

Study name: Health and social condition of adoptees in Greenland - a comparative register and population based field study. Creation of an "adoptees-database"

Project number: Eol #1202 - IPY project # 167

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Abstract:

The Aim of the present research project is to highlight adoptees' and stepchildrens' morbidity and mortality, delinquency and social conditions compared to non-adoptees in Greenland.

Greenland has a long tradition of child adoption and collective child care. In small societies, a strategy for survival is a strong, stable community, where child mobility is an integrated part of the social system.

Nowadays, child adoption and foster care need accept from legal authorities. However, a large number of children are moving 'in and out' of different placements, but there is no evidence that these movements are the results of the administrative regulations. The exact figures of children raised by other people, than their birth parents, are unknown.

Some sources argue that child neglect is the reverse side of Greenland, and that social problems make it difficult for parents to ensure a safe childhood for their children.

In the period 1988-2005, 594 children were legally adopted. 389 were ≤ 10 years at the adoption date. Compared to Danish adoptees same age, this amount is 60-70 times higher.

International research indicates, that children relinquished for international adoption have a poorer health status than children raised by their birth parents, and that children adopted in-country have a better life than children placed at institutions.

The research is composed by

1. A cross-sectional register based study examining a cohort of adoptees (n = 594) born between 1974 and 2005 compared to non-adoptees (n = 11,703).
2. A field study planned to be conducted in East and West Greenland

Considering that adoption is closely linked to social organization, identity, cultural openness and collective consciousness, in what kind of settings is adoption linked to child neglect and lack of care? Do adoption and child mobility have an impact on well being, family health and social condition in a Greenlandic context?

The field study will pay attention to parents' and care givers' control and coping strategies.

History proves that laws and regulations only can be efficiently implemented and self sufficiency become sustainable, when development issues are designed in a coherent society constructed upon

its own culture. The all over strategy of the research is a Greenlandic ownership, where students' and local populations' participation are a 'sine quoi none' condition.

Project status: Active

Project Progress 2008:

The first study area covers psychiatric aspects: 'Greenlandic adoptees' psychiatric contact. A comparative cross-sectional register research'. The findings are prepared to be published in an international Public Health periodical and are presently undergoing the peer-review process.

Preliminary results have been presented at the VI. International Congress of Arctic Social Sciences in Nuuk in August 2008.

Associated researchers:

Merete Laubjerg, RN, MPH, research assistant.

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and Michèle Therrien, Professor in 'Arctic Anthropology and Inuit Ethno-linguistics'. Institut National des Langues et Civilisations Orientales (INALCO), Paris.

Plans 2009:

Continue the register based research. Elaborate the field study proposal and applications for grant support.

Expected Completion Date:

Ongoing