
Title : I did it for you

Subtitle : *The paradox about adoption*

Type : Article and first report after Family Constellations with Adoptive Parents April 2006 in the Netherlands

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Most of the time, people say, that it such a good thing what adoptive parents do. To adopt a child from another country is a socially still something which can count on admiration and positive responses from the society. The idea, that western parents are willing to do something for someone's other child, most of the time, a non western child, creates nowadays, besides a 'silent social applause' a huge and unforeseen international question by Adoptees and others: "In whose interest is adoption?."

Besides a long-term impact on families and an unforeseen, and most of the time non-traceable, effect on the question of (inner) loyalty of the adoptee, as well of those from the adoptive families, is something, which somehow opens a new field of research and most probably, a very sensitive topic for adoption parents as well for all who are involved in adoption as such.

Partnering and parenting expectations in adoptive couples

Sexual-and-Relationship-Therapy. Vol 20(3) Aug 2005, 309-322.

*The paper describes research-investigating couples that undertook the procedure of becoming adoptive parents, studying the partners' representations of relationships in the context of their psychological sense of loss owing to infertility. The sample consisted of 100 subjects (50 couples) who took part in an assessment process related to adoption within the Social Services structures. The subjects had the following features in common: they were between 35 and 45 years of age; the duration of their marriages was between 7 and 10 years; none had biological or previously adopted children. The instruments used were a Psycho-Social Questionnaire, the **Adult Attachment Interview** (Main & Goldwin, 1998) and the Family Life Space (Gozzoli & Tamanza, 1998). The results showed a majority of couples classified by the AAI as 'Secure', and a lack of couples formed by partners both classified as 'Insecure'. Moreover, we found a prevalence of couples who are classified by the FLS instrument as failing in 'space government' (Fragmentation and Overfilling = 68%). These results suggest that adoptive couples show a strong appreciation of affect and **attachment** needs, but are still deeply in crisis in the personal and family relationship sectors of their lives.*

The reflection of the past

The abstract of the article mentioned as above, shows us a new direction of thinking which seems more and more supported by other researches and other professionals like therapists and others who are working in the field of (international) adoption. More and more reports and stories shows us the very difficult area to get a clear view on the real motives of their choice for adoptive children besides the physical and social ones and the possible 'breaking bearing' points of the adoption by adoptive parents themselves.

In the Netherlands the aspirant adoptive parents have to go to training before they are allowed to adopt. But even in this training, where future parents are told, how difficult adoption can be, is no part for self-reflection on their own family background and their own possible attachment disorders. This seems still to be an 'unwritten taboo'.

Now international adoption gets a different and changing perspective because of the influence of older generation Adoptees, and the more clearly view on the impact on family structures and the social diligence in the international society, adoption cannot be longer hid as an incidental issue. Since the fifties, estimated more than 700.000 international adoptions and less than half adopted domestically, with an estimated financial turnover of more than €20.000.000.000. , we cannot longer speak of an incidental situation. This issue became and is a global issue with an international political, economical and social range of effects.

The other side

Referring to the article of Alessandra Santona some Adoptees from all over the world working in the social welfare area and in the field of science, wrote me their ideas and conclusions regarding the issue about the reflection and screening of the behaviour and possible social disorders of adoption parents. One of them, an adoptee from Australia adopted from Vietnam in 1972, Indigo Willing PhD candidate Sociology wrote:

I do get concerned that, perhaps, a number of parents spend too much time worrying about the child's potential issues while ignoring (or denying) that they, themselves, may have issues that have not been dealt with. The impact of the screening they go through was touched on in an excellent article by an anthropologist who unfortunately, passed away shortly after receiving his own adopted child. Thus, this area of research is ripe for many future investigations into 'who' adopts and guides our community of Adoptees in their formative years.

This response and many more over the years, are concentrated around Adoptees who are willing and able to think and to see further than their personal situation. Their contribution created a totally different view on adoption than the society in general has. Some Adoptees were aggressive and were attacking the researchers or the questions about adoption with a regular response to protect their adoption parents in every way they could. Even when it was about their own feelings of adoption and their connection with the country of origin, their prime response was to get the position of their adoption parents save first.

Family Constellations

Many years ago, Bert Hellinger the founder of Family Constellations, and many of his students, now constellation leaders themselves, opened the door to use a so-called 'contextual therapy'. Basically you can speak of a therapy but in the context it self, I would rather called it a way of live and understanding than a therapy.

The basic idea about family constellations is to see and to feel where in family's disconnections of the structure and content does occur. The deeper impact of this way of working is the understanding of the flow of the (inner) soul. Every human being is connected with this flow and essence of live. If it happens that something does miss in the natural order of the flow, something might occur and present this missing part in someone else. For example;

A man, who was in fact the oldest son of the family, felt always a little odd about his position in his family. He asked several times his parents if there was someone else before him. The parents who found this a little awkward told him every time that he really was the oldest son. At the same time he felt himself fighting with his manhood and asked himself how much he felt himself a real man.

Years later, a letter received the parents with the message, that the father had another daughter from a former girlfriend who let her daughter adopt. This girl was in fact older than this guy and he felt relieved somehow after hearing this new fact. Nowadays he has good contact with his newfound sister and feels himself stronger in his manhood.

This example gives a clear picture. But many things in live are not that clear and many things in our souls do not present themselves so clear as it presented here. But with working with constellations where people represent others in natural family positions shows us many times, the unseen parts of the family (soul). More info: www.admaeum.nl (Dutch)
<http://home.wanadoo.nl/panthon/opstellingen/english/index.html> (English)

Constellations with Adoptive Parents

I guess last Saturday was a historical event. Hester E. Storsbergen PhD (adopted from Lebanon) and I guided a constellation session with thirty adoptive parents from the Netherlands. Both trained and educated in the field of constellations where invited to execute a constellations session by a national association for adoption parents in the Netherlands.

I do not want to get in detail too much about the constellations itself, but what happened was somehow the continuation what I have seen since my involvement in the (international) adoption world since 1988. The day was mentioned for adoption parents and the first constellation started unforeseen with an Adoptee and her adoptive father. It looked like, that the father had to solve something for himself by his adoptive daughter. Nonetheless it seemed a very sensitive topic for the daughter and at the end the role of the (biological) father seemed to be very eminent.

She was trying to prevent the death of her natural father and replaced this situation towards her adoption family situation. She cried when she said the words... 'daddy, I do it for you'.

This picture is more than once to see in family constellations. We call this a constriction. A child carries a burden for one of the parents because they are not willing or able to carry it themselves. Children are so loyal to their parents that they are willing to do this till the end (like here we see sometimes the movement ending in the death of the child). In adoption families constriction can be tangled in between family of heritage and the adoptive family which makes one another multiple difficult. Especially where the question about loyalty is not clear and is still a (inner) dispute for the adoptee or forced by the adoptive families.

What we saw before the start session was the aggressiveness or denial against the idea that a possible core of the problem, which the adoption parents experienced, was possibly to find within them selves and their system instead by their adoption child. The self-reflection and the maturity, to see own themes and essential questions, as a part of their own heritage, were hard to accept for the adoption parents.

In one case, the question of an adoptive mother about the well being of their Adoptees, led instead to the Adoptees towards her own relationship with her mother. Instead to want biological children, what her husband really wanted, she choose for adoption. She could not approach her mother to tell her how much she missed her and her father was totally denied as part of the family. Without any further explanation, you can feel something is going on here. The adoption itself was probably objectively meant with a good heart, but in the picture of the constellation, you could see the continuation of the constricted movement.

I did it for you

How many Adoptees have not heard the sentence that they were adopted for their own well being. How many adoptive parents have not told their Adoptees, that they were adopted because the other parents (like parents are easily replaceable ?) could not take care of them in the meanwhile hiding personal trauma's such as infertility and childlessness, ideological ideas, helpers syndrome etc.

And how many Adoptees have not heard, after finding their biological parents, how sorry the parents are and that they did it with the best interest for the child. Hoping for comfort by their children who they gave away, which of course turns the position of the parent in the child and opposite.

More and more we see the opposite movement and flow of the story behind adoption. Adoption executed in an easy way, or with illegal payments and 'one stop shopping structures like in the 'States' will possibly cause strong constrictions within already constricted and dual family systems and society.

I did it for you, is a remark, which in my opinion, needs a further thought and better understanding at a deeper level. A level where we can bow for the essence of live and where we can see the drama of it as a part of our being. Not longer get stroked by the tragedy but with a feeling of silent understanding and reconciliation where everyone takes and accept, what belongs to her and his destiny as human being.

Warm and kind regards,

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