both consented to receive Lara. She was over eight years old at the time they started living together.

Hueb and Cecílio (2015) analyze that in cases where there are divergences concerning the profile of the child and/adolescent to be adopted during the adoptive project's construction, participation in the preparatory course and the presence of respect for feelings and desires helps in joint decision-making that contemplates the possibilities and impossibilities of each of the applicants. This negotiation could be observed with Cláudia and Antônio, as they sought agreement regarding their expectations about the new family they were planning.

About the analysis of the results obtained with the children, it is noteworthy that the implementation of adoption presents a significant transition for the adoptee, not only from an environmental point of view but also from a psychological point of view, since that the child and/or adolescent inserted into a new family experiences ruptures and new beginnings (Guimarães, 2015). Peiter (2011) also states that the entry of the child and/or adolescent into a new family introduces a type of historical discontinuity in their life. Thus, due to this rupture, it was considered essential to approach the theme of the adoptive project with the child, within its narrative possibilities, in the sense of understanding how each of the children experienced the exit from their previous context to the new family.

In relation to this question, it was observed that the three children found it challenging to talk in detail about how they experienced the beginning of the adoptive project. This theme proved to be a sensitive point for children, as they did not show the same difficulties concerning other questions made during the research.

Nevertheless, it can be pointed out by Lara and Gustavo's descriptions that both were participants in the adoptive project's construction by accepting and expressing the moment of approximation of the couple positively. Lara stated that she wanted to be part of the new family when she reported that she remembered the moment of getting closer to Cláudia and Antônio and the photo that the shelter professionals showed her. Her narratives indicated consent to the adoption, as Lara responded positively when the shelter professionals

consulted her about the matter. On the other hand, Gustavo reported positive feelings about meeting in the park with those who would be his new parents. He demonstrated, like his sister, an active posture in the adoptive project's construction by accepting the approximation between him and the couple, thus considering the possibility of insertion in this new family. Contente et al. (2013) state that the fact that the child is allowed to express his/her desire to start, of his own volition, a new family bond contributes to the child's adaptation process to this family and such opportunity is considered especially important in studies on adoptive affiliation (Fernandes & Santos, 2019; Gomes & Levy, 2016).

In the context of the participation of children and/or adolescents in the adoptive project's construction, it is expected that, throughout the life trajectory of adopted children and adolescents, they move from one context to another, subject to the decisions of adults, in an impotent manner, so that the child and/or adolescent has little or no opportunity to build an adoptive project (Guimarães, 2015) effectively. About the children in question, the narrative of the two older children illustrates that, at least, they had the opportunity to express their desire to be, or not, adopted. However, both Lara and Gustavo brought few elements regarding an adequate preparation for adoption, which gives signs that, as studies on the subject point out, the construction of the adoptive project is worked out more with the adopters than with those who are in the process of being adopted.

Regarding the younger brother, it was found that Lucas did not speak openly about the initial moment of adoption and that his answers regarding the moment before approaching the new family were linked to the memory of the biological mother. However, even without expressing in more detail how the first approximations with the father and mother were, his reports demonstrate that a common point among Lara, Gustavo and Lucas, about the perception of the adoptive process is that the three expressed how much they felt welcomed by the couple and welcomed in their new home since the process was started.

About Lucas' mentions about his biological mother, it is analyzed that, by bringing the two references simultaneously, from the approximation with the current parents and the longing for the biological mother, the child was still trying to integrate his past experiences with current ones. He felt free to talk about the birth mother when he felt like it, which signaled a facilitating aspect of this integration between past and present. Concerning the issue of transition experienced by the child and/or adolescent in the context of insertion into a new family, when there is respectful acceptance on his past, such a parental attitude facilitates his integration into the new family (Fernandes & Santos, 2019; Gomes & Levy, 2016).

Thus, it was observed that the children's narratives reaffirm the importance of having a more significant investment in the preparation of children and adolescents who are on the verge of experiencing insertion into a new family in the pre-adoption phase, as pointed out by the researchers on the subject (Alvarenga & Bittencourt, 2013; Contente et al., 2013; Guimarães, 2015; Gomes & Levy, 2016).

## **Final considerations**

From the analysis of the results, it was observed that the adoptive project's construction marks the possibility that both parents and children should have a time of elaboration and preparation regarding the beginning of a new coexistence, observed not only by expectations but also fears and insecurities. It is considered that, by seeking better to understand the point of view of adults and children, this study contributed to expanding knowledge about the child's experience concerning the imminence of insertion into a new

family. Thus, the need to prioritize pre-adoption actions with those waiting to be adopted, not just those who wish to adopt, has taken special importance.

However, it was found that, despite the literature review emphasizing the importance of space for the preparation of applicants regarding the construction of a solid adoptive project based on the willingness to exercise parenthood, the researched couple did not highlight the preparation for qualification adoption as something that helped them to develop emotional resources to deal with the challenges they faced while adapting with their new children. These results arouse reflections on the effectiveness of the adoption preparation courses in the construction and implementation of the adoptive project.

Thus, the importance of the consistent development of public policies that involve preparation actions aimed at the whole family is reiterated to favor reflections on the construction of a family bond in the adoptive context so that both parents and children feel helped by these preparation processes, to deal with the challenges that may present themselves during the delicate construction of the family bond.

As this is a qualitative case study with a small number of participants, it is also considered necessary that a more considerable number of families could reveal their feelings and perceptions about the adoptive project to obtain results that can expand knowledge on the subject.

For these reasons, we alert to the relevance of further research on the particularities that permeate the construction of an adoptive project to produce subsidies for professionals from multidisciplinary teams that deal with families in the process of adoption, expanding the possibility to support adopters and adoptees at the time of pre-adoption.

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