



ST. JOHN'S
UNIVERSITY

Conference Jointly Organized/Sponsored by NYSPA Division of Psychoanalysis and The Adoption Initiative at St. John's University/Montclair State University (4 CE credits)

Understanding Identity Development and Search in Adopted Individuals: Assessment and Treatment Implications - A Psychoanalytic Perspective

Saturday, October 18, 2025

9:00 – 1:00 PM

St. John's University | 101 Astor Place, NYC 10003

This half-day conference will address issues affecting the lives of adoptees and their biological and adopted families (adoption triad) from a psychoanalytic perspective. Other conferences and publications have focused on the legal issues of adoption, challenges in the search for biological parents, and issues related to national, international and transracial adoptions. The central focus of this conference will be on the impact of the adoption experience on individual psychological development. The speakers will examine identity development and the content of the self and its relationships with others throughout the developmental trajectory. As clinicians we need to be aware of the unique ways adoption affects individual identity development, and the kinds of questions members within the adoption experience are likely to bring to mental health professionals when seeking services.

Following questions will be addressed:

- The nature of the psychological challenges (and trauma) likely to affect those in adoption;
- The core challenges in identity formation throughout the adoption journey;
- Specific elements/conditions present in those with successful adoption journey;
- How best and what types of assessment tools should we consider to obtain a more accurate psychological picture of the experience associated with adoption; and
- What services would be most helpful to facilitate integration and cohesiveness of self-representation within the context of the adoption experience?



List of presenters/topics:

- **Amanda Baden, Ph.D.:** Navigating the Intersectionality of Race, Culture, and Adoption: Lessons on Microaggressions and Adoption Sensitivity
- **Linda Mayers, Ph.D./Doris Bertocci, LCSW:** The Complex Psychology of Being Adopted: A Psychodynamic Perspective with Implications for Assessment and Treatment
- **Christopher Deeg, Ph.D.:** A psychoanalytic perspective on the development of the inner life of the adopted person.
- **Bryn Jessup, Ph.D.:** The Self in the System: A Pilot Study of Adopted Young Adults in Intensive Treatment

Presenters' Bios

Amanda L. Baden, Ph.D., is a transracial adoptee, adopted internationally from Hong Kong. She believes in examining issues of race, privilege, oppression, and power in adoption to promote ethical and sensitive practice with transracial adoptees and their families. Amanda is a Professor and the Doctoral Program Director in the graduate Counseling Program at Montclair State University (NJ). She is a licensed psychologist with a practice in New York City and New Jersey. She focuses her research and clinical practice on the adoption kinship network, transracial/international adoption issues, racial and cultural identity, and multicultural counseling competence. Visit her website for more information.

Doris Bertocci, LCSW, is in private practice in metropolitan New York, having had a long career in college mental health on campus at Columbia University. There, she worked with a number of adopted students who presented with concerns typical of university students, but eventually all of them focused on the ways they felt their adoptions were now holding them back. Ms. Bertocci co-authored a chapter on the underlying meanings of the adopted person's search in the *Psychology of Adoption* (Oxford University Press, 1990). Her more recent efforts have focused on the knowledge base that she and other specialists believe that therapists ideally need in order to treat adopted patients. This includes recent approaches for addressing early childhood trauma, which therapists do not generally consider. Ms. Bertocci also emphasizes the important benefits of psychodynamically-based treatment to address the internal life of adopted persons, a dimension that is rarely addressed in the scholarly literature. Ms. Bertocci is co-editor and author for the *Handbook on the Clinical Treatment of Adopted Adolescents and Young Adults* (Routledge, 2024) and, with colleagues who are specialists, provides consultation for psychotherapists interested in learning the recommended modifications for treating their adopted clients. She and Dr. Mayers also provide online interdisciplinary, interstate, and interactive training seminars on the *Psychology of Being Adopted*. Finally, Ms. Bertocci and her colleagues are formally consultants to the only psychiatric residential treatment program in the country to provide adoption-informed psychodynamic treatment for adopted young adults.

Christopher F. Deeg, Ph.D., is a licensed clinical psychologist in private practice on Long Island in New York State. He received his doctorate from Hofstra University and completed post-doctoral training in psychoanalysis and psychoanalytic psychotherapy at the Derner Institute of Adelphi University. He has been in general practice since 1986. In addition, Dr. Deeg has over 30 years of experience treating adopted persons of all ages as well as their families and significant others. Dr. Deeg also works with birth parents, and people considering adoption. He

consults with adoption agencies and provides consultation and supervision to clinicians treating adopted persons and their families. He has several publications on the psychology of the adoptee and on the treatment of adopted persons. He is one of three editors of a recently published book on the clinical treatment of adopted adolescents and young adults.

Bryn Jessup, PhD, is the Director of Family Services & Systems at Yellowbrick, an intensive, neurobiologically-informed treatment program for young adults and their families. He received his PhD in Clinical Psychology from the University of Michigan in 1984, where he developed an enduring interest in adolescent and young adult development, trauma, and family therapy. Following a postdoctoral fellowship at the University of Michigan Children's Hospital, he joined the staff at Children's Memorial Hospital in Chicago, where he became the Associate Clinical Director of its Inpatient Psychiatry Unit. He also served on the adjunct faculty of Northwestern University from 1986 through 2011. He joined The Phoenix Institute in 1996, a Chicago-based psychotherapy practice group specializing in trauma, and continued outpatient work with children, adolescents, adults, and families in private practice before joining Yellowbrick in 2015.

Linda Mayers, PhD, is the Past Director of Training, Training and Supervising Analyst at the Institute of the Postgraduate Psychoanalytic Society. She was also an adjunct Associate Professor at LaGuardia Community College, City University of New York; she is currently a member of the Editorial Board of the Journal of Infant, Child and Adolescent Psychotherapy, Editorial Reader, and of the International Forum of Psychoanalysis. She is a co-editor of the *Handbook on the Clinical Treatment of Adopted Adolescents and Young Adults* (Routledge, 2023) and has worked with adoptive families and adopted people of all ages; her ongoing interest is in the Psychology of Being Adopted and the developmental complexities of adopted individuals throughout the lifespan. She is a clinical psychologist, licensed, and psychoanalyst in private practice in New York City.

