

Art and Adoption: Exploring Life and Identity with Adopted People



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The construction of identity involves narrating stories that allow for the articulation of a sense of self capable of linking past, present, and future. In the case of adoption, this process is especially complex, given that it includes diverse experiences of separation, integration, and belonging to different families, cultures, and relational spaces.

Narrative research can be considered a highly relevant approach for ethically and meaningfully examining the complex processes of meaning-making related to identity in adoption. By recognizing identity as a dynamic phenomenon, this perspective allows for the recovery of underheard voices and fosters personal agency and the reinterpretation of experiences. In addition, in recent years, interest in participatory, creative, and arts-based research methods has increased significantly in the field of social sciences. This interdisciplinary approach uses principles of the creative arts in all phases of research and, as Patricia Leavy points out, has a largely unexplored potential for expanding human knowledge, understanding, and problem-solving.

These approaches allow for the involvement of participants through inclusive and expressive means, facilitating the exploration of sensitive experiences and promoting the dissemination of findings beyond the strictly academic sphere. In the field of adoption—a highly regulated, politicized area marked by dominant discourses that often render adopted people invisible through paternalistic

assumptions or framings of vulnerability—these methodologies offer a particularly valuable path. They allow for expanding the possibilities for participation and reformulating narratives about life and identity from the perspectives of those who experience adoption firsthand. At the same time, they raise theoretical, methodological, and ethical challenges that require careful consideration.

Over the years, my aim has been to contribute an innovative and sensitive perspective to critical adoption studies and social studies of childhood, linking them with narrative, participatory, and creative methods, thus articulating diverse interdisciplinary fields to understand adoption from a complex and dialogical perspective. This publication is based on two recent projects I have led as principal investigator in recent years: one in Chile



Workshop "Collaging Life and Identity".
Valencia, 2025.



Workshop "My Story on Screen"
with Jenifer de la Rosa.
Madrid, 2025.

(FONDECYT/ANID No. 3170338) and another one in Spain (AdoptARTE, GA ID: 101105284, funded by the European Commission's Horizon Europe program). Although both incorporated diverse methods (individual and group-based) and different participants (adopted people, adoptive parents, foster families, and professionals), this article focuses on the art-based workshops developed with young and adult adoptees in Chile and Spain, using a selection of techniques.

How the workshops were carried out

The projects presented in this article were conceived using a multi-method and participatory approach, aimed at exploring what adoption is like for those who experience it. The first project was developed in Chile (2017–2020) and included narrative interviews with 35 adult adoptees, as well as five self-portrait workshops with 14 participants between the ages of 21 and 52. The second project, AdoptARTE, was implemented in various cities in Spain (Barcelona, Madrid, Valencia, Valladolid, Pontevedra, Santander, and Pamplona) between 2024 and 2025, and involved 75 adoptees between the ages of 11 and 38. For its implementation, partnerships were established with several institutions, including two associations of adoptees—CORA Joven and APACAT—which were key to organizing and promoting the workshops. Likewise, some workshops

were co-facilitated by specialized artists, such as Dr. Rosario García-Huidobro - and/or adopted people who are also artists, such as Jenifer de la Rosa.

The proposed approach was carefully designed to examine identities as dialogic constructions and to foster creativity and reflexivity, offering a variety of means for participants to narrate their own stories. The combined use of artworks and words allowed for a rich exploration of the complexity of identity construction processes and the diversity of personal experiences that would be difficult to capture through traditional interviews. The methods employed included individual interviews and techniques such as self-portraiture, creative collage, and photovoice using meaningful objects.

These techniques not only functioned as ways of generating material, but also created spaces where it was possible to ethically and sensitively explore the lived experiences of adoption, their temporalities, emotions, and connections to the broader social and cultural world. The materials produced made visible political, social, relational, and affective tensions, revealing the complexity of personal perspectives beyond the traditional verbal record. Using these methods also helped challenge the stigma that has historically impacted adopted people, offering spaces where they can express themselves and exercise their agency.

Furthermore, researching adoption from this perspective has entailed upholding an ethical commitment: the participants are

not merely sources of information but active participants who reflect on and guide the research experience according to their own interests and forms of expression. In this sense, beyond the informed consent required by ethics committees, creating a safe and respectful work environment also involves complex decisions regarding anonymity, authorship, and the future of the



Workshop "Collaging Life and Identity".
Pamplona, 2025.



"We are bridges".
Collage.
Chandra.

works produced, always respecting each person's voice and experience. Therefore, each participant decided how they wished to be identified (for example, by requesting that their real name be used or by choosing a pseudonym), balancing ethical considerations with autonomy.

After digitization, the return of the original works to their creators reaffirmed their symbolic ownership and agency, allowing them to reinterpret their creations beyond the workshop or, as some participants told me, to incorporate them into their personal living spaces (for example, a special place in their homes).

Self-Portrait: Looking at Oneself from Another Perspective

The self-portrait technique—used in various workshops within the FONDECYT/ANID project—as Anna Bagnoli points out, allows for a holistic exploration and narration of the participants' identities and lives. It also helps to break silences and visualize aspects that, for various reasons, can be sensitive and difficult to express in words. In the first part of the workshop, visual artist and feminist researcher Rosario García Huidobro gave a presentation on the technique and referenced artists, and outlined some general guidelines for its implementation. In the second part, the participants created



El (re)conocimiento.

Self-portrait.

Marcela.

their self-portraits using different materials, accompanied by both her and me throughout the process.

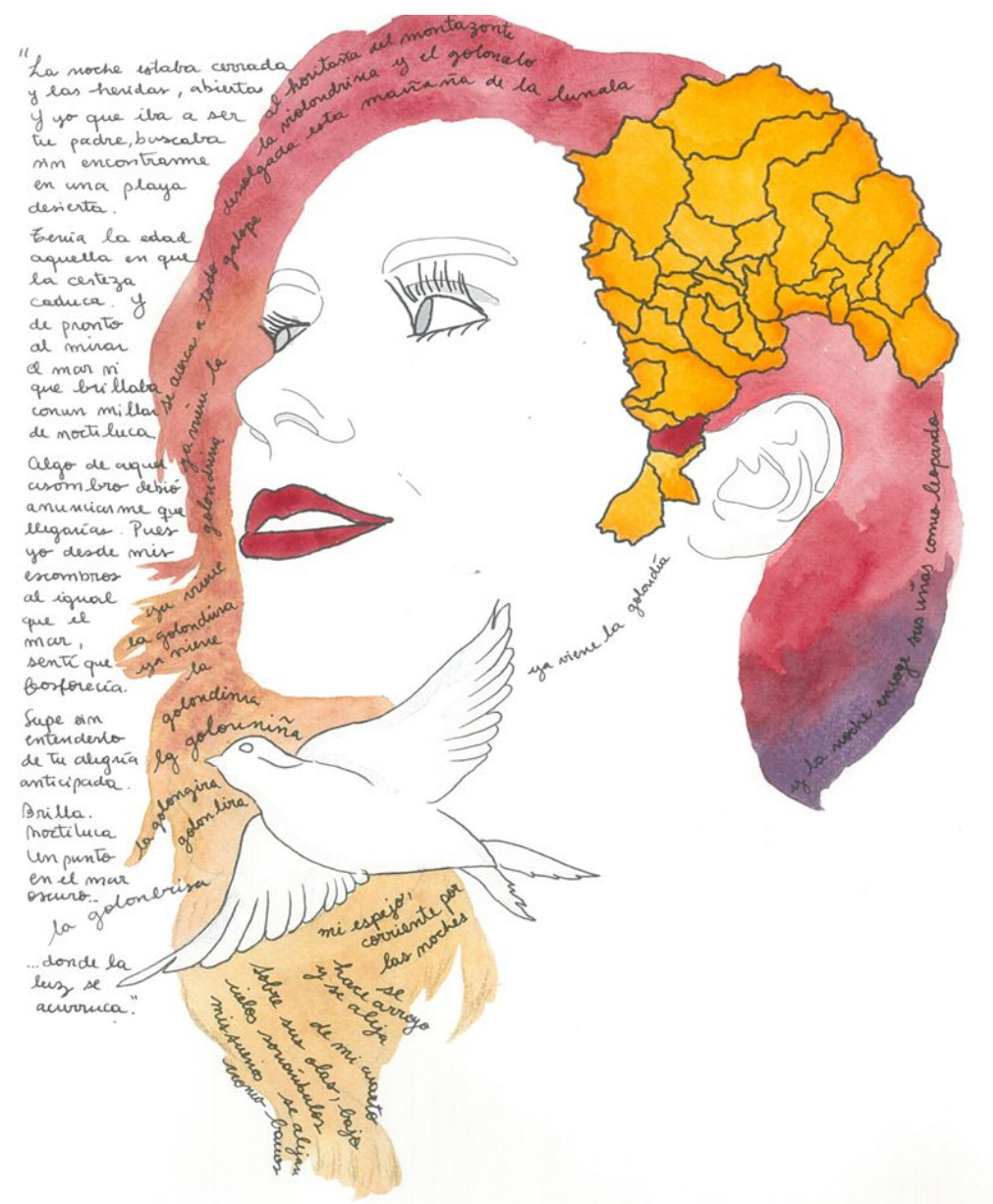
The self-portrait created an ethical and affective space in which the participants could decide what to show, how to combine the elements, and what meanings to assign to each fragment. It thus becomes an act of co-creation, where each person's timing, decisions, and modes of expression are respected. Each self-portrait was transformed into a visual narrative where discontinuities and gaps are not hidden, but rather acknowledged and integrated. This allowed for the

construction of identity narratives that are simultaneously personal, aesthetic, and political: they offer a voice to those who are often rendered invisible in traditional discourses on adoption.

To illustrate the application of this technique, the case of Gisella (35 years old) is presented below. Her self-portrait integrates photography, drawing, texts of various kinds, and significant objects. She explained it as follows:

"I chose that song because it's very moving. It's about a father singing to his son. I wanted to express, through Jorge Drexler's lyrics, the impact a person can feel upon learning they will become a parent. I also wanted to incorporate two important elements in my life: birds, which for me are a symbol of liberation, and the map of the region of Chile where I was born and raised, where my life took shape. In particular, I marked the city where I began my career and where I met a dear friend who I still keep in touch with. There, I learned to value and appreciate the simple things in life. That place, for me, is associated with maturing and growing. The intensity of the colors reflects how intense I feel; I love birds, and the place where I grew up has profoundly defined who I am."

The meaning of Gisella's self-portrait is clearly reflected in its chosen title, "El sobrevuelo" ("Overflight"), and in the central figure of the bird, which symbolizes her yearning for freedom and the



El sobrevuelo.
Self-portrait.
Gisella.

possibility of observing herself from a different perspective. Her creation combines photography, drawing, text, and significant objects such as a tattoo, a song, a map, and several birds - into a complex and deeply personal visual narrative. Gisella, a self-taught artist and passionate birdwatcher (a hobby she shares with her adoptive father), articulates a rich representation of her identity through symbols that interact with one another. The concept of "overflight" alludes both to the literal act of observing from above and to a metaphor for the ability to gain perspective on her own story.

Other participants also explored symbols of transformation, memory, and emotional connections in their self-portraits, incorporating photographs, drawings, fragments of text, tattoos, maps, and personal objects. Although not all cases are detailed here due to space limitations—though ten of these self-portraits can be found in the book *Sankofa*—it is important to note that each work reflected unique processes of reinterpreting and appropriating one's own history.

Collage: Assembling the Fragmented

The use of the creative collage technique—implemented in various versions of the "Collaging Life and Identity" Workshop, within the framework of the AdoptARTE Project—allowed participants to work with scattered fragments, loose images, and seemingly unconnected pieces to construct a new

visual narrative. Collage is a dynamic process in which seemingly isolated elements are combined, reinterpreted, and reveal unexpected connections, opening new ways of understanding one's own life story and identity through a personal visual narrative. In adoption, where gaps or discontinuities may exist in personal history, this technique fosters flexible reconstructions that give rise to both the (un)known and the (in)complete.

Gaby, for example, created “La imagen oculta” (“The Hidden Image”), a collage where butterflies, a raven, plants, the planet Saturn, and words that evoke personal processes such as “Goodbye to Guilt” and “The Path” coexist. The figure of a woman appears partially fused with the word “hidden,” alluding to the tension between what she shows and what she keeps to herself. Gaby explained her work as follows:

“Among all the images I could find, one of them is butterflies. I greatly admire this insect because they are so light and delicate. Whenever I come across one, they make me feel good, as they transmit 'good vibes' to me.

Another of the images I chose was the raven. It's not usually a bird that everyone likes, but I do. They don't frighten me, nor do I believe they are truly a sign of bad luck if they appear, for example, in dreams, ravens are seen as messengers of death or bearers of a negative message. For me, they are admirable birds, with an



La imagen oculta.
Collage.
Gaby.

elegant bearing and presence, and I also love the color black. As for the plants, I chose those leaves somewhat randomly. The image of the planet Saturn takes me back to my childhood; it connects me with my mother, since it was a planet we loved. We would always stop to admire its rings because we were fascinated by them, and we would talk about them. We found it incredible that this planet existed in the solar system.

The chosen phrases are ‘The path’, ‘Goodbye to guilt’, and ‘Your spaces’. ‘Goodbye to guilt’ and ‘The path’ are attached to the butterfly wings

because, for me, they signify that I am in a process of self-discovery, in which I am not to blame for everything that happens, or at least that I shouldn't always blame myself for what happens in my life.

I included 'Your spaces' because they represent my personal space, which I so desperately need, and I believe Saturn was the ideal image for these two words.

Finally, the figure of the girl, partially fused with the word 'hidden', is a representation of myself. I was, and still am, hidden behind a face that I sometimes have to put on, especially when things aren't going well. Little by little, I am managing to get rid of that invented mask. This collage represents personal blossoming, as if everything is gradually emerging, including the *cabecita* ('little head') that is so important to 'keep in its place'."

Without attempting to go beyond the creator's own interpretation of this collage, we could reflect on how this work reveals an intimate process of transformation and personal self-discovery. Each visual element—butterflies, a raven, the planet Saturn, leaves, fragments of text—functions as a symbolic piece in the reconstruction of one's own identity.

As a whole, the collage allows us to reconstruct and reinterpret what has been fragmented, forgotten, or never spoken. It offers a way to give form to what has been

left out, to inhabit the voids without needing to fill them, and to integrate them from a unique perspective. By superimposing images, textures, words, and symbols, each composition becomes a space where past, present, and future converse, expanding memory and enabling new ways of narrating oneself, without submitting to imposed narrative structures.

Thus, beyond its technical dimension, collage is a powerful metaphor for adopted identity: an experiential assemblage composed of unique pieces, a construction in constant transformation. In its poetic and political power, it allows us to understand that not all stories are told in a straight, coherent, or closed line, and that there are different, legitimate, and creative ways of inhabiting complexity.

Photovoice: Objects That Tell Stories

The photovoice technique using significant objects - explored in various versions of the workshop titled "My Favorite Objects" - opened a particularly powerful avenue for delving into memory, identity, and the personal narratives of each participant. In the context of adoption, objects can be vestiges, witnesses, or companions of a little-known past, traces of a fragmented history, or symbols that have accompanied each personal journey, as well as experiences of transition, loss, integration, and/or (re)construction of identity. Photographs, letters, clothing, documents, toys, or seemingly banal objects are experienced as true treasures or sacred symbols. They act as

invisible threads connecting the known with the unknown, facilitating processes of resignification, reappropriation, and dialogue between origin and present. Working with these meaningful objects in the workshops was not just an exercise in memory, but a profound act of reappropriation: a way of giving new meaning to lived experiences, building bridges to origins and giving space to aspects of identity that have often been silenced or displaced.

The objects brought to the workshop not only triggered memories but also acquired a deep symbolic meaning when shared collectively, generating an atmosphere of communion and mutual recognition. Each object held a story, an emotional imprint linked to significant bonds, moments, or transitions. The possibility of doing a photovoice exercise, first photographing the object alone and then in relation to its owners, allowed for the construction of a visual narrative where the intimate became visible and shareable. An example of this was the work of Lucía (25 years old), who brought to the workshop a photograph taken in an orphanage in her native country:

“I brought this photo. I think it’s the picture they took of me at the orphanage to show my parents. I suppose this was the one they showed them to say, ‘This is going to be your daughter.’ They named me Yangmei Chiang Mai. ‘Chiang



Lucia and her object-photograph. Workshop "My Favourite Objects".

Mai,’ ironically, has a somewhat controversial translation.

I discovered with my Chinese teacher—a Spanish woman who studied Chinese—that the literal meaning is something like ‘unwanted child of Yangzhou,’ or ‘orphan girl of Yangzhou.’ It was a fairly common name for girls who didn’t have a name, a generic way of referring to them.

But later, I met people native to China. I would tell them, ‘My name is Chiang Mai,’ and they would reply, ‘How beautiful!’ I asked them why, since they had told me it meant something

sad. And they explained: 'If we translate it literally, yes, it can mean an unwanted child. But if we interpret it from a more literary or poetic perspective, it means plum blossom, which is the only flower that blooms in winter in China. It is a symbol of strength: the flower that blooms in the face of adversity.'

Then I understood that my name can also mean that: the girl who is destined to survive, to bloom even in the middle of winter. That is why I have always wanted to call this photo by my name. Because depending on how you look at it,

it is my decision whether to see this image as the abandoned and adopted child, or to see it as the child who has survived the circumstances of her country."

Lucía's photography, integrated into the workshop's creative process, became a symbolic threshold that allowed her to connect past and present from her own perspective. This process was amplified through the two photographs she took during the workshop. In the first image, the childhood photograph appears placed inside a suitcase, surrounded by papers, letters, and personal belongings. The suitcase functions as an affective and biographical archive, a space where memories, official documents, everyday objects, and remnants of experiences intertwine. It evokes travel, movement, but also the possibility of choosing what to preserve, what to reinterpret, and how to revisit what was once merely a cold record or an administrative record. By placing her photograph within this symbolic container, Lucía suggests that the child she once was continues to inhabit her present, now accompanied by new meanings and connections.

In the image on page 10, Lucía holds the childhood portrait over her present face, partially concealing her current identity behind the image of the past. The seemingly simple gesture activates a powerful visual reading: the adult body supports the child she once was, creating a continuity between the two and allowing a narrative of reconciliation with herself to emerge. It is not about denying the past, but about integrating it: about looking at their history from a place of choice.



Lucía's suitcase.
Workshop "My favourite objects."

Together, these images articulate a deeply personal, but also collective, visual narrative: they speak of the right to look at the past from the present, to reconfigure one's adopted identity not as a closed narrative, but as a constantly shifting constellation. What was imposed—the name, the photograph, the institutional logic—is reinterpreted from a place of creative agency, tenderness, and strength.

Working in a group setting: “brothers and sisters in history”

The use of the group setting allowed for the creation of intimate and supportive spaces where adopted individuals could share their stories in the company of others with similar experiences, moving beyond the one-on-one interview format. In small groups, artistic work based on personal archives involved aesthetic, emotional, and symbolic decisions that fostered expression, the recognition of unexpected abilities, and the processing of meaningful experiences. Active listening, respect, and empathy generated a climate of trust that facilitated the expression of painful aspects of adoption journeys and promoted a strong sense of belonging, experienced by the participants as the formation of a community of “brothers and sisters in history,” as Alexandra (30 years old) expresses it:



Participants of the co-creation project of the book *Sankofa*.

“The workshop and the subsequent group meetings were a wonderful experience—meeting people and becoming friends, ‘brothers and sisters in storytelling,’ as I call them.”

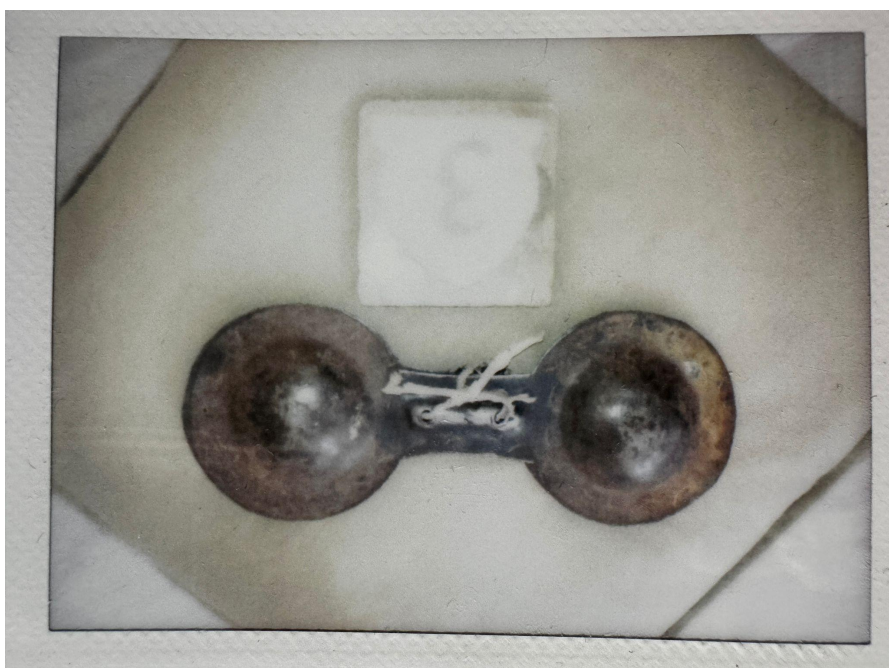
The shared narrative situated the autobiographical experience as a collective and dynamic process of meaning-making, in which personal stories were revealed as open and constantly evolving. Participants not only maintained their individual perspectives but also engaged in broader conversations, sharing, contrasting, and even disagreeing on different meanings. These interactions highlighted that personal narratives are not fixed or closed accounts, but living processes in constant transformation. As Carolina (22) pointed out:

“What struck me was that my drawing wasn’t finished; it’s like my story, because my story isn’t finished. I found it very interesting that a drawing could reflect that truth.”

The workshops concluded with emotions of relief, gratitude, and joy, strengthening bonds that extended beyond the physical space of the meeting. In this way, the research was configured as a relational and generative practice, where care, listening, and shared affection became central dimensions, both to produce knowledge and for the well-being of the participants. For example, in one of the workshops—My Favorite Objects—the participants captured in a photograph the connection and affective resonance that transcended words.

Reflections in Progress

Throughout these years, my interest as a researcher has been to promote ways of working that expand the possibilities of participation of the adopted people and that allow their experiences to be communicated in a sensitive, situated and deep way. The fragments of projects that I present in this article show that the combination and cross-sections between narrative, participatory and arts-based



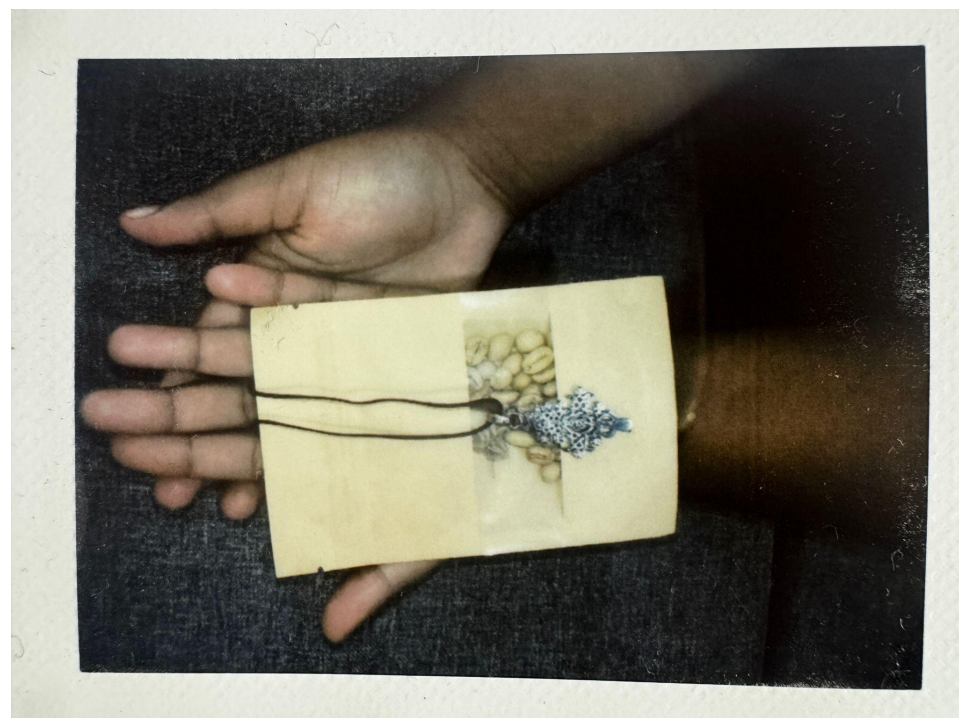
Qraqeb (a traditional Moroccan musical instrument) contributed by a participant in the workshop “My Favourite Objects.”

research not only allows the creation of knowledge “slow fire”, but also enables the construction of more transparent, ethical, human and sensitive research relationships that can approach the complexity of adoption, overcoming the extractivist logics and velocities that predominate in neoliberal academy.

The production, analysis, and presentation of knowledge can take multiple forms and materialities. In particular, the use of various artistic techniques is especially powerful to open languages in which silences, ambivalences, symbols, and / or metaphors that hardly emerge in more traditional devices are accommodated. Techniques such as self-portrait, collage, or photovoice with significant objects allow the fragmentary, ambiguous. or ineffable to find a place of expression, revealing dimensions that often remain hidden after the word. Each person decides what to show, what to resignify and what to integrate. This process of choice becomes an act of affirmation, where the personal, the political and the symbolic intertwine. This opens richer, more creative and beautiful expressive territories, capable of capturing the complexity, depth and ambivalence of the experiences lived. Likewise, the significant participation of the adopted people transforms research into a relational space, where listening, co-creation, care, and beauty are integrated with the production of knowledge, re-dignifying those who participate in it.

This approach not only modifies the dynamics of research, but also expands its impact: in Chile, the co-creation of the book *Sankofa: Adoption stories and searches of origin* and, in Spain, the series of podcast *Re-imagining adoption* have brought these narratives to the public sphere, offering sensitive tools that accompany those who seek to understand their history and promote social reflection on adoption. Integrating artistic and narrative languages turns research into an act of personal and collective affirmation, where past, present and future dialogue and citizen participation expands both the knowledge produced on this subject and the social impact.

Working from this approach also means moving away from the traditional position of researcher as an expert or neutral figure. Investigating from this perspective is, above all, an act of co-creation, which is built on doing, bonding and shared experience. As a researcher, I cannot remain on the sidelines: I must (de)focus and let myself be affected and transformed by the very process that I am setting in motion.



Coffee beans and an Ethiopian cross provided by Martha for the workshop “My Favourite Objects”. Barcelona, 2025.

I take away the certainty that the voices of the adopted people must be at the heart of research and public policy. Their experiences, knowledge and sensitivities deeply enrich our understanding of adoption, and open paths to more respectful, open and careful practices. Nothing learned would have been possible without the generosity of those who shared their stories. I owe each of these people not only knowledge, but also gratitude and humility. This work remains, to a large extent, a collective fabric, built together with those who decided to trust me a part of their lives and help us all to better understand adoption in all its dimensions.

About the author



Irene Salvo Agoglia

I am a psychologist (Universidad de Chile, 2003), with a Master's degree in Family Counseling and Guidance (Universidad de Santiago de Compostela, 2003) and a PhD in Psychology (Universidad de Buenos Aires, 2016). For over two decades, I have dedicated myself to intervention, teaching, research, and specialized consulting in areas related to child rights protection, alternative care, and adoption. As a university professor, I have been affiliated with various institutions since 2001, teaching undergraduate and graduate courses in Chile (Universidad de Alberto Hurtado, Universidad Católica Silva Henríquez, Universidad de Chile, Universidad Mayor, Universidad de las Américas), Argentina (Universidad de Buenos Aires, Universidad Nacional de La Plata), and Spain (Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona). As a specialized consultant, I have collaborated with UNICEF, RELAF, FAI, and various public organizations in Chile and Latin America. In the clinical field, I founded and coordinated GEDIFA (Family Diversity and Care Group). I was also the academic and teaching director of the Diploma in Adoption (SENAME, 2015–2017), an unprecedented training experience in the region, in addition to teaching in numerous postgraduate programs specializing in child protection, alternative care and adoption. As an author, I have published several scientific articles (in English, Spanish, and French), technical materials, and I am the author of the book *Pasado, presente y futuro de la adopción en Chile* (UNICEF, 2025). I also serve on the editorial board of the journal *Adoption Quarterly*.

As a researcher, I have led several FONDECYT/ANID projects. Between 2023 and 2025, I was a Beatriu de Pinós Research Fellow (AGAUR-MSCA) and a Marie Skłodowska-Curie Research Fellow (MSCA, Horizon Europe) at the AFIN Group (Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona), where I led the AdoptARTE project, which focused on participatory, creative, and art-based methodologies with people adopted in Chile and Spain. Currently, I am a Ramón y Cajal Research Fellow in the Grup de Recerca en Intervencions Socioeducatives en Infància i Joventut (GRISIJ), within the Departament de Mètodes de Recerca i Diagnòstic en Educació (MIDE), at the Facultat d'Educació de la Universitat de Barcelona. My research focuses on exploring the experiences and perspectives of adopted children, adolescents, and adults regarding identity, origins, and open adoption, as well as the experiences of their significant figures, both in Chile and Spain. To this end, I develop participatory and creative techniques, as well as narrative and art-based methodologies, that allow access to diverse and complex narratives about the adoption experience.

To watch



Jenifer De La Rosa (2025)

Hija del volcán [Documentary]

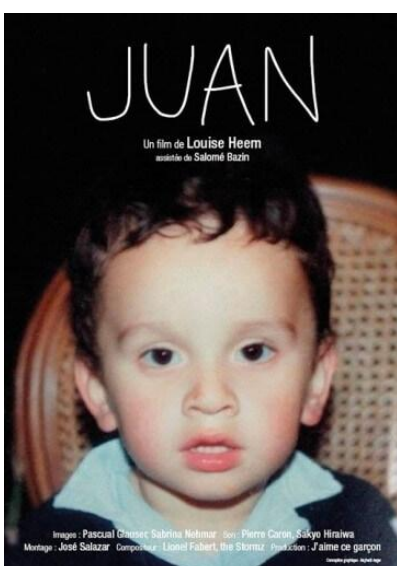
Mayéutica Producciones

The eruption of the Nevado del Ruiz volcano on November 13, 1985, resulted in one of the greatest tragedies in Colombian history, causing the deaths of more than 23,000 people and the near-total destruction of the town of Armero. Jenifer de la Rosa was one of the many children who survived and were adopted abroad, arriving in Valladolid at just a year and a half old. At thirty, motivated by the possibility that her biological mother is still alive, she decides to explore her roots. This investigation takes her back to her native country on a cathartic journey that she captures in images through film. *Hija del volcán* is a work that, at the same time, speaks to a universal experience: that of the diaspora of adopted people around the world. People who, driven by hope and the search for answers, never stop haunting the ghosts, both literal and symbolic, of their past. (Filmaffinity)

Louise Heem (2020)

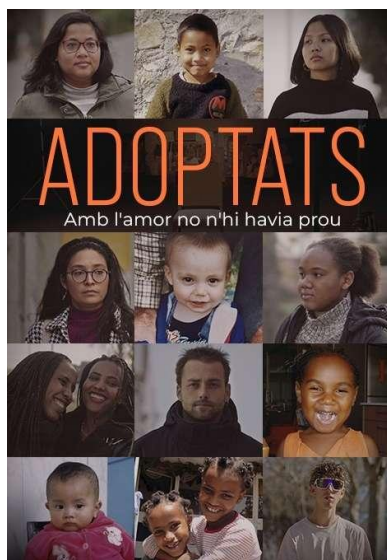
Juan [Documentary]

Produced and distributed by J'aime ce garçon



Juan was adopted in Paraguay in 1987 when he was just a few months old. He has lived in northern France ever since. Since his teens, he has dreamed of returning to his native country to find his biological mother. After much hesitation, fearing she would refuse to see him, Juan finally decided to search for her. Thirty years after arriving in France, he flies to Asunción with his cousin Louise.

[Veure trailer](#)



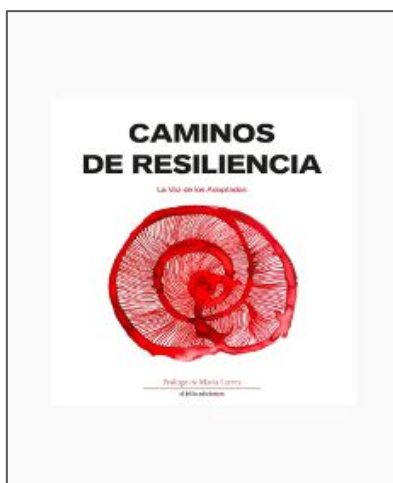
Fúlvia Nicolàs Tolos & Xavier Garcia Balañà (2024)

Adoptats: amb l'amor no n'hi havia prou

TV3

Between 1998 and 2015, more than 13,000 children arrived in Catalonia through international adoptions, at the height of the phenomenon. Today, many of those children are adults, and their voices are beginning to fill the space that was historically silenced. Was the love of adoptive families enough to heal the wounds of abandonment, separation, and displacement? During those years, an idealized narrative prevailed: it spoke of “saving creatures alone in the world,” of children with a “little backpack” of bad experiences that could be eased with love. It was believed that racialized babies would not suffer racism because they had Catalan surnames, and that health problems would be resolved with good parenting. But did it really happen that way? Young people adopted from countries like China, Russia, Ukraine, Nepal, Brazil, Ethiopia, Colombia, and Madagascar are now sharing their experiences. Many recount the deep desire to know their origins, the search for their biological families, and the discovery that they were not abandoned, but separated by poverty, war, or institutional deception. Some have been reunited with their mothers. Others carry the burden of doubt or guilt of hurting their adoptive parents with their searches. The documentary also reveals the contradictions of the international adoption system, including the business it represented, the abuses committed in some countries, and the weight of inequalities between the Global North and South.

To read



La Voz de los Adoptados (2025)

Caminos de resiliencia

El Hilo Ediciones

In this book, the voices of adopted people intertwine to share stories, feelings, and journeys, weaving a complex and profoundly human emotional map of the adoptive experience. These voices contain personal narratives, but also urgent questions, necessary truths, and a collective force that fosters more humane, honest, and respectful ways of understanding adoption. An invitation to listen, without judgment or romanticizing.



Chandra Kala Clemente-Martínez (2022)

Volver a los orígenes, una etnografía de la adopción transnacional

Bellaterra Ediciones

Prepared by Dr. Irene Salvo Agoglia, with the support of UNICEF and the National Service for Specialized Protection of Children and Adolescents (Chile), this book offers a rigorous and multidimensional analysis of adoption in Chile. Based on extensive and participatory research, it incorporates the voices of various key stakeholders: specialized professionals, adopted individuals, adoptive families, judicial system operators, and public policy makers. The publication is especially relevant in the current Chilean context, marked by the enactment of a new adoption law in August 2025.

In this context of transformation, the book traces the historical evolution of the adoption system in the country, addressing controversial practices from the past - such as forced adoptions and child trafficking - and analyzing the cultural, legal, and technical transformations that have shaped the field. With a focus on the rights of adopted individuals throughout their life cycle, the work underscores fundamental principles such as the best interests of the child, the right to identity, and the right to participation.

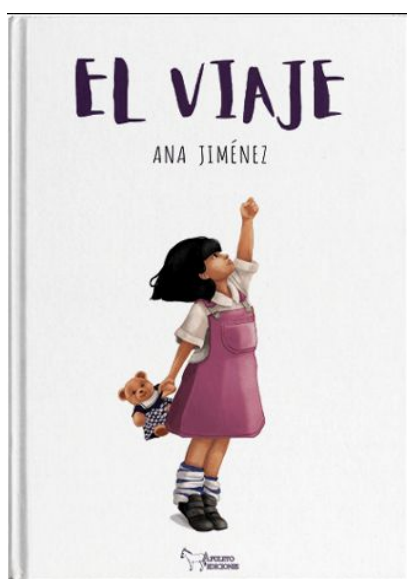


Irene Salvo Agoglia (2025)

Pasado, presente y futuro de la adopción en Chile: Hacia un enfoque centrado en los derechos de niños, niñas y adolescentes

UNICEF Chile

Elaborat per la Dra. Irene Salvo Agoglia, amb el suport d'UNICEF i el Servicio Nacional de Protección Especializada a la Niñez i la Adolescencia (Xile), aquest llibre ofereix una anàlisi rigorosa i multidimensional de l'adopció a Xile. Basat en una investigació àmplia i participativa, incorpora les veus de diversos actors clau: professionals especialitzats, persones adoptades, famílies adoptives, operadors del sistema judicial i responsables de polítiques públiques. Amb un enfocament centrat en els drets de les persones adoptades al llarg del seu cicle vital, l'obra subratlla principis fonamentals com l'interès superior de l'infant, el dret a la identitat i el dret a la participació. Des d'aquesta perspectiva, no només s'identifiquen els desafiaments actuals i emergents del sistema, sinó que també es proposen recomanacions concretes orientades a l'enfortiment de les pràctiques, polítiques i marcs institucionals en l'àmbit de l'adopció.

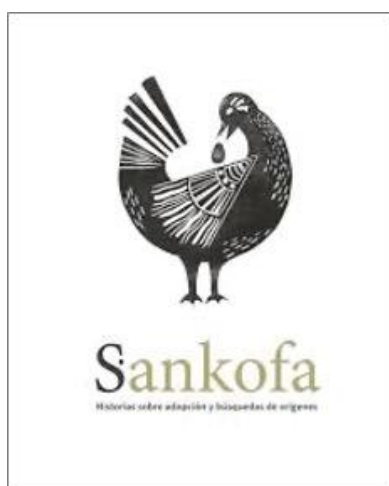


Ana Jiménez (2024)

El viaje

Apuleyo Ediciones

Ana Jiménez's picture book is a deeply personal work that combines visual storytelling, emotional memory, and reflection on identity. Through drawings and words, the author explores her own journey to adoption, from an orphanage in Arequipa, Peru, to her life in Spain, constructing a narrative that allows us to understand how an adopted child feels in a world that often ignores—and sometimes minimizes—these experiences. The book recounts her early childhood, the moment she was told she would be adopted, and her arrival in an unfamiliar country. Throughout the pages, the illustrations serve as anchors to memory. Through them, Ana reconstructs everyday scenes charged with emotion: the surprise of having a bed all to herself, the strangeness of receiving questions about whether her parents "were real" because they didn't share the same skin color, among others.



Sankofa: historia de adopción y búsquedas de orígenes

TransformaAdopción y Agencia Nacional de Investigación y Desarrollo (ANID)

Sankofa, the term that gives this book its title, is inspired by an adrinka from the Akan culture, a group of West African peoples located in what are now the territories of Ivory Coast (central and southeastern), Ghana (central and southern), and Togo (southern). *Sankofa* refers to the idea that remembering the past is key to understanding the future. This book is a collaborative work spearheaded by the principal investigator of the FONDECYT/ANID project *La construcción de narrativas sobre los orígenes y la identidad* along with a group of people who were adopted as infants and who, as adults, embarked on a search for their origins. Through their voices, this work showcases the richness of their narratives, reflections, and experiences surrounding adoption, identity, and the right to know.

The book is structured in three main chapters and a series of appendices. The first two chapters address general aspects of adoption and the processes of communication and the search for origins, including narrative excerpts from adopted individuals and adoptive parents, as well as quotes, songs, and poems that engage with the themes discussed. Each section includes two parts: “Mensaje en una botella,” offering guidance or key ideas, and “Bitácora,” a space for each reader to write and reflect on their own personal journey. The third chapter presents ten life stories of participants in the book, told in the first person. Finally, the appendices expand upon and delve deeper into key themes, while also providing relevant supplementary information and resources.

To listening



Serie 5 - (Re) imaginando la adopción

Conversaciones AFInes (Re)imaginando la adopción

This series of the *Conversaciones AFInes* podcast, titled ‘(Re)imaginando la adopción’ and led by Dr Irene Salvo, is a valuable resource for disseminating and critically reflecting on interdisciplinary studies of kinship, childhood, and adoption. Through a series of episodes available on Ivoox and Spotify, this audio production shares findings, questions, and debates stemming from research, professional practice, and the lived experiences of individuals involved in adoption contexts. Adopting an open and citizen science approach, the series promotes the co-production of knowledge and its transfer to diverse audiences, fostering dialogue with researchers, professionals, and experts in the field. Its accessible yet rigorous format makes it a valuable tool for exploring contemporary adoption challenges, opening spaces for situated and participatory reflection.



Episodio 1

Los silencios de la adopción en España: 15 años después

Diana Marre (Grupo AFIN, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona).



Episodio 2

Volver a los orígenes: investigación y experiencia vivida en la adopción

Chandra Kala Clemente-Martínez (APACAT, Cataluña)



Episodio 3

De las “madres abandonantes” a las familias “incompetentes”

Claudia Fonseca (Rede Anthera, Brasil)



Episodio 4

De padre adoptado a activista: el asociacionismo como recurso

Anton Mouriz (CORA, España)



Episodio 5

(De)construyendo la adopción: un camino hacia la integración, la pertenencia y la resiliencia

Lucía Rabadán (CORA Joven, España)



Episodio 6

El derecho a la identidad en las relaciones familiares: lecciones, avances y desafíos desde una perspectiva comparada

Christina Baglietto (CHIP)



Episodio 7

El lenguaje nunca es neutral: las palabras que usamos en la adopción

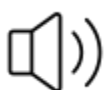
Beatriz San Román (Grupo AFIN, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona)



Episodio 8

“Nunca es demasiado tarde”: Desafíos y posibilidades en la adopción de adolescentes

Fabiana Isa (Universidad de Buenos Aires, Argentina)



AFIN News



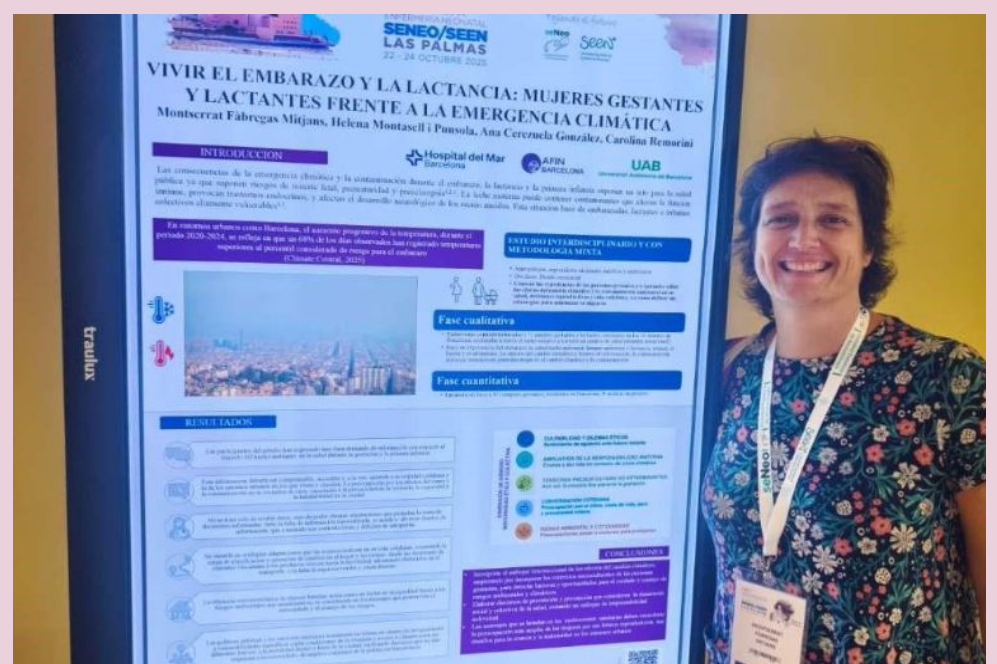
Results from the project *Viure l'embaràs a Barcelona* at the XXX Conference of Neonatology and Perinatal Medicine

Last October, at the XXX Conference of Neonatology and Perinatal Medicine SENEIO/SEEN, held from October 22 to 24, 2025, in Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, preliminary results from the project *Viure l'embaràs a Barcelona: dones i persones gestants davant l'emergència climàtica* ('Living Pregnancy in Barcelona: Women and Pregnant People Facing the Climate Emergency') were presented. This project, funded by the Ajuntament de Barcelona, has been developed by the AFIN Group in collaboration with Hospital de Sant Pau, Hospital Sant Joan de Déu, and Hospital del Mar.

The presentation, titled "Vivir el embarazo y la lactancia: mujeres gestantes y lactantes frente a la emergencia climática" in poster format, was prepared by Montserrat Fàbregas Mitjans, Helena Montasell i Punsola, Ana Cerezuela González, and Carolina Remorini. It presented the results of the qualitative phase of the project, focusing particularly on the accessibility and adequacy of information about care during pregnancy

and early childhood, in relation to exposure to pollutants and the effects of heat waves, as well as the specific challenges that the city of Barcelona presents in this area.

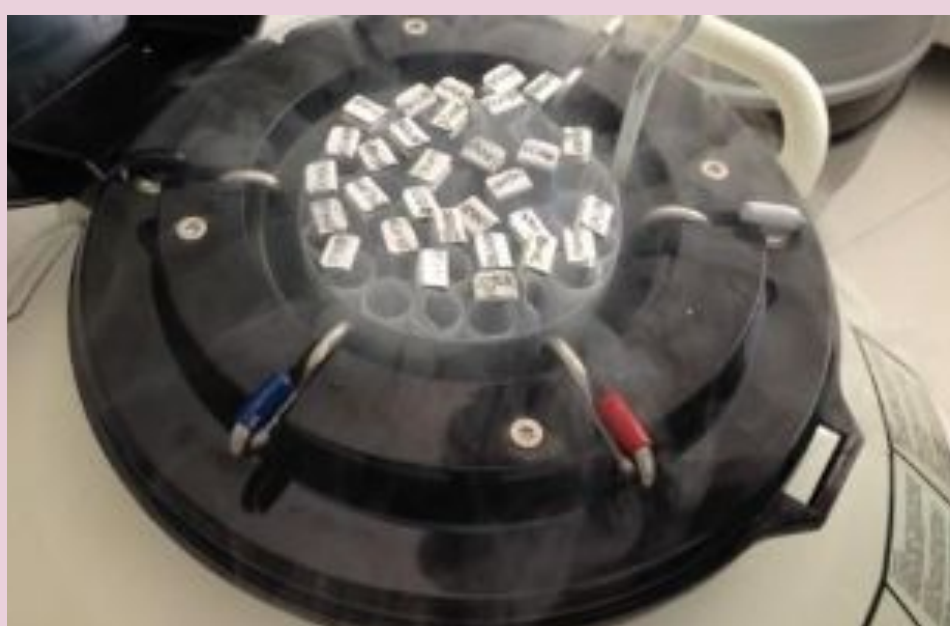
The presentation highlighted the need for healthcare institutions to design and communicate prevention and health promotion strategies that incorporate the social and collective dimensions of health, avoiding an approach focused solely on individual responsibility. It was also emphasized that messages and interventions should take into account women's broader concerns about their reproductive futures and the everyday limitations they face in child-rearing and motherhood in urban environments.



Polina Vlasenko's lecture at the University of Chicago

On 17 November, Polina Vlasenko delivered the lecture "Reproductive Markets in Wartime: Ukraine's Fertility Industry and the Shifting Geographies of Global Reproduction" at the University of Chicago, examining how the war is reshaping Ukraine's fertility industry: from sustaining

a global supply of donor eggs amidst displacement, infrastructural damage, and legal uncertainty, to the ways egg donation functions as income under conditions of precarity. While surrogacy has sharply declined, Ukraine has maintained transnational donor-egg supply chains through biomaterial cryopreservation and transport, relying on international partnerships, logistical innovations, and the navigation of regulations across different markets. The talk also explored Ukraine's peripheral position in the global reproductive economy and how professionals respond to Western suspicions regarding quality, safety, and ethics by asserting "European" standards of professionalism, even as demand shifts toward other emerging markets. The event was hosted by the Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures, the Center for East European, Russian, and Eurasian Studies, and the Center for the Study of Gender and Sexuality.



Moral Economies of Reproduction at the 2025 ASEEES Annual Convention

Between 19 and 23 November 2025, the ASEEES Annual Convention (Association for Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies) was held in Washington, D.C., USA, one of the leading international gatherings dedicated to the study of Eastern Europe, Central Asia, and the Eurasian space.

One of the highlights of the convention was the panel "*Moral Economies of Reproduction in Central Asia and the Caucasus*", which brought together Madeleine Reeves, Polina Vlasenko, Elene Gavashelishvili, and Nino Rcheulishvili. Drawing on ethnographic research conducted in different countries across the region, the panel examined how infertility treatments, egg donation, and transnational surrogacy are shaped by moral expectations, market pressures, religious ethics, and gender norms. Particular attention was paid to the experiences of Georgian and Central Asian surrogates, analysing the rapid expansion of the surrogacy sector in Georgia, the migration of women from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan to work in the country, and the growth of surrogacy in Kazakhstan in a context marked by the decline of the Ukrainian market.

Polina Vlasenko presented her ethnographic research in Kazakhstan and Georgia, showing how commodified reproductive labour, although heavily



stigmatised, becomes a crucial source of income for many women. Her contribution focused on the strategies through which Central Asian surrogates manage secrecy, family honour, and motherhood while moving between their communities of origin and transnational reproductive programmes. Elene Gavashelishvili and Nino Rcheulishvili, for their part, analysed how Georgian surrogates reconcile motherhood and surrogacy, and how they manage stigma through linguistic and emotional strategies that differentiate the gestated baby from their own children.

Participation in a roundtable with Nari Shelekpayev, Usmon Boron, and Erica Marat on the impact of the war in Central Asia was also particularly relevant. In this space, Polina Vlasenko reflected on her positionality as a Ukrainian researcher conducting fieldwork in Kazakhstan and Georgia, as well as on recent transformations in the dynamics of reproductive labour and mobility in the region.

Making visibility a tool for transformation: first-trimester pregnancy loss in the health and research agenda

This was the objective of the Second Conference “Pérdidas Gestacionales Tempranas: derribando tabúes, creando puentes, sumando voces”, held on Thursday, October 23rd, from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. at the Palau Macaya, Barcelona.

This year, with the aim of fostering public debate and placing this issue on the agenda in order to transform social and healthcare realities surrounding pregnancy loss and gestational grief, the conference provided an opportunity to present four outputs resulting from the project *Pérdidas Reproductivas Tempranas*, funded by the Fundacion “la Caixa”, the Instituto de las Mueres of the Ministerio de Igualdad, and the Instituto Carlos III, through the RICORS-SAMID network.

The first output presented, by María José Rodríguez from the University of Alicante, consisted of the results of the first national survey: “Opinión Pública de la Población Española sobre los Abortos Espontáneos”. The questionnaire was completed by 1,857 people, forming a representative sample by age and sex quotas at the national level.

The second output was the executive report and evidence-based recommendations on care for pregnancy loss, prepared by the AFIN-UAB and POMADE-UA teams and addressed to healthcare professionals and health policy decision-makers. The discussion of these documents was led by an expert panel including midwife Georgina

Clapés del Barrio from the Associació Catalana de Llevadores; Dr. Juan José Espinós, President of the Sociedad Española de Fertilidad; Manuel Fernández Alcántara, Professor of Psychology and Vice-Dean for Research at the Universidad de Alicante; Sara Fernández Basanta, nurse and Professor at the Universidade da Coruña; Dr. Ignacio Herraiz, gynecologist at Hospital 12 de Octubre in Madrid; and Dr. Cristina Trilla, gynecologist at Hospital de la Santa Creu i Sant Pau, both researchers within the RICORS-SAMID network. The panel was moderated by Diana Marre, Director of the AFIN Group.

The summary and recommendations are available in open access: [¿Cómo podemos mejorar la atención sanitaria de pérdidas de embarazo en el primer trimestre? Recomendaciones basadas en la evidencia](#), and [Pérdidas gestacionales del primer trimestre: visibilidad, reconocimiento y atención](#) (Executive summary).

The project coordinator, Dr. Carolina Remorini, also presented [the book](#) and [videos resulting](#) from the compilation, transcription and editing of the presentations delivered during the 2024 Conference.

Finally, the second series of short audiovisual pieces was presented, conceived from testimonies collected within the framework of the project, as part of the “Pérdidas” Collection, directed and produced by Miguel Gaggiotti (University of Bristol). Both series can be viewed with subtitles in seven languages [here](#).



The conference also featured two keynote presentations, delivered respectively by Mónica Lalanda (Asociación Española de Medicina Gráfica) and Xusa Serra (GestDol association). Both contributed elements and stories to reflect on perinatal grief in clinical practice. In addition, a roundtable was held in which several project researchers (Alexandra Desy, Ana Sánchez Larrosa, Giulia Colavolpe-Severi, and Carolina Remorini) presented findings included in scientific articles currently in preparation or in press.

As in the 2024 edition, attendees were also able to visit the photography exhibition “No tengo nada más” (“I Have Nothing Else”).

It is worth highlighting that the Conference brought together numerous professionals from different disciplines and autonomous communities across Spain, whose questions and perspectives enriched the debates proposed in the panels, roundtables and lectures.

Videos of the different activities mentioned are now available on the AFIN YouTube channel [AFIN YouTube channel](#).

Opening of the exhibition *Transforming Voices* at Spoleto, Italy



On 30 November, the exhibition *Transforming Voices* opened at Palazzo Collicola in the city of Spoleto, Italy, as part of the commemoration of the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women.

The exhibition features a series of short films by Dr Miguel Gaggiotti, Professor at the University of Bristol and member of the AFIN Research Group at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona. The audiovisual pieces are based on research carried out within the projects *Pérdidas reproductivas precoces*, led by researchers from the AFIN Research Group, and *Women Organisational Vulnerabilities*, led by

researchers from the University of the West of England and the Universidad de Baja California.

Through the audiovisual medium, *Transforming Voices* seeks to centre the voices of research participants. In this way, the exhibition aims to create a space for dialogue between academic production, artistic creation, and the general public, contributing to making visible realities that are often silenced.

“Crippling Reproductive Justice: Rethinking Reproductive Futures” Symposium

On 13 and 14 October, the symposium “Crippling Reproductive Justice: Rethinking Reproductive Futures” took place at the Foto Colectania Foundation (Pg. de Picasso, 14, Barcelona). The event was held in a hybrid format (in person and online) and included simultaneous interpretation into American Sign Language. It was organised by Hannah Gibson (MSCA postdoctoral researcher in the Department of Social and Cultural Anthropology) and Laura Sanmiquel (Juan de la Cierva postdoctoral researcher in the Department of Social Psychology), both members of the AFIN research group.

Focused on the experiences of disabled people from the perspectives of reproductive justice and disability justice, the symposium brought together contributions from a wide range of approaches. Participants included academics from fields such as the social sciences, as well as from other areas



including narrative studies, development studies, law, and theatre. Several of the participants are also engaged in activist work.

The opening keynote was delivered by Dr Alison Kafer, Embrey Associate Professor of Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies at the University of Texas at Austin (USA).

The second day opened with a participatory workshop facilitated by Kayla Rush, based on speculative narrative as a form of resistance.

The event concluded with the reading of a message of solidarity sent by anthropologists Rayna Rapp and Faye Ginsburg (New York University), addressed to all those attending the symposium.

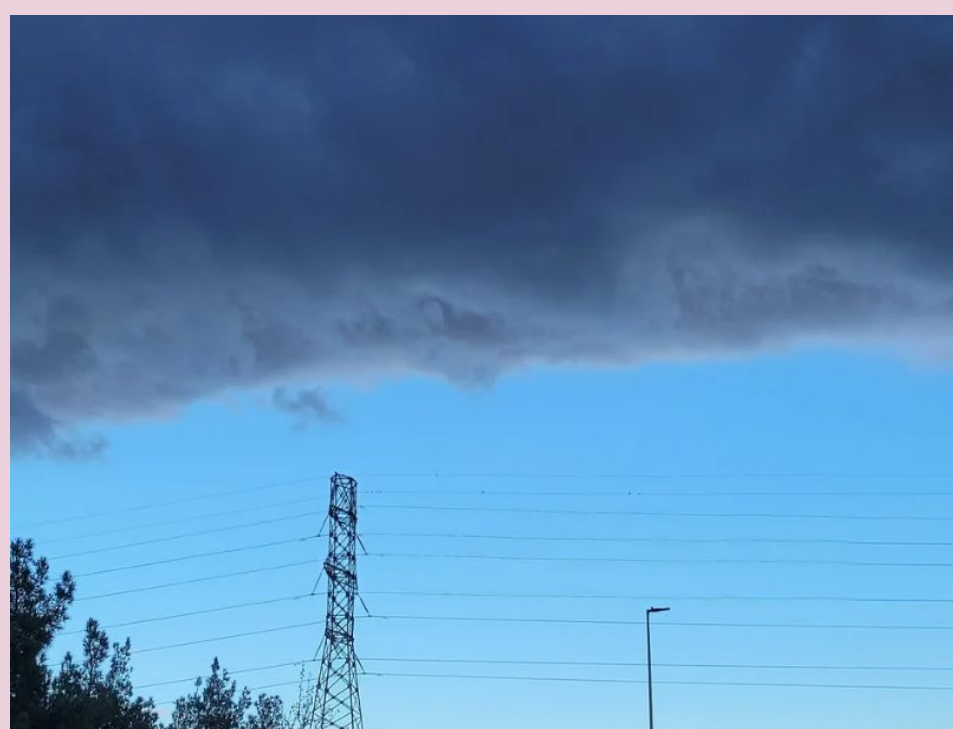
The popular science article "A House in the Desert" on motherhood, climate and the future has been published

Ana Cerezuela, a PhD candidate in Social Anthropology and researcher in the AFIN Group for the project *Viure l'embaràs a Barcelona: dones i persones gestants*

davant l'emergència climàtica, has published the popular science article "[A House in the Desert: Reconfigurations of Water and Time by Mothers of Barcelona](#)" in the Fall 2025 edition of *Weather Matters*, an independent and interdisciplinary publication supported by the Institute for Science, Innovation, and Society (InSiS) at the University of Oxford.

The article appears in a special issue titled *Unruly Ecologies: Reconfiguring Climate Knowledge through Refusal, Resistance, and (Dis)Rupture*, which explores how attempts to know, govern, or intervene in environments and climates encounter incomplete processes, tensions, and resistance.

Ana Cerezuela's article is based on the qualitative phase of the study on pregnancy and climate emergency conducted by the AFIN Group, with support from the Barcelona City Council, Hospital Sant Pau, Hospital Sant Joan de Déu, and Hospital del Mar. The research analyzes how the effects of pollution and climate



change in the city of Barcelona influence reproductive health, caregiving practices, and the ways in which mothers envision the future.

Participants reflected on climate anxiety, the loss of familiar landscapes, and everyday tensions caused by extreme heat, pollution, or the lack of green spaces. Their accounts reveal how these phenomena reconfigure the experience of raising children in a context of uncertainty, as well as the care strategies that mothers develop to sustain their children's lives.

Combining results from ethnographic interviews conducted across different districts of the city with personal reflections, the article specifically explores experiences related to time (past and future) and water extremes (droughts and floods). Through the participants' accounts and the researchers' experiences across the seasons during the fieldwork, it offers a reflection on how extreme weather events intersect with motherhood and child-rearing, as well as perceptions of emerging environmental risks.

Conference “Hijas de la emergencia climática”: the effects of climate change and pollution on perinatal health

The conference “Hijas de la emergencia climática: reconstruir futuros, repensar la maternidad, habitar Barcelona”, held on 20 November at Espai Ca l’Alier, marked the conclusion of the research

project *Viure l’embaràs a Barcelona: dones i persones gestants davant l’emergència climàtica*, developed by the AFIN Research Group at the UAB, with the support of the Ajuntament de Barcelona, and the collaboration of the Hospital de la Santa Creu i Sant Pau, Hospital Sant Joan de Déu and Hospital del Mar.

The event brought together anthropologists, architects, urban planners, physicians, nurses and public policy experts, who discussed the effects of climate change and pollution on maternal and child health. In addition, AFIN researchers Carolina Remorini, Ana Cerezuela and Helena Montasell presented the main results of the study in poster format, with the aim of placing the findings of the anthropological research in dialogue with the experiences and perspectives shared throughout the different activities of the conference.

Dr Carme Valls-Llobet (CAPS) delivered the keynote lecture “Ciencia, salud y reproducción: la encrucijada biológica, social y medioambiental”, and the round tables addressed, from an interdisciplinary perspective, the interactions between climate change, maternal and child health and public policies. Participants included María Dolores Gómez Roig (Hospital Sant Joan de Déu), Sònia Hernández-Montaño Bou (Arquitectura Sana), Darko Kramer (Ecoserveis), Nicolás Olea (Universidad de Granada), Miguel Felipe Sánchez Saúco (HCU Virgen de la Arrixaca), Anna Espart



public policies in the areas of environmental health, urban planning and children's rights. In this sense, the meeting benefited greatly from the interdisciplinary nature of the programme and served as a starting point for potential lines of research and intervention addressing the different aspects that shape the context and environment of people living in the city.

(SOCSA), Anaïs Bas Mantilla (Cíclica) and Laia Pineda (Institut Infància i Adolescència de Barcelona).

In addition, the artist and educator Chari Cámara carried out a live graphic intervention that captured the emerging themes, as well as a participatory activity in which attendees were invited to create collective care networks in the urban context.

Several media outlets highlighted that the research points to the difficulties that, according to the study participants, the city of Barcelona presents for caregiving and child-rearing during pregnancy and early childhood, as well as the way in which economic inequalities seriously condition families' ability to protect maternal and child health in the face of the climate crisis. The conclusions underline the need to promote structural