

## **InterCountry Adoptee Perspective Paper: Parenthood**

***This paper explores parenthood for adult inter-country adoptees, including those who are and are not currently parents.***

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Describe what it's been like to have a child of my own?

This has been a new experience as an adoptee. I am over protective of my children because I want to protect them from hurt and sadness. Not everyone gets a chance to raise their biological children. I am fortunate to conceive children and I want to enjoy every moment, spending quality time with them, initiate family closeness, it's important and I didn't have much of this in my childhood and I didn't have a happy childhood. I hope my children will enjoy their childhood and look back with happy memories.

Most of my life I have questioned myself why am I not happy? Why don't I feel comfortable in my own skin? Why do I feel so confused? I felt alone as a teenager and young adult with no-one to talk to. I never felt complete and I didn't know why. Becoming a mother answered these questions because I now have a connection with my children I've never experienced before. As they grow I will see my characteristics in their personality and looks which makes me happy. I love my adopted family and feel a closeness to them but I don't have much in common with them. At times my ideas and opinions are so different to them.

Do you think this is different for mothers who have not been adopted?

Yes, some mothers seem to be more relaxed, even take it for granted they have biological children because they don't know anything different.

What adopted related issues have arisen since giving birth?

- My fear of rejection and hurt
- The need to make others happy before myself so I feel happy because I don't want to feel sad anymore
- Putting closure to adoption issues - they always weighed me down, made me feel insecure, depressed, unconfident to achieve goals and dreams
- Exploring adoption issues I had become ignorant to...my way of accepting myself into Aussie society, 'I'm not different I'm like everyone else'
- I want to create a happy home environment where my children can express themselves whether happy, sad, angry, embarrassed, or insecure

- I want to find out more about my culture to teach my children
- Loneliness, not knowing my biological family
- Relax and enjoy motherhood, don't try to be too perfect

A poem I wrote:

### ***Over Protective***

*I try not to be but can't help feel it*

*I want to protect him from being picked on by other kids*

*I want to protect him from racist comments*

*I want him to grow up confident*

*I want him to like himself for who he is*

*I want to protect him from hurting himself*

*I want to protect him from all the hurt I felt growing up*

*I can't stop these things happening*

*I must be strong*

*I must learn to step back and watch so he can grow*

*Maybe I need to protect myself for what the future brings ....*

As I find answers to my own questions or just talk about them, I'm becoming emotionally strong, I feel really happy within myself for the first time.

I can't imagine what our mothers thought. It must have been a hard time for them and if they lived they would be thinking about us.

I don't think our children will fully understand how our adoption has impacted our parenting of them, not having gone through it themselves. My husband tries to understand but can't relate. He's supportive of me being a part of ICASN. He doesn't understand why I attend the adoption playgroup because our son is not adopted and the kids are older. He also doesn't connect with the adoptive parents. I think it's good for our son to associate with children from different nationalities, also in time, I may be of help to the kids if they need someone to talk to.

My husband's ideas on parenting are very similar to mine, his parents divorced when he was young. I've noticed parents from divorced families, parents who conceive children by IVF, and parents of adopted children all have parenting styles like mine even though they're not adopted.

Recently a couple from the adoption playgroup took their daughter to China to visit the orphanage she was from. It's closing down and they were shown her file and taken on a tour of the orphanage. Unfortunately the daughter was abandoned by her mother and they don't have anymore information. Maybe down the track in time China might give the parents and daughter more information? The daughter seems to cope with it ok but her moods were a bit up and down during the trip. Sometimes when the parents from playgroup talk to their children about their adoption, the kids can become emotional one day, a different day they are interested, and some are just not interested at all.

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Becoming a parent in November of 2006 was something that needed to happen although it was a tough transition.

I believe being adopted will always play a role in me as a parent. The first year was particularly difficult in terms of initial bonding. When I learned that I was having a boy I locked myself in the bathroom and called my mom. She put it well and said that it would be an opportunity for me to pave a different path as a mom to a boy.

I was adopted at 5 years of age. Because of this, sometimes I feel disconnected as a parent since I do not know who my care givers were nor does my family know what I was like before that time. I do not have experiences of that time that I can look back at and relate to my son.

My son's father is Italian/German. My son looks ethnically ambiguous. His skin tone is much lighter than mine and most people will not say, "Oh your son looks like you". As a matter of fact, it is quite the opposite. I have to explain to people that he has certain features of me and his dad. He does not look at all Filipino like me.

I do feel that being an adopted person and a mom to my two and a half year old son, comes with the baggage that I am still working through i.e. insecurities with my adopted family, my low self esteem, inability to trust people to name a few.

My brother has a young child. At one point I felt that there was some favouritism towards my niece because my brother is biological to my mom, whereas I am not. After having open conversations with my mom about this issue I realised this is

not the case and it is merely something I have conjured in my head. It almost feels like my self esteem has been tested more and more as I have grown older.

All my adult life I have been wary about trusting people let alone allowing them into my life. Truthfully, it has been difficult to find like minded people in their early thirties with children where I live. I suppose I have been somewhat resistant to meet others because of my fear to trust but feel that once my son is in grade school there may be more opportunities.

I do hope that my son will have certain attributes of my family such as being humble, sincere, sense of humour, strong family values and integrity. I do know that my family will provide an enriching bond just as strong as I feel with them, if not more. I do not want my son to carry on the insecurities I have. I know I could still benefit from going to a therapist and am considering returning.

Two and a half years later I feel more confident about parenting and in a much better place than I was in the first year. We moved to a new apartment with more space, a neighbourhood that is far more diverse and of course a building that has an elevator. Some amenities were lacking when we lived in the upper east side. We now live on the upper west side of Manhattan with an abundance of playgrounds and every necessity a stones throw away or by walking or taking the subway.

Parenting books will not tell you outright that motherhood can be a lonely journey. I wish someone would just tell it how it is without all the technical mumbo jumbo. Some of my concerns I am sure are similar to those who are not adopted but of course I know there are some characteristics that are unique to my own past.

These days I make it a point to meet with friends on a regular basis, which I did not do in my first year. People who do not have children have this misconception that once you become a parent, you have no time to socialise. I continue to maintain the Filipino Adoptees Network (FAN) website, attend conferences and events about post adoption services, as well as volunteer with Filipino American organisations. I have other hobbies such as jewellery and card making that help me keep my creative juices flowing. Learning new cooking techniques and trying out new recipees gives me joy (I guess that comes with the territory?!) I am trying to find a healthy balance between the life I once led with my present life.

It has helped that I reconnected with a fellow adult adoptees who are also from the same orphanage as me. We do not talk on a regular basis but we did make it a point to meet each other and our kids for the first time when I was in Seattle in October 2008.

Even though the last two and a half years with my son have been challenging on so many levels both physically and emotionally - he has change the course of my life that was close to chaos. He is a true joy and a pain, I am not going to lie and know it will get harder before it becomes easier. If I knew then what I know now, I

would have been able to manage the transition of parenthood better, although I guess that is part of the learning process.

Lorial

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You ask me rather foolishly my thoughts on being a Mother? Foolish I say in a jokey way because it would take as long as my arm to tell you how much I just love being a Mummy! And I know you probably don't have time read what I have to say but I will share some of my thoughts as briefly as I possibly can.

Firstly, I love this overwhelming feeling of unconditional and total love I have for Phoenix, you know the type of love that is felt by most mothers world over, but added to this when I look at her I can't help but feeling so blessed that my life has been given a 2nd chance in order to have Phoenix. When she falls asleep in my arms I study her face, her feet, creases in her elbows, her fingers and marvel that she is related to me, she is my blood relation and that she carries genes and possibly personality characters which may have come from my biological Mother, Father, Auntie, Grandparents. When she dashes around me filling my home with laughter, tears and little angry tantrums I reflect and feel as though some things are occurring; obviously I care for Phoenix in the first instance as her Mummy, but sometime (perhaps because of her current age 2 and a half), I feel that I'm seeing a little past 'ghost' of me - when I was her age and ask myself questions like - did i speak some Vietnamese? It seems quite possible. And thirdly sometimes I feel like my biological Mother is somehow re-incarnated in Phoenix, a shadow of her, it feels like I can see my Mother's vulnerability and want only to throw a blanket of protection around Phoenix - acknowledging that difficult decision my Mother made to give me up, but wanting to saying to my Mother that it's okay now - look I'm taking care of your beautiful grand-daughter and if it had not been for her decision to give me up - We would never have had Phoenix.

Well that's the shorten version of my thoughts! It is strange, but I have never shared these with anyone else - not even my husband, yet.

It is interesting that you question the attachment a biological grandparent and a non biological grandparent would have towards their grandchild. I personally don't see that a non biological grandparent's reaction or attachment would necessarily be any less. Let me explain: Phoenix's 'blood' grandmother (my mother-in-law) adores Phoenix and would move mountains for her I am sure. However, this I know applies to my adoptive Mother. My 80 year old adoptive Mother, travelled to England to be at the birth of Phoenix and stayed with us for 4 weeks thereafter to cook, clean and try and help with the baby - as much as she could. I feel certain

that so strong was my adoptive Mother's desire to have a child of her own i.e., me, that her maternal instincts extended to her 'grandchild'. How wonderful it must feel that, from her perspective, that she managed to care and nurture me thus far to feel that life has awarded us with Phoenix. I think the only 'distance' we perhaps feel now, is that my Mother lives in Melbourne and much to our sadness will not 'bond' with Phoenix as much as my Mother-in-law will.

As for a Grandparent related by 'blood', I have observed that with some friends, here in England, that one friend of mine complained that her Mother had gone travelling during the birth of her daughter and was away for a good few months after, because her Mother felt 'the need' to see the world, another explained that her parents never offer to look after her child because they have so many grandchildren, they simply do not have time!

So, having 'defended' my Mother's attachment or love for Phoenix, I will mention that when my Mother visited us, in June this year. It was interesting to observe that when Phoenix was having a grumpy moment or particularly disobedient, when I asked my Mother for advice or questioned as to what she did when I was behaving like this, my Mother found it hard to offer up a solution. This is because I was almost 3 - almost 4 years old when she adopted me. She explained that because it seemed I was so 'traumatised', I was very quiet and stuck to her like glue. Therefore, in a sad kind of way I showed nothing like the independent spirit that Phoenix has. This made me quite aware of this huge missing piece of the jigsaw, the bit that explains the beginning of my life.

Jaki

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Before I had my son and before I was even in a relationship in which I contemplated having a child, I had this innate fear that I'd never be able to have my own child. I think this fear was driven by never knowing anyone who I could call my own "family". My innermost desire was to have a family of my own – people who were biologically related to me and hence, unquestionably where I belonged. This desire for a sense of belonging stemmed from never knowing who I was born to or why I was given up, and due to adoption, always having an underlying feeling that I had to be grateful to belong anywhere at all, in relation to my adoptive family.

So I won lotto twice! The first time was in meeting a partner who I could see loved me no matter what, warts and all! The second was in being blessed with the most beautiful son in the world! From my personal experience, there is no question that a mother and child bonds before it is born! After birth, that bond only grows

stronger! From the first moment when I held my son in my arms – he was beautiful to me in all ways! I've never felt such a love and in fact, I've lived my life questioning what "love" really is, until now. That questioning arose because I kept being told "your mother loved you so much that she gave you up". I can attest that this type of message really confuses adoptees! And having a child of my own, I have no doubt now that the decision to give up a child has nothing to do with "love" but more to do with survival and the only option left! The only pure and innocent love that I have now experienced is what I have for my son. This is the feeling I missed out on seeing reflected in my mother's eyes as she held me! I have no question as to whether she loved me, the only question I have is what was so powerful to have caused her to give me up despite the depths of that love! Or, if it was the case she willingly gave me up, what was so painful for her to have actively avoided and disconnected from the natural bond and love that should have existed?

Having a child of my own has provided me with insight into many areas of questioning that had arisen during my life as a result of being adopted. Firstly, the amount of genetic inheritance that one shares with biological family is incredible! I lived my life never seeing any of my gestures or expressions reflected in the family around me. I now see my son doing things that make me sure he comes from me and my partner! Secondly, I can see from experience that love is not thicker than blood and the ties between child and parent cannot be re-created perfectly because there is not the instinct to protect a child that is not one's own, as there is to protect one that you've borne. Thirdly, I use to wonder whether I'd be any good as a parent given I was an adoptee who'd struggled with many issues, namely, my inability to trust / connect or really love something left me wondering if I'd be a good role model for a child. Would my issues get in the way of me being able to be there for my child or would my child become damaged by my issues? This fear has since been blown away. I think if anything, I am a very over attentive and over loving mother because I am giving to my child what I lacked, knowing how important it is to have that unconditional love and attention. Knowing how important it is to look deep into my child's eyes and give them unconditional acceptance and knowledge of their importance and sense of belonging in this world. I have no doubts my son will not have any of the feelings I had of not belonging anywhere. My son will know that he was definitely loved by his mother! Fourthly, growing up I was ashamed of how I looked, my Asian appearances. Now when I look at my son,

I can't help but wonder how on earth I ever felt ashamed of such cute Asian features! I tell my son all the time how much I love him and how beautiful he is. I know he will grow up to feel proud of his Asian looks and I think it is good that I eventually grew to be proud of my Asian / Australian-ness before I had a child, so that he could inherit that sense of pride too!

I can also say that in having a child of my own, I have developed a healthy respect for both my adoptive parents and my biological ones that I have never

met or known. In this, I mean that it is not easy being a parent. We don't come equipped with a recipe book on how to do it right. It's trial by error and it's about equipping yourself to have the best knowledge possible to make the best choices possible at any time. It's also about taking responsibility for one's issues and ensuring one is aware of one's emotional baggage and how to deal with it so as not to dump it on our unsuspecting loved ones! I really became a lot closer to my adoptive mother when I became a mother myself. This was because I could see a lot clearer and with experience what patience and wisdom she really did give and still has today. I value and accept her ways more than ever and I seek her advice given that she parented more than I ever will! I also realize how much more strength and logical love a mother must have for a child who is not her own. Mothering a child not your own must be extremely difficult as you don't have the intuition one has when you have borne a child and it shares your genetics and mirrors yourself.

My extended adoptive family have always treated my son as if he was part of their natural family. I wonder sometimes if I'd found my birth family just how much more complicated "family" would be! Has having my son made me want to find my birth family any more or less? Probably less because I feel that I already have my own family now. The only driver to make me want to find them now would be for medical reasons or if my son grows up and wants to know more about them himself.

Having my own child has been like Karma has finally come around to me. I started off with a life that was pretty average – in losing all that was mine and then being adopted, to make the best of the loss – now I have a family of my own and a place of belonging with the gift of a loving husband and child. Parenthood is a pleasure for me – of course there are those tough days where one's patience is worn thin and one is worn out and tired! But on the whole, I love it and find it is a way of developing and learning more about what it means to be human. It helps me see everyday just how valuable family and love are. Of course the day will come when he questions how I parented him and the mistakes I made. Don't we all hold our parents accountable at some stage? I hope that when he does, I will have the ability to reflect openly and with acceptance make the changes I need to allow him to continue growing and for us to remain as connected and close as we are now.

I can't help but project into the future and wonder if I'll feel lonely when my child has grown up and developed a life for himself. Will I feel as alone as before I married and had a family? Will I ever feel that black hole of not belonging and not knowing that I use to have as a young adoptee? No. I don't think so because there has been a part of me that is now fulfilled – I do belong somewhere and I know what love and connection really is. It's no longer a fantasy or a mystery. It is very real. I do, however, question now more than ever, the myths and misconceptions our society sells us to justify international adoptions. Nothing can ever replace one's natural place of belonging. We should be doing more to

enable families to stay together where possible and share our economic means to give them a chance of being together as nature intended. Where this is not possible, we should give them a chance to be cared for by people within their own culture and country.

If my husband and I were to die today, I would hate for my son to be given up for inter-country adoption ... I would first naturally want him to be cared for by extended family and if this were not possible, then by another family who were similar to ours in an environment as similar to what we created as possible with as similar values, beliefs and culture as possible. I'm sure this would be the wish for most mothers and fathers around the world!

Lynelle

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I am really excited about becoming a mother. It is an emotion that has come naturally to me and I think sometimes of how hard it must have been for my birth mother. To have us growing inside her for 9 months and then decide to put us up for adoption - because she knew that she would not be able to take care of us? I think it is the ultimate act of love for a mother to sacrifice her own emotions to think of her child and what would be best for them.

I can't wait for when my son is older to explain to him about my life and our story, cause now he is a part of that and it is his heritage too. I would like for him to embrace both his parents cultures and know and understand many world issues that make adoption so prevalent in today's society.

I just think that it is our family's history and we are special because it is not the 'norm'. I also have a step daughter who is 11 years old and she seems to have just blended into our lives and is looking forward to the birth of her baby brother. I am thinking of down the track of adopting her so legally if anything was to happen to me she would be taken care of, at least we will have something in common!

The names we have chosen for our son do embrace all of our combined family cultural heritage. He will have a traditional Anglo Saxon first name, a Sri Lankan second name and a Sierra Leone middle name. So he gets the best of all worlds!

I do think sadly that racism will be an issue however, I will bring my children up just as my mother did for me - to simply rise above people's ignorance and walk away from confrontation. Ultimately it's people's own fears and misunderstandings that contribute to their ignorance.

I would hope that we will be able to give our children a future where they are able to travel and experience different cultures with their parents, and truly become citizens of the world. I think by exposing children to other people, places and cultures it will expand their view of the world and hopefully they will develop a sense of compassion and empathy for those less fortunate than themselves.

Gabbie

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## **A breath of life on the mirror**

A worldwide development endangering natural parenthood

By Hilbrand W.S. Westra

*...“Van der Meulen has never doubted that he would be a good father. Although he characterizes himself as a distant and a rational person, as well "not very good in relationships": "That I keep some distance, is due my adoption, by the detachment and loss of confidence as a child. It is a wonder that I ever got a relationship like the one I have now with Elma.*

*But his relationship to Arvid, his son, felt from the very moment real, says Van der Meulen: "He is the only one with whom I dared to be essentially attached." That is, he thinks, because of the language of Blood: "What for you might be natural, this very distinct sense of family ties, I have always missed it. Blood is very strong, I can see this now. The very fact that you share the same bloodline, is enough to stay together. "*

*South Korean Adoptee, Rien van der Meulen, A Wine Connoisseur in daily life,, in the article, 'He is a memory of myself', in Trouw, a Dutch National Newspaper. By Iris Pronk, 10.01.2009*

## **Adoption**

Adoption is basically a legacy of post modernism. An accepted phenomena which is based on the idea of constructivism in Western society. An act of intervention which detaches biological connections. Within the latest international debates about family constructions, the constructionists believe in shaping families instead of the continuation of biological ties.

These people believe that adoption is the ideal example of a win win situation. Children and couples who want to have children are helped by this phenomena. They argue that the natural attachment of children is by far exaggerated and try

to show by, so called scientifically evidence based, models that everyday, children show a high level of plasticity to adapt to new situations as long they are been taken care of and out of institutional care. The adoptions by famous Actresses and Unicef ambassador like Angela Jolie and Pop stars like Madonna does suit them well for their purposes.

Adoption became from a last resort intervention a modern facility to get children for the purpose of others, instead of keeping families together. But so-called pedagogy and child psychology, many times, adopters and adoption parents, copy easily longitudinal outcomes of researchers, most times clinical and statistical determined research, and argue that these outcomes proof; that adoption is a well and meaningful intervention for children. But nobody ever executed international qualitative research about the consequences for adoptees and families for the short and long term in non fixated and detached situation where they can answer without be threatened by the eyes of their adoption family and the social system forcing them to give answers which they would not have given when they were free to give their own inclusive answers without the fear to be abandoned again.

Science should be objective and not been influenced by political aims and social instigated interests. But the question demands a certain distance from an explosive subject like adoption. Many times, the justification for objective science is many times fiction instead of a reality. Though, the social system many times interact and exchanges the necessary information to keep the political and economical migration of children on going in a speed which the history never seen before.

## **Parenthood**

But what does this have to do with the subject of parenthood for adoptees. At first sight the political and economical field of adoption looks far away from adoptees choosing to have their own children and carry their own children in their arms for the first time. Then the concept of constructivism to grow an own family and neo Darwinist approach to hand these children over to those who claim to have the best abilities to be better parents looks far away.

Many times adoptees are not aware that they belong to a social system which believes in social constructions of families and see family life as a privilege for the economically better situated. The system which believes, that when you don't belong to that system, the right to keep the children should be withdrawn to a minimum.

So I always ask when adoptees wondering about to have children what does stop them get own children or decide to get them if possible. Most times they answer, that their income should be secured and their relationship should be stable. An approach which is only a reality for not even twenty percent of the world's families. Does this mean, that all the others should not be able to get children or

give them to those who are economically better situated? Like growing families should always be based on economic wealth instead of a homogenic system where families take care for each other like in earlier tribal family structures with extended social families and social care organised by their own group.

Interesting are the wounds which have been grown slowly in the heart of some adoptees who say that they do not dare to wish for children because of their own adoption. Most times this group cannot believe that they would adopt children to foresee in a family of their own. The fear to loose and see a mirror of themselves hurts too much and they decide to stay childless purposely.

The other group who receives children of their own, have to deal many times with different other issues. Essential emotions like; why did my mother give me away and the existential feeling to have something of their own. Their own 'flesh and blood' and suddenly they do not belong and act to the standards of family as a construction but primarily feeling to continue a feeling and reality of belonging. Something which enables them to reconnect with their lost past. Suddenly adoptees are confronted with a deep existential emotion and feeling of reconnection and continue a family line which they thought they'd lost. Even when they say, they are proud to give their adoptive parents offspring, they feel most times silently connection of an older reality of their own lineage and heritage. In any case, they create a lineage which is biologically not the one of their adoption family but the one of where they come from. And this truth does create sometimes a tension and a new reality for adoptees where they never were prepared for.

Adoption intervenes in biological systems of the adoptees and the relationship with their own heritage and detaches it until they become parents themselves and feel how the connection could have been to their own parents. Suddenly biological arguments seem to be in favour and they cannot think of it leaving their children to others. And this signal should be a strong mark at the landscape of, adoption as a natural intervention as it is presented nowadays.

### **Social Perspectives Endangering Adoptees who become parents**

When adoptees get their own children, suddenly this experience opens many times different dimensions of life and understanding what adoption does to people. Many times I see adult adoptees starting opening their adoption history and reveal their inner depths regarding their adoption in different ways as ever before reaching this situation. Even those, who did not believe that adoption marked their personal landscape, start many times questioning their adoption and their perspective on the issue. Many times adoptees do not dare to do this. Afraid to be stigmatised as someone who is not successful. Like successful adoptions should show no questions about the adoption itself; like, adoption itself is the main purpose and can alone be graded in the levels of showing happiness and

thankfulness to the adoptive parents and institutions, who so-called, saved the adoptees from a certain death or unhappy life.

With this burden adoptees are marked as target for the DSM IV because many times they do possess one of the whole list of pathological symptoms of illnesses and therefore even some adoptees ended up in dangerous zones were social workers, the institutions, who helped adopters to get them, found adoptees in psychological problems endangering their child after birth and reported them as not able to take care of their own child, not understanding what adoption did to them. This extreme and dramatic outcome has been a possibility which I witnessed in reality more than once. Some adoptive parents see their chances to get the grandchild as a new promise for a 'baby' they never had before, forcing their adopted daughter to hand this child over to them as their legitimate child, assisted and in accordance by medical and social staff, leaving the adoptee as birthmother alone without no help.

There is a strong need for support and understanding for those and other adoptee parents, who have to struggle as the first generation with the emotional problems and also happiness – which they cannot always show to their adoption parents, afraid of confronting them with their pain of childlessness – to see all those wonderful parents fighting to survive and cope with deep feelings of belonging recalled by getting their own offspring in their hands.

### **Nature and Nurture**

Science became a new religion with the same rigid concepts and methods as most religions show. The whole discussion about what is nature and what is nurture is in the interest of the reliability to create a controllable and stable structure for a designed society. A world which was written down in the book; 'Brave a new World' by the English Author 'Aldous Huxley. A world which strives for certain perfection and a state of control at social, economical and demographic level. A world which comes frighteningly close to our reality.

For those who can afford nature believe that this is essential to them as they do believe in nurture and creates a society believing that children should be available on demand. This world is enhanced by medical possibilities and protected by legal measures when they are been requested to formulate ethical boundaries whereon they act as member of the society called postmodernism believing in possession within constructivism.

Those who live in the natural world believe less in conceptual approaches while life itself does not allow them to become member unless they are accepting certain restraints where they have to offer what is most precious to them. Life. They become nurtured after they sign as signatories of a single developed treaty to pay the world of nurture by natural resources due the lack of these resource in the postmodern world by following a schematic planning of family orders.

## **The scent of life**

My friend Rien, from the quote where I started this article with, understood his adoption pure and tense for the first time when he held his son in his arms. I remember his words when he told me, that the scent of his son touched him deeply and said that this was the first time he really felt the existential ties where he now could acknowledge, that this was the blood of his blood and the history of his history. A language which cannot be learned but can only be inherited because of this. And from someone who is normally very rational and analytic, it is a great discovery and a painful experience how deep this understanding grasp his consciousness by the throat overthrowing the constructive idealism he, I and many others are been raised by.

## **History**

The history shows us again and again, that the longing to belong and knowing who you are, is a deep and essential feeling which carries a deep ongoing hunger to attach in an essential way. Like the Australian well known anchor and writer Robert Dossaix wrote in his book; 'A Mothers disgrace'

*"A couple of days later. I got a note, careful and well-considered written on fine paper. Not distant but with some restraint, correct. I could call her if I wanted she noted. I recall, if I am honest, that I hoped for a little more emotion, but I was aware, that her choice of words in this note, had cost this woman, a tremendous effort"...*

An existential bond to reconnect. But many sense the danger behind it, bringing social systems in danger who believed that detachment of nature was in the best interest of the child and for the mother. But this detachment can bring whole families and generations in a turmoil of unrest and instability. Something which is not a choice but an outcome of unpredictable size inflicting many relationships and their children where whole societies depend on. Misunderstanding these developments endangers not only families but whole societies.

## **Final**

That's why we should acknowledge, that family life is not an old and traditional concept but something we should honour and protect and create facilities for those who are in need for a hand by raising their children if they cannot do this always at their own. Respecting life as it is given, so all members can bloom and secure a future for a new generation who can help their parents and others developing a society in harmony, knowing that they are protected by the loved ones and that they can stay with their parents so a new generation of children can grow in trust that can stay and belong were they are. Even when disasters and terrible situations are accompanying them. Children are the new hope and continuation of the society. Taking this away, is taking away hope, taking hope away, the societies and families living in it, die.

*An own system creates the necessary and natural conditions to survive and to establish a new level of balance and harmony. A minor intervention in a vulnerable social system can bring huge problems for generations and even the start of collapsing the layers whereon societies were build on.*

*Eon Jung*

Sometimes when it is cold outside and the windows are covered by condense, I breath the air from an old family tree and see, when I draw the branches, how it comes alive and disappear telling me life itself is worth it but that I never should forget where I come from.

Woon Seok aka Hilbrand Westra

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As an adopted man from Sri Lanka living in Sweden for about 30 years, my thoughts have started paying attention to considerations on becoming a parent. I have reached the conclusion there exist some structural limitations which are never discussed within the context of parenthooding from an adopted man's perspective. In this text I discuss these overlapping structural limitations which tend to contribute to the fact that adopted men complete their lives in solitude. My concluding suggestion is to dissolve and prevent the reconstruction of these structural limitations for adopted men by ending all international adoptions from Asian, South and Latin American, and African countries which sell their children to Westerners.

Because I was sold to Sweden for a reasonable amount of money and have grown up in the Swedish nuclear family and lived in Swedish society all my life, this text is based on thoughts which have been constructed within a Swedish context. These thoughts are confirmed by the tendencies expressed in the statistics. Considering the fact that Sweden is one of the countries which internationally adopt the most children both in absolute and relative numbers in relation to its population I believe what I am discussing also would be possible to generalize to other Western countries adopting children from non-European countries.

In order to understand the tendency that the majority of the adopted men over twenty-five years old in Sweden spend their life in solitude, I claim that parenthooding must be seen within the context of overlapping structural limitations an adopted man is faced with, instead of meeting a potential partner to reproduce children with. These structural limitations are: the adoptive parents' fetischization of the children's sex and country of origin, the stereotyping

of individuals with non-European faces which deviate from the appearances of the majority population, and the dominating ideal of beauty in the Western host country the adoptee has been migrated to by force.

***(Note: For complete 12 page text, please see [www.intercountryadopteevoices.com](http://www.intercountryadopteevoices.com) The following are paragraphs that have been taken as excerpts from the original text).***

Having clarified the way in which the adoptive parents' fetishization of different countries of origin tend to be controlled by the prevailing stereotypes of individuals with non-European faces in the adoptee's host country and that girls are adopted before boys, the question of parenthood from the perspective of an adopted man can be approached. A question never discussed which I claim is constructed within a context containing several overlapping structural limitations contributing to the fact that adopted men stand in solitude thinking about becoming parents instead of meeting a partner to reproduce children with.

In Sweden the majority of the adoptees having completed twenty-five years of age are women (62% women, 38% men). It demonstrates that the adoptees having completed twenty-five years of age and are men exist within a minority position in that age category and also in its whole (55- 60% women compared to 40-45% men) within the foreign adopted group. Out of the 62% adopted women over twenty-five years of age 51% were born in South Korea. Regarding the adopted men over twenty-five years of age 29% were born in South Korea. I have not succeeded in deciphering the available statistics (Internet link 1) as regards the numbers and countries of origin for the rest of the adopted men over twenty-five years of age.

My theory is that masculine adopted individuals with an African origin are the fewest and that South Asians are somewhat more while South and Latin Americans are further more. The meaning of this theory is that white Asian adopted men together with South and Latin American adopted men, whom as a group are the closest to the characteristic European whiteness, are overrepresented among the foreign adopted men over twenty-five years of age, while brown Asian adopted men and black adopted men with an African origin as a group are underrepresented among the foreign adopted men and within the adopted group as a whole. Simultaneously, adopted men often represent the majority of the men in the immigrant category from the same country of origin, region, and continent. This fact however does not contribute to the case that women within the immigrant category from the same (or any other) non-European country find the adopted men as potential partners. The reason to this case is discussed further below in the text.

Taken together, because of the adoptive parents' fetishization of sex and country of origin which tend to be controlled by the positive and negative stereotypes about non-Europeans the foreign adopted men represent a minority in relation to

men in the majority population in the host country and are underrepresented within the foreign adoptee group. It brings about the case that the darker the skin color of the adopted man becomes the more his face differs from the dominating ideal of beauty and thus falls outside the category of a potential partner to reproduce children with. These overlapping structural limitations the foreign adopted man need to take notice of when looking for a potential partner because these limitations never cease and are continuously reconstructed.

I will now make a survey of the potential partners an adopted man could become a potential partner for within his host country and discuss the reasons many adopted men tend to live in solitude. Of course, there is nothing odd about living in the category "single" if it is voluntarily chosen or that you as a homo-, bi-, or transsexual do not get married for some reasons. I claim that many heterosexual adopted men have not voluntarily chosen to live in solitude. Here follows some statistical data (reference given in Internet link 2a) which confirms this claim: A survey from 1997 showed, among other things, that in the year of 1995, 51% of the adopted women were married or living together with a partner in comparison to 25% of the adopted men. In another survey made in the year 2000 on 1897 adoptees in the age category 23-34 in the year of 1996 only 13.3% of these individuals were married compared to 25% among the Swedes and 15.9% living together with someone compared to 31.1% among the Swedes (in total 29.2% compared to 56.2%). Furthermore, a survey from the year 2001 showed that out of 3119 adopted men in the age category 20-35 in the year 1998, the estimated chance of being married were three times less than among the Swedes.

Moreover, a survey on foreign adoptees born 1968-75 demonstrated that adoptees more seldom were married in comparison to individuals of equal age in Sweden, foremost, the adopted men (Lindblad, Hjern & Vinnerljun 2003, reference given in Internet link 2b). This survey also showed that among foreign adopted women it is more common to live in solitude with a child in comparison to others and that among the foreign adopted men it is more common to have children and not live with them. I will try to show that many adopted men have not chosen to live in solitude but there are overlapping structures in the host country which tend to form limitations in regard to parenthood with a potential partner: with women within the foreign adopted group, with women in the majority population, and with women within different minority groups.

It is possible to imagine that the predominant majority of the adopted women over 25 years of age in Sweden get married and reproduce children with adopted men. They don't. I have not found any statistics over this case but estimate that about 95% of them get married to Swedish men. The reason why the majority of the adopted women, who do get married and involve themselves in parenthood, do so with a Swedish man before an adopted man is that they have been raised as Swedes within the Swedish nuclear family with the existing stereotypes prevailing within it about individuals with foreign origin. These stereotypical perceptions can be conscious or unconscious and manifest themselves in conjunct laughing

within the nuclear family at Western popular cultural TV-shows which make fun of non-Europeans, in general or from a particular country, region, or continent. Because both the male and female adoptees have been raised as Swedes they are given no strategies to resist, for example, the colloquial racism in the Swedish society. They take on the views of others as a part of the majority population and distance themselves from non-Europeans and sometimes people from their own country of origin, contributing to the continuous reconstruction of the prevailing racism in the host country which in the end, strikes back at the adoptee. Swedish adopted women tend to choose a Swedish man before an adopted man because the adopted man with his deviating appearance falls outside the category of a potential partner to reproduce children with due to the stereotypes prevailing consciously or unconsciously within the nuclear family and in the popular culture about non-Europeans which the adopted woman has incorporated during her upbringing.

The ideal man for an adopted woman becomes a Swedish man. And the Swedish man would love to involve himself in parenthood with an adopted woman. She is as exotic as other women from her country of origin but economically cheaper enterprise to run because the home country has become the host country and easier to control than an immigrated woman from the same or another non-European country. The adopted woman is already civilized and educated in the host country and knows only of the Swedish culture and the role women plays within it. She becomes the perfect fetishized object for the Swedish man. The adopted women who choose an adopted man as potential partner are those who do not want to become fetishized objects for Swedish men.

The adopted men, just as the adopted women, are raised to Swedes within the nuclear family with the prevailing prejudices existing within it, consciously or unconsciously, and fed by force with racist representations of non-Europeans in the Western popular culture which foremost has focused on making fun of non-European men. The ideal woman for an adopted man is a Swedish woman because the adopted man has grown up in the belief that he is an individual among the majority population. However, his non-European appearance makes him considered according to the prevailing stereotypes existing within the host country.

Surely, Swedish women enter relationships with and some even carry the children of adopted men but the majority of these women tend in the end to decompose the relation with the adopted man and get married to and reproduce children with a Swedish man. Here I believe that the Swedish women's perception about non-European men is reflected. The woman gets tired of the adoptee because he does not embody the stereotype as a fetishized non-European person. The adopted man misses the attributes the immigrants from the same country of origin and other persons with an immigrant background possess because the adopted man has been raised in the Swedish nuclear family, often consistent, of two Swedish parents. The adopted man becomes a

quasi-fetisch, neither a Swede nor an immigrant. He looks like an immigrant but acts like a Swede. The Swedish women an adopted man tends to become a potential partner for are those who are deviating within the majority. Taken together, the adopted man is situated within a minority position in relation to the majority population in the host country and in the foreign adopted group simultaneously as he tends to be stereotyped as less rational and industrious by people in his surrounding the darker his skin color is which contributes to the case that he also falls outside of the dominating ideal of beauty in the host country which involves the masculine and feminine beauty, even though he is a social and cultural Swede.

In Sweden the dominating ideal of beauty tends to lead a white male to a white female and a white female to a white man. This ideal partnership was constructed during the 19<sup>th</sup> century when the Europeans searched for their historical origin, or when Romance grew into and was replaced by the European racism. There was a great debacle about the origin of the Europeans within the Indo-European research discipline. Still today it is unclear where the Europeans have their origin. However, under a certain time in the academic world the researchers of the Indo-European origin proposed that individuals having lived within the area which today is named Greece, was a homogenous and pure/non-mixed people and predecessors of the contemporary Europeans (Bernal 1997). Because the researchers never found the origin of the Europeans they constructed the subjective and heroic fantasy based history of the Europeans. Still today Greece is popularly considered as the cradle of Europe.

An adopted man also falls outside of the category as a potential partner to reproduce children with for women in the immigrated minorities from non-European countries within the host country. It depends on the fact that they know the reasons children are adopted from their countries of origins to Western countries; they are undesired by their parents and born in extra-marital relations. The immigrants' knowledge of these causes is independent of the immigrants' religious identification. I will now give an example how Muslims relate to adoption and adoptees, although Hindus, Buddhists and to some extent Christians have similar ways of relating to adoptees. I have chosen to exemplify the Muslims relation to adoptees because the Koran expresses it very explicit.

Within Islam 'adoption' in the sense it is defined in Western societies is a misrecognized term. The adoption practice is forbidden for Muslims. There are three reasons the Koran has a negative view on the adoption practice. First, it is considered illicit – haram – because no bond exists between the adoptee and the adoptive parent(s). Second, it is presumed that the amount of possible marriages in the society will decrease. If the adoption practice is allowed there are no reasons for many men and women to enter into marital relations. Third, because men and women can intend to adopt with the purpose of using the adoptee to satisfy their own needs, the prohibition forms a mechanism of control to the prevention on trafficking, slavery and sexual abuse of adoptees. Thus, from a

non-European immigrant's perspective, i.e. from a country with an Islamic form of government, the adoptee would represent an illicit individual who could have been abused by his adoptive parents simultaneously as the adoptee's biological mother most definitely has done something unacceptable according to cultural norms in the country of origin and therefore regarded the child undesired which is why the international adoption presented itself as an alternative to get rid of the child and protect the family honor. This way of relating to adoptees tend to contribute to the case that adopted men (and women) fall outside of the category as a potential partner to reproduce children with for non-European immigrants, independent of religious identification.

The other non-European women an adopted man can become a potential partner for is a woman who in her country of origin is socially stigmatized or culturally defect. It can be a woman who has done something culturally unacceptable or a woman of mixed race. Because no one wants to enter into marriage with this woman in her country of origin an adopted man can come in hand as a potential partner as the both of them share the same sense of exclusion and are viewed at in similar ways both in the country of origin and by immigrants in the Western host country.

Taken together I claim that the adopted man can choose to participate in parenthood only with a few potential female partners: adopted women who do not want to be fetishized objects for men in the majority population, deviating women in the majority population, non-European women which no one wants to enter into marital relationships neither in the adoptee's host country nor in her country of origin, and divorced import women/Western princesses.

Beside these overlapping structural limitations an adopted man is put in between which have been described above it tends to exist an important difference between men and women considering parenthood. It is the woman's active drive to ally herself with a partner to reproduce children with. This active role the woman takes is controlled by the intention of finding a man who can provide the child with security. This man is to be found within the majority the woman belongs to or identifies herself with. A foreign adopted woman tends to choose a white Swedish man. A Swedish woman tends to choose a white Swedish man. A woman with a non-European background tends to choose a man with the same foreign background or a man with another non-European background within the adopted man's host country. A couple where both partners have foreign background (but are not adopted) can provide the child with strategies to resist against the prevailing racism in the host country in contrast to adoptees who consider themselves part of the majority and mostly do not resist against the racism. No woman wants her child to grow up in an insecure family where the father's foreign background which also becomes the child's is made fun of in the popular culture and is popularly considered less rational and industrious the darker his skin color is. Therefore, the woman chooses a partner within the majority she belongs to or identifies with. This striving to have children can make

women do almost anything. If they cannot have children of their own with their allied partner they can expose themselves to laborious, painful and expensive treatments through so called in vitro fertilization. And when this Western luxurious medical treatment fails their last alternative to have a child is to adopt one from countries which ignore the development of proper social institutions for undesired children, orphans and handicapped children. Countries which instead have chosen to sell these children like dogs to rich adoptive parents in Western countries where, foremost, the foreign adopted men are exposed to the prevailing stereotypes about non-Europeans and are situated within inescapable minority positions within the foreign adopted group and in relation to men in the majority which contribute to the case that they tend to complete their lives in solitude.

I claim that the context of parenthooding from an adopted man's perspective is limited by: the adoptive parents' fetishization of sex and country of origin which principally follows the European men's sexual preferences for and the import of non-European women, the stereotypes about individuals with non-European faces especially concerning the men, and the dominant ideal of beauty in the host country which was constructed during the 19<sup>th</sup> century by the "Aryan" academics within the Indo-European research field. This context is never discussed but contains several overlapping structural limitations for adopted men contemplating parenthood.

In order to dissolve and prevent reconstructing this reality of structural limitations for adopted men within the Western host country they are situated I will give three reasons to the case that a total decomposition of the international adoption practice would be far more reasonable than encouraging Western adoptive parents to adopt more brown and black boys in order to collapse the dominating ideal of beauty/characteristic European whiteness and the stereotypes in the host country which make adopted men present themselves as unattractive, irrational, lazy, and funny.

The first reason is there will never exist a "second generation of international adoptees". An adopted person does not pass on the adoptionhood, neither to his biological child nor to an adopted child. If an adopted person reproduces a child with a Swede or an immigrant the child becomes mixed. If the adoptee reproduces a child with an adoptee or an immigrant from the same country of origin the child becomes a child with foreign background. If the adoptee adopts a child the child is categorized as an adopted child, not a second generation international adoptee. It depends on the fact that no biological bond exists between the adoptive parents-the adoptee. Foremost, the child is migrated involuntarily because it has not chosen to be adopted and sold, according to the UN Child Convention, for a reasonable amount of money to a single or a couple in a Western country. Foreign adoptees are always a first generation of immigrants because they grow up with Western or Westernized adoptive parents and simultaneously a last generation of adoptees because the adoptionhood is not passed on. It is buried with the adoptee when he/she has completed his/her

life. Thus, a total decomposition of the international adoption practice would not be detrimental to the adoptees as a group, rather a happy ending to a trade with children from the formerly formally colonized countries to the post-colonial powers.

The second reason to the total decomposition of international adoptions is that it makes possible for the giving countries to care for their children. The reason that the giving countries do not do that today is because the international adoption practice is sponsored by Western countries which prevents a construction of proper social institutions for orphans and handicapped children simultaneously as the giving country does not have to bring up the discussion about reincorporating the practice of killing the undesired children which prevailed in most giving countries before they were colonized by the receiving countries.

The third reason to the total decomposition of the international adoption practice is that it takes place with the aim of satisfying adult needs, both in the giving and the receiving countries. In the giving country most children are given up for adoption because they are undesired by their parents. In the receiving country the child is adopted as a last alternative for “the involuntarily childless” or as an anti-racist mascot. The adoptee becomes an object of a trade which denies the adoptee of his/her human rights.

When the involuntary migration of children has been decomposed between the giving and the receiving countries the foreign adopted persons in the Western host countries can complete their lives as singles or in those few family situations they may be situated within, as discussed above, until they have come to an end. As a result of the total decomposition of the international adoption practice the overlapping structural limitations for adopted men would be dissolved and prevented from being reconstructed. It would no longer be essential having thoughts about parenthooding from an adopted man’s perspective because he would not exist. The non-existence of adoptees would precipitate the essence of contemplations on parenthooding which are never discussed within the context the adopted man encounters instead of meeting a partner to reproduce children with.

By Daniel Cidrelius

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