



ADOPTIVE DILEMA

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The prototype of the undervalued personality is well illustrated in the cases of children who have been given up at birth and then adopted by a family from their own culture; in particular, a culture which highly values children, i.e. Hispanic cultures. Even in the case where the adoptive child is genuinely valued by their adoptive parents, family and community, the adoptee can still struggle, throughout their lives with self-defeating behavior reflective of a paradoxically vague and unrecognized sense of not having sufficient value. For these adoptees it is an existential dilemma whose nature is obscured and confused by the indisputable fact that they remain truly valued by their adopted family. Their unrecognized dilemma is that they can never be “naturalized” by their adoptive family no matter how much they are valued.

These individuals struggle to grasp their existential dilemma because of the cultural belief that all children have innate value because they are a gift from God. “Why then”, they lament, were they not valued enough

to be “kept”? Is something wrong with them? Was God somehow displeased with them? Were they imperfectly made?

Only when their generalized self-depreciation is successfully linked to their “given up” status, can they begin to grasp the etiology of their dilemma: “how can I have a value if my parents gave me up? Is it somehow my fault that they gave me up?” Not until they reach adulthood do they have the intellectual ability to grasp this illusive non sequitur. If and when they conclude that they are not at fault for being “given up at birth”, their challenge is to develop, maintain and increase their value by their accomplishments and achievements, unlike their non-adopted cultural counterparts who have never questioned their value. Ultimately, the adoptee, whether valued or not by their adopted parents and family, needs to come to the conclusion that the fact that they were adopted is no longer a determining factor in how they live their lives. It really isn't!!