Early attachment relationships are theorized to play a crucial role in regulating levels of the stress hormone, cortisol.

International adoption offers a powerful test of the unique influence of early experiences on cortisol because children experience profound shifts in caregiving environments after adoption.

Prior studies are inconsistent regarding the consequences of early experiences of adversity for internationally adopted children's cortisol outcomes.

It is also unclear whether the effects of early adversity on internationally adopted children's cortisol outcomes persist across time or whether the effects fade as children age and adapt to their new, adoptive caregiving environments.

The results of this study are consistent with the idea that experiences in early attachment relationships help regulate the functioning of cortisol, a critical stress hormone.

These enduring results from 6 months post adoption through 4 years post adoption suggest that early adversity may have lasting implications for children's neurobiological development.