

The development of the couple at the crossroads of adoptive parenthood By Alejandra Fonseca¹; Chile

Abstract

This article² summarizes some central points of the qualitative and exploratory research on couples who present infertility and who adopt in Chile, whose singularity intersects with adoptive parenthood. The study represents a descriptive and relational effort from semistructured interviews made for men and women, members of one of these couples. The observation of the phenomenon is approached from the fundamental pillars of the existence posed by Existential Analysis³.

The results indicate that the challenges faced by adoption have an impact on the couple's development. There is a risk observed, of the parental roles blocking the dyadic dimension. Also, the unfolding of the couples which are existentially fulfilled associates considerably with the levels of the fulfillment of the existential requirements described on each fundamental motivation. Nevertheless, the parental functions transcend any deficit in them and even disorders. Finally, the study concludes the importance of re-observe, of reflecting and reconstructing the adoptive processes in the work with the couples. In doing so, couples could build their postadoptive project with the necessary plasticity, establishing flexible attitudes and developing creatively in the road of adoption, making use of their capacities and in dialogue with each situation.

Key words: development, couples, parenthood, adoption, Existential Analysis

Introduction

The study establishes that the couple constitutes a ubiquitous desire in human beings (Corana and Rodriguez, 2000), therefore, it could be understood like a heideggerean

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² Translator's note: In this article I choose "they/them" pronouns to preserve a gender-neutral presentation, especially in concepts like "child", "human being", "human", "individual", "other", "person", etc.

³Existential Analysis, EA from here on.

existential⁴, because it represents thematic in which all, at diverse moments of our existence, are confronted by, whether we wish to experience it or no, independently of its historical transformations.

Particularly, from the last half of the XX century, couples have been subject to a series of observable transformations in its structuring, composition and function (Arriagada, 2002), as in the ways of experiencing and signifying it. Thus, it usually associates with concepts such as love, sexuality and erotism, reproduction and parenthood, economy, property, protection, warmth, intimacy, privacy, family, and also restrictions, renunciations, surrendering and violence.

Regarding parenthood, for the majority of people, the couple becomes a privileged setting to start a family (Linares, 2010). For many fortunate couples the miracle of becoming fathers and mothers by biological means is fulfilled, but for others on the other hand, it is not, due to a diagnosis of infertility in one or both members of the couple.

Infertility, which affects both men and women, is understood as a disease of the reproductive system and it refers to the inability to complete a pregnancy after twelve months or more in the practice of unprotected sex (WHO, 2009). The same organism (2009) defines sexual and reproductive health as a condition for physical, mental and social well-being that influences the different stages of the life cycle of a person and of the couple. It follows, then, that it not only affects the body, but the psyche and the person as a whole, while experiencing strangeness, impotence, generating a feeling of discomfort and grief in general.

After a while, some of these couples persist in their desire to become parents, and choose adoption. Then they begin a long process, which in that study has been defined as an adoptive path that includes three main phases: pre-adoption, during the adoption process, and post-adoption. Pre-adoption refers to the history of the couples until the moment prior to their decision to adopt, a period that is crossed by their constitution as a couple, their projects, their avatars, their attempts to have children, the difficulties to achieve it, the medical treatments of reproduction in many cases, the illusions and failures, the diagnosis of infertility, the pain, the onslaught of the desire to have a child and the decision to adopt. Once decided, the couple approaches some institution and begins the phase referred to as 'during the adoption process', a long, strenuous and an uncertain period. In it, both members attend informative talks, and if they continue, they must undergo an evaluation process to prove their physical, mental, social and moral suitability (SENAME, 2018). If all goes well, they go forward, having to attend a series of activities such as training workshops in parenting and adoptive culture, and even individual or couple therapy, in some cases. Meanwhile, as they advance in this process, the wait for the desired child becomes eternal, until the arrival of a child and a viable and concrete adoption project becomes closer. The project materializes in the post-adoption, with the arrival of one child or adolescent⁵, or more, to the bosom of this couple, initiating their cohabitation. But far from this being the goal of a

⁴ An existential refers to the concept of *existential*, coined by Martin Heidegger in his work *Sein und Zeit* (1927). The analysis of the *Dasein* (there-being) points out all of what constitutes the existence, that is to say, it configures as a constitutive structure of one particular existence, but that dominates all the relations of the existence, because it represents the always present possibility or possible way of being in the existing human.

⁵ NNA is used in this text as a substitute acronym to refer to adopted child or adolescent in a generic way.

couple, the arrival of the child initiates the post-adoption phase, understood as a moment that lasts for a lifetime.

In describing this journey, it is clear to understand that the history of these couples is unique compared to those of the couples who became fathers and mothers by biological means. Their history and life experience is crossed by a series of situations and milestones, which add to the uniqueness of the NNA -often marked by adversity- who become their children: however the journey marks their lives, with joys and positive emotions, on the one hand, but, on the other hand, with pain and ungrateful emotions. These couples at the crossroads with adoptive parenting are confronted, strained, challenged, tested, which makes them distinguishable and interesting to meet. It is curious, however, that there is no bibliographic material, nor specific information about this type of couples. Therefore, this type of couples is emerging as an interesting phenomenon to problematize when it is delimited from various tasks of knowledge. This knowledge based on the experience of post-adoptive couples would become full of meaning in the phase during the adoption process, which is when the couple is studied and evaluated.

The Couple

As mentioned before, the problem about couples is understood as a situated phenomenon. Today, for any clinician and other professionals, there is a lot of information about couples. Of their transformations, challenges and tensions, as of their issues and ways of working with them.

Beck and Gernsheim (2003), from a sociological perspective, sees the theme of couples introduced into Late Modernity in the midst of the Risk Society. In it, they point out that the public sphere is usually heartbreaking, competitive, depersonalizing, functional, and the private sphere, instead represents the family, the home and intimacy, and it is offered as the desired instance in its quality of refuge, of warmth, that place which makes it possible to show oneself as each one is.

Along the same lines, Giddens (2006) gives an account of couples configurations recognized as Pure Relationships, decided on the basis of love, but which differ from those based on idealized romantic love in which united relationships are conceived for life. Pure relationships are not condemned to eternity, they are not committed for a lifetime, but until love lasts, where the experience of a satisfactory sexuality is very important.

In a more critical sense, Bauman (2003) reflects on the repercussions of a modernity that he regards as ruthless in the field of relationships with others, affirming that today they are superficial, with fragile ties, with a marked difficulty of commitment and ease to change partners when satisfaction is no longer found, resulting in the other easily disposable or expendable, in the context of what he calls Liquid Modernity.

But, more recent studies in Latin America, question the statements of these authors of the first world regarding couples, pointing out that specifically in the country, there is a coexistence of discourses and practices that range from more traditional perspectives to understand and live it, which associate it with romantic love and family with children, fidelity and commitment for life; to other, postmodern perspectives, being closely involved in pleasurable sexuality, demands for equal roles, where the other appears in different ways according to their own needs: someone loved and desirable as long as love lasts and there is an active and pleasant sexuality not linked to reproduction, but quickly disposable once

the pleasant experience disappears, or when disagreements and differences appear, at which time the partner can reach the extreme of being understood as someone who imprisons, and threatens one's own freedom, castrating, and even an obstacle to the realization of one's own interests (Araujo and Martuccelli, 2012; Sharim, D.; Araya, C.; Carmona, M. and Riquelme (2011).

The context of multiple possibilities of realization accompanied by the uncertainty of Late Modernity, do not exempt those who decide to become fathers and mothers, from great fears and contradictions. In this regard, in the field of adoptive couples, marked by a clear desire to have a child (Alkolombre, 2008) it seems important to know how they experience this discursive duality, how it is put into play in their history crossed by adoptive parenting, and how adoption specialists look at these couples and their situational complexities.

Adoption

Adoption is a protection measure focused on responding to the right and need of a child to grow and develop within a family (SENAME, 2018). The guidelines on adoption programs are covered by Law 19.120, which dictates who can adopt in Chile, requires the declaration of suitability of these individuals and couples.

It has been mentioned before that adoption processes are long, demanding and strenuous for those who cross them, so applicants or applicants to an adoption build a relationship of ambivalence with adoption institutions. On the one hand, they respect them and create illusions and hope in them, thinking that they educate, care for and protect them as an adoptive family. On the other hand, due to the evaluative instance and the uncertainty about whether they will be able to adopt or not, they often feel permanently observed, and required to adapt to an ideal standard of a person, couple and / or an ideal standard of parenthood.

Regarding the process during the adoption, the couple is evaluated and counseled. But from an attentive and critical look, the evaluation to prove the suitability of the couple, makes use of different instruments that are applied individually to its members, and that are not designed to evaluate the couple as a whole. In addition, their validity as predictive instruments of parental performance, and/or successful adoption are also under discussion (Sandoval, 2004). In turn, the training activities in these adoption processes focus on positive parenting, on the one hand, understood in this study as an *a priori* imaginary exercise, and on the adoptive culture, on the other, where it realizes the needs of a child, the demands to which these parents will be exposed, and the ways in which they are expected to be able to respond by appealing to the need for couples to develop their parental capacities. As can be seen, both in the evaluations and in the training, the couple appears reduced from its complete dimension. Here is a second assumption of this research, namely: the loving couple for themselves, is obstructed after the parental role. That is, from now on the couple is considered in this field only in its parental dimension, without there being room for the attention, development or care of the dyadic relationship. This study understands that a family constitutes a whole in which the subsystems interact and affect each other, but it is also based on the basis that each subsystem needs to be considered in its uniqueness, it requires a singular, intimate space of attention, recognition and specific help. The fraternal and parental subsystems have been considered, but not so, the conjugal and loving couple. The extent to which these various edges found in the couple relationship are realized, affects the experience and significance of the own experience of its members and has repercussions on the other family subsystems (Linares, 2015).

Advances in adoption have included the need to provide support to these families in the post-adoption phase, but they return to focus on the parental dimension, without being able to focus on the future of these couples for themselves, their development, or how it is stressed or affected by the exercise of adoptive parenthood.

Some of the distinctive challenges that these couples must face at the crossroads of adoptive parenting can be named from experience in the following list of milestones and situations that are accompanied by various types of feelings of discomfort and suffering, demands for personal, bodily, economic and emotional resources to face each situation, one's own experiences, the pressure of the social environment, and the effort to grieve multiple times and re-arm to face new situations:

Pre-adoption:

- . Confronting difficulties due to non-fulfillment of the desire, project and / or planning to conceive children
- . Withstand family and social pressure
- . Discomfort from the diagnosis of infertility
- . Failures in reproductive care treatments
- . Exposure of physical and psychic dimensions during fertility treatments
- . Grief and elaboration of limitations, impediments or losses
- . Decision to adopt

During the adoption process:

- . Overcoming a series of stages in the adoption process from the category of simple interested in adopting, applicant for adoption and candidate for adoption, to becoming adoptive couples
- . Gathering a series of necessary documentation according to the stage of the process in which they are
- . Having time, psychological and economic resources to face the long process of evaluations, activities, waits and uncertainty
- . Proving their suitability by undergoing a series of evaluative activities such as interviews, informative talks, preparation and training, even assistance to psychotherapy (in some cases)
- . Giving an account of the elaboration of the grieving process regarding several situations of previous losses
- . Manifesting a legitimate desire for a child
- . Accountability for a stable and healthy relationship
- . Accountability for a state of physical health compatible with adoptive parenting
- . Accountability for a sufficiently healthy mental status
- . Accountability for a morally acceptable mode of conduct
- . To know and understand the complexities and challenges involved in adoptive parenting
- . To know and understand the history of adversity and the profile of children
- . To learn, develop and/or expand their parental abilities
- . Developing their own family history of origin
- . Providing an account of a sufficient support network to be accompanied during their formation as an adoptive family
- . Moving from the image of the dream child to the possible real child according to the profile of the children

Post-adoption

- . Receiving a third party into the home of the dyadic couple
- . Going through a process of mutual adaptation between the couple and the child or children, until they are adopted as fathers, mothers and children
- . Openness to be monitored in post-adoption
- . Transitioning from the adoptive honeymoon to the daily reality of family coexistence
- . Introducing the now adoptive family to the family environment, the neighborhood, friends, school, doctors, and facing it like a couple
- . Promoting a sufficient relationship with the child so that they can manifest themselves in self-confidence, as well as their origin, their losses, their pain, their longings, and their memories.
- . Unveiling in different ways and degrees the adoption of the child in case of adoptions of newborns or young children
- . Showing respect and not making any negative or idealized judgments about the child's past
- . Telling them about their origin, helping them develop respectful and sufficient answers to questions about the child's origin
- . Talking about the couple's own history, the desire of a child, the infertility, and the process of adoption
- . Accepting that in their parenthood there are other referents in the child, at least one biological father and mother who at different times are present in the family scene
- . Defining the degrees of openness and unveiling of contents of their story and configuration in the different environments and moments of their family history
- . Having capacities and resources to repair the adversity and losses of the child, and being able to bear the discharges of their children in them
- . Accepting not having a concrete data on the genetic and health past of the child, especially in the presence of possible diseases
- . Coping with a multi-pronged society that fluctuates between normalization and rejection of adoption in general

Specialized praxis

As a psychotherapist, from the very praxis of what could be called a clinic specialized in adoption, I have been able to verify that, in post-adoption, many times these couples come to consult a third party, moved by the difficulties with the child. These come after a long journey by various experts and counselors in childhood, family, education, psychotherapy, accompanied by long periods of discomfort due to the presence and exacerbation of family difficulties by not finding answers or solutions to their demands. Most of the time, the petition of the derivants, and of the couple, request an intervention with the child, or the child and their parents, placing the difficulties in the place of the child due to their condition of adopted. However, as I walk from one session to another, I have observed the emergence of difficulties at the parental level and mainly at the conjugal level. Along with this, I observe the discomfort of these couples, their children or the family in general, the absence of links with the adoptive institutionality, and the absence of specialists to provide timely attention. Therefore, it arises from this field a need for therapists or other professionals informed and trained to understand the phenomenon in its depth, who can support these people in a timely and efficient manner, attending phenomenologically to each particular case, and not from a generalized or standardized knowledge. The requirement in the field of adoption experts is that they know about the couple's present, and incorporate an open, dialogical,

understanding, reflective and critical look when working with these couples. The requirement on the side of couple's therapists is that they know the complexities that adoption means for them.

In summary, from the various areas exposed in the introduction on the couple, the family, adoption, psychotherapeutic praxis and EC, much has been said about it, but it is not really known who and how they are once converted into adoptive couples beyond the two years of post-adoptive follow-up that was given in practice at the time of this study. There is a gap in this regard that allows us to know how adoptive parenthood impacts on them, on their dynamics, on their experiences and meanings, in short, it is not known who they became, we do not know their future. Herein lies the relevance of knowing them. Building knowledge from their experiences would allow in the first place to evaluate the need to give the couple a greater space in the adoption processes without being obstructed after their parental role. It would also allow obtaining information based on daily life experience and not only referenced theoretically and hypothetically to attend to the evaluation and training processes. Finally, it could become a useful knowledge for the support staff with which this couple crosses paths in the post-adoption phase, a moment that as has been said lasts for a lifetime of those involved, thus making timely interventions.

In this regard, the question arises about the future of couples who adopt in Chile at the crossroads with adoptive parenting.

Existential Analysis and Couples

As a theory and psychotherapeutic approach aimed at helping the person to act with approval and consent, to find authentic and decisive positions, considered and in freedom and responsibility, EA, not only has a consequent knowledge for working with the individual person, but also for the couple. In this context the couple is understood as a unit, and is more than the sum of its members.

Längle (2008) argues that the cornerstones of an existentially fulfilled relationship are respect for the other and the ability to be able to be oneself in it. These personal tasks for oneself, as for the other or to be for oneself and for the other, represents a challenge of two partly antagonistic forces that strain relationships. The way in which each couple circulates, tries or elaborates this challenges will mark its developing, that is, it will affect the way in which the experience of the couple and the experience of each member becomes and signifies it. This capacity will depend on the way in which the fundamental conditions of existence, represented in each Fundamental Motivation, are constructed or not. Their deficit, their excesses or their equanimity in each part of the couple, or in the relational unity are at the base of their becoming Längle (2008).

Theoretical Framework

In order to know the development of the study subjects, we have opted for Existential Analysis. The EA is both a theory and a psychotherapeutic model.

Theoretically the EA asks: What is a good life? What is essential to a good life? That is, it deals with the analysis of the conditions for achieving existence, understood as an "active and determined commitment (...) a power to live with dedication (...) being oneself (...) that

is, to stay healthy" (Längle, 2004, p.4). As a method, it questions the means required by a specific person to achieve a good life or a full life. Its processes are oriented as a phenomenological psychotherapy whose purpose is to help the person to achieve a free experience, mentally and emotionally, and to be able to take an authentic position in front of the circumstances of one's own life to develop a responsible treatment with oneself and with the world (Längle, 2004). In the experience of a singular person, the aim is to help them so they can live with approval and personal consent towards their own action (Längle, 2004). It is a personal activity of affirmation to life, which refers to two areas: to say yes to our own personal world or internal world, and to the external world that surrounds us. In this way the person can live with dedication, an attitude essential for the achievement of a full life.

The concept of freedom is possible and understandable, since the anthropological view of EA understands the human being as a three-dimensionality: Body, Psyche and Person⁶. The Personal dimension, according to Frankl (2000) is that which is free in the human being, that which escapes any determinism and conditioning, therefore, it always remains healthy, but requires an organized structure with a Self and a personality (psychic dimension) sufficiently developed to be able to manifest itself.

Human beings have certain personal capacities such as freedom and responsibility, along with the skills of self-distancing, self-transcendence and self-acceptance. In addition, they are open to the world (Heidegger, 2019), for and towards this, they have the capacity to open up for a dialogical exchange with themselves and the world (Längle, 2004).

However, for the Person to find their place and be able to manifest themselves and to make use of their Personal capacities, they need the presence of these requirements, which are a precondition for the achievement of a full life. Those requirements, partly given, are mostly actively constructed by an individual, and they become the motivation for saying yes to life and living meaningfully. These motivations are those alluded in the Theory of the Fundamental Motivations of Existence, which represent the fundamental pillars of a fulfilled existence, which give a structure to personal life.

The first fundamental pillar of existence is for a person to experience that they can be-in-this-world. The second pillar alludes to the fact that they can experience-the-taste-for-life, their own life and life in general. The third foundation refers to the fact that they can experience as a Person, and that it is legitimate for them to be-themselves, just as they are. And the fourth cornerstone relates to the fact that they can find contexts in which to engage-in-actions-in-the-world-full of meaning.

These same fundamental pillars of existence are required for the construction of fulfilled couple's relationships. The couple, understood as a unit, is a living organization that has its own structure to live and exist (Längle, 2008). This structure will depend at the same time on the achievement of such fundamental motivations of each member of the couple.

Kolbe (2008) has developed the motivations of the existence of the couple, understood as The Four Poles of the Couple Relationship. He calls the former the Substantial Pole, which would be expressed as "being- able-to-be/being-there-with the other." The second is the Pole of Closeness which refers to "being-able-to-be-happy-together" or "we-like-living-together". The third pole referred to as the Individual Pole in the Couple indicates the

⁶ Person understood as the anthropological dimension of the EA, is written in this text with a capital letter, to distinguish it from a person in the sense of subject, human being or individual.

possibility of "being-able-to be-oneself-in-the-relationship". The last is the Pole, is that of meaning, which refers to "finding-the-pole-of-the-productive-by living-together".

In turn, each FM has its own conditions to be able to build its purpose, and these are the same for the individual person, and for the couple. These conditions can sometimes be deficiently constructed, or excessively magnified. In both cases, full existence is hindered, and this situation may constitute a threat to the health and well-being of the person and the couple in terms of being affected by the bodily dimension and getting sick, of falling into reluctance at the psychic level or into emptiness at the Personal level. When this happens the Person ceases to express themselves in their freedom and they are imprisoned by what their psyche dictates, a dimension whose function is at the service of survival⁷, an activity that differs from existence, so free and determined actions are partially or totally replaced by psychodynamic reactions (Längle, 2004).

Both Kolbe (2008) and Längle (2008), point out that in couple relationships where an interrelationship dominates not from personal freedom but from psychodynamics, they will be most affected in their exchange, they will be experienced less fulfillment, given the presence of a great and / or permanent conflictivity. The Personal encounter with the other is obstructed, leaving the relationship polarized, each protecting themselves from the other. Of course, these effects signal to its development and future. In this regard, Kolbe (2008) has described three levels of conflicts that can arise according to the dynamics and exchange in the couple. His descriptive model accounts for three levels of conflict in couples, which can lead them to different types of crises, live in constant tension, or break the bond, depending on the state of the personal-existential 4MF.

Thus, for example, it is possible to talk about healthy couples, but who are limited at a point that they cannot solve a problem on their own, but with the help of a third party they manage to quickly get out of the problem in which they are stuck. In these cases, it is assumed that both members of a couple can access, without difficulty, their personal skills and resources. Another level, on the other hand, occurs when access to one's own personal resources is difficult, bringing the couple closer to a relational dynamic marked by reactive behaviors, which unfortunately prevent or reduce the dialogical capacity. It could be said that these are traits fixed in some way, in some area, of which the couple can be aware, but, without the possibility of getting out of that dynamic, they manage the relationship at the level of the neurosis of the psychic dimension. Finally, on a third level, the couple encounters serious difficulties of personal access, due to long-standing and unelaborated intrapsychic disorders, probably occurring in childhood, of which the couple may or may not be aware. Here, the central problem is that the other is blamed for one's own difficulties. It could be noted that this level is associated with the level of personality disorders, where the couple, one of its members or both, cannot in any way freely deal with differences, disagreements or conflicts (Kolbe, 2008).

Bearing in mind the fundamental pillars of existence, the study is mediated with the following questions constructed on the basis of each FM: In what ways does the capacity for mutual

⁷ For Längle the concept of existence, understood as something essential of human beings, means a realization of their life. Life is what we share with all other living beings, whose characteristic is that it is given to us and in which we take care of survival, but to exist alludes to an active and determined commitment. Contrary to existing is to vegetate, where for the human being "it is no longer possible to rise above the conditions imposed by life" (Längle, 2004, p. 3); then the occupation is reduced to survival and the person remains a victim of circumstances.

acceptance arises regarding the experience of a couple in the adoptive journey? What are the experiences of closeness in relation to the couple in the post-adoption phase? What is the experience of deepening one's own singularities in the relationship through the exercise of adoptive parenthood? How is the commitment perceived in the couple in the face of the emerging difficulties in the post-adoption phase? In short, it is expected through these questions to know the way in which each member of the couple has dealt with the challenges of being a conjugal couple, before the experience of being a parental couple in the post-adoption phase.

Methodology

The study is approached from a qualitative methodology in Social Sciences, since the phenomena studied are not quantifiable, and in addition, because a most comprehensive analysis, the establishment of relationships and analyzing the phenomenon in greater depth are privileged (Conrado, 2020).

The exploratory character refers to the lack of specialized bibliographic documentation observing the phenomenon of the couple at the crossroads of post-adoptive parenting both abroad and in the country, except for that which focuses on the prenatal level of the couple, neglecting the conjugal level.

It comprises a descriptive and relational design. It is descriptive, since it aims to demonstrate, in a clear and limited way, the uniqueness of the phenomenon of this new study and to highlight the need for informed and timely interventions that can help these couples. It is relational in the analysis and elaboration of results and conclusions, because it is intended to be able to deliver a more comprehensive view of the problem (Länge, S. 2007).

The collection of information is carried out through at least one individual interview of a semi-structured nature, of approximately ninety minutes, and a second or more if deemed necessary, both by the researcher and by the participants. This methodology aims to satisfy the criteria of depth, amplitude and saturation (Valles, 2014).

Data analysis works through the construction of a priori and emerging categories (Echeverría, 2005).

The sample brings together ten participants, men and women of legal age, members of a heterosexual couple with one or more adopted children, who present infertility in one or both members of the couple, residing in Chile at the time of legalization of the adoption, regardless of the continuity of coexistence as an adoptive couple, but who at the time of the interview have elapsed more than two years at least of the beginning of the coexistence with the NNA. Participants who have made adoptions less than two years of cohabitation of the adoptive family, who have adopted abroad, or with biological children were not considered.

Conclusions and discussion

The most relevant conclusions and reflections are presented in relation to the specific objectives contained in the four questions indicated above.

Regarding the mutual acceptance in the couple in the adoptive journey, it can be pointed out that, in that long journey, many couples find, along with pleasant experiences, several obstacles, pains and wear, which affect both members in different ways in various temporalities, generating a lot of confusion in the couple, of which they make a transition towards acceptance. One of the milestones that most marks this aspect in the couple is related to infertility.

Infertility comes in a surprising way in most cases, and has a profound impact. It is accompanied by ups and downs, especially in the affected member, but also in the partner and therefore in the relationship, as involving the different anthropological dimensions. The transit through the different dimensions is observed, because although infertility is a condition that is located in the body, experiencing thus as a impeded body, it affects above all the psychic dimension of the individual, being affected emotionally, and in the conditions of the pillars of existence. The body itself becomes foreign, it becomes a difficult space to inhabit, therefore it is experienced as not supporting enough, affecting the dedication to the other in the loving encounter, because the appreciation for oneself is affected, and self-esteem declines. The sufferers elaborates a series of theories attributing hostile attitudes and feelings to their partner. It is thought that the partner feels rejection towards them, and they experience the threat of being abandoned, and even more so, in some cases they offered their partners the possibility of leaving, so they can realize as a father or mother in another relationship. So the partner also suffers on their part. On the one hand, one pities the other and wants to welcome them, to support them, however, many times the partner cannot do it because the other in their discomfort closes up and rejects the offer of support that the couple offers. In addition, they also both suffer from the news that they probably will not be able to be parents by biological means. They experience pain due to the frustration caused by the non-arrival of the longed child. The partner, in order to not to become a burden, silently carries their ordeal. Then, there is a kind of implicit conflict in the couple, of which many times they do not talk, they distance themselves, and each one suffers in their niche.

By account of the participants, when asked on how they overcame that moment, this idea of transit arises precisely in a process that finally leads them to perceive and understand that the other is still there, and this perception is possible now because the gaze of pain has been lifted, in some way. What emerges as a revelation is that what hinders the relationship and aggravates the situation is not the other, but the subject themselves, because this situation hides a self-rejection, a lack of self-acceptance due to infertility. So the task is to move towards self-acceptance. When it is achieved, they are open and available to be in the relationship.

It follows then, in a comprehensive way, that the conflict and distance that occurs in this situation, more than lack of acceptance of the other, is a form of self-protection for the pain that is experienced separately, and also as a form of protection of the relationship.

The impediment of an existential such as having a child, when it is not possible in a couple for various reasons, usually comes with a lot of pain, a difficulty in accepting this reality, and a personal devaluation of the sufferer, an aspect coinciding with MINSAL (2015) that points out the impact of infertility on the couple. The predominant theme here alludes to a lack of self-acceptance, rather than a genuine rejection of the other.

In this regard, it is also possible to observe that couples who managed to move towards mutual acceptance due to infertility and other relevant milestones, such as those described

in the list of challenges of couples in adoptive parenting, are those who, by re-establishing the dialogical openness, managed to seek different instances of help. On the contrary, those couples who remained in conflict, unable to talk to each other about their differences, unable to elaborate on the issue together, remaining isolated, closed, etc., are those who did not seek nor receive help. In these couples, the repercussions of remaining in a state of unprocessed feelings and experiences, impacts the other FMs.

The second objective explores experiences of closeness and mutual dedication of men and women in relation to their partner in the post-adoption phase. It is understood that dedication arises from being attracted to the other, feeling them as a value, someone they like, who gives them pleasure, attracts them, and wants their closeness. It could be seen that much of what afflicts some couples is actualized in their story as an adoptive couple, or in the post-adoption phase. The adopted child, their presence, their emotional mode, provokes contradictory feelings in many couples, especially at the beginning of coexistence. It is an expected son or daughter, but one who arrives with a story that makes them be seen as peculiar in their behavior. This perception, together with the joy of the child's reception, provokes feelings of estrangement both towards the other and themselves. There is a new being, for which one is responsible for, they are called son or daughter, but the connection with them is a process that occurs in the course of time. The couple is faced with the challenge of bonding with the child, despite the difficulties that may arise. Pressure and experiences of estrangement sometimes generate friction between the couple, and despite the need for closeness, sometimes the opposite happens, as an attempt to seek respite in individual intimacy. Therefore, it is possible to express that the couple has the task of a reconnective challenge between its members in the post-adoption phase.

Again here we observe a process of transit associated with multiple losses that goes from estrangement from the child and from the other, followed by distancing, the reunion with oneself in one's own intimacy, and finding again the need for closeness of the other, where the reconstructive dialogue is reopened, and reconnects through the introduction of the novel, which is to see the other with greater value when they are being seen in their loving dimension with the child.

One aspect that produces relief and allows this transit is the time factor. But the passage of time does not lead to closeness when couples cannot introduce novelty in the equation, or suffer too much from the distance from the other, or show greater dependence on the other. In these situations a sort of renunciation of the desire of closeness is observed, where absence and the lack of warmth in the relationship due to the lack of resources to reconnect and to introduce new elements to the relationship of the family and of the couple, is normalized. Personal activity is obstructed, and passive reaction is installed, the lack of closeness remains, as does grief and a lack of dialogue. Again without help, the couple can fall and remain at the level of a disturbed dialogue (Kolbe, 2008). Many wounds from the past are brought by the participants to the present day, with their child in the post-adoption phase, and these issues intervene in the relationship and in the bond between the couple, at the risk of leaving lasting traces.

Another phenomenon that can be installed as a conclusion, is that all couples, explicitly or implicitly, refer to two levels of the relationship, either by their presence, absence or predominance. They sense that the levels of a conjugal couple and as a parental couple, blurred favouring one or the other. The problem becomes conflict, not because one level denies or is changes the other, but because of the passivity of doing nothing to rebuild what

has been transformed into loss. For other couples, on the other hand, this transformation seems to accommodate them, without affecting the relationship.

Clearly, at the level of the personal activity of the grieving process, there are some difficulties associated with deficits in some of the FMs. For example, when reluctance, apathy, or the feeling of coldness predominate in the relationship, it is generally couples fixed to an unelaborated painful past. The substantial pole at the level of the bond is diminished, and problems predominate in the pole of closeness, where both people together love each other, but they cannot access happiness being together. On the other hand, in other couples, grieving is perceived in their words as being sufficiently elaborated personally and / or as a couple. When this appears, greater vitality, mobility, flexibility and adaptation to novelty is observed.

It can be asserted that the fixed experiences of these couples in difficulty have a strong sociocultural component, where the unpleasant, the painful tends to be placed on the undesirable side of life, with the preconception that that side of life should not exist. The postmodern culture, in the words of Bauman (2002), is characterized by fervent ties, but as soon as problems arise, the fragility of these ties is made evident.

The other objective asked about the capacity to deepen in one's own through the other in a relationship, a theme of the third FM. But where does the legitimization of the being like this, of one's own action, of what is authentic, correct, and corresponding to one's own person come from? In the couple, as stated by Längle (2008) and Kolbe (2008), the presence of the conditions of the 3rd FM for the development of the Person is crucial so that both can legitimize their own being. In the couple this legitimation comes, on the one hand, from the achievement of an identity as a whole, they both feel and want to be part of the relationship, but on the other hand they must leave space for their own and their individualities. In this regard it is possible to notice that the identity of the couple as a whole is built, it is observed that there is a common us, where both feel part of that whole that is the couple. However, the reference to "us" is called into question when difference, dissent or limits emerge on the part of the other.

The recognition of the other is observed conditioned to the fulfillment of one's own expectations by the other. It is also manifested that the recognition of the other remains very much on the side of the roles, which means seeing the other and valuing them in their functionality either as a good mother, a good man, without being able to delve in depth in the other. This becomes problematic, according to Frankl (2015) regarding the capacity for self-transcendence, which in our condition of openness as human beings leads us to turn to the other when we perceive their value. But we also want to be seen and recognized in our uniqueness by the other. If the recognition of the other is limited to the superficial or the functional, the person feels pain for not being able to satisfy that need. In the most extreme cases this pain inhibits the opening for personal encounter in the couple, and the members of the couple, in terms of protection, and they may remain entrenched, each in their own pole. Despite this, the couple identifies themselves in "us", and remains together. But in the most extreme cases, that staying together marks a life of conflicts and permanent discussions, which can lead to a violent escalation, where the other happens to be held as an obstacle and a threat to one's own (Sharim, 2010). In these cases, the separation of the couple should not be seen as a problem, because staying together harms their members more than the separation itself, as well as their children. These could be very complex and difficult adoptions, and serious in the highest degree, and a sort of failure, despite the

continuation of coexistence, in the sense of what Palacios (2018), and Berástegui (2018, 2017, 2008) point out.

Finally, the personal capacity of commitment to the other in the face of the emergence of difficult situations is explored, understanding the commitment from the contents of 4th FM. It manifests itself as the presence of "us", a unity that has decided to engage with each other, because they are called to be there, so that the couple rises again and again for the realization of that which they find valuable. In this, together they become fruitful. The activity of engaging with another in these couples figured as something that is unquestionable in most informants. This was named by the majority in various instances of the adoptive process, especially in retrospect, when the beginnings of the relationship were mentioned, before the diagnosis of infertility and losses. On those occasions, the commitment appears associated with the couple that visualized a future with children, as a common project, with the certainty that it is with that other that they want to walk that path. Regarding post-adoption, the feeling of a duty to the other that strengthens the commitment was heard around the project and long process of upbringing, education and the well-being of the children, a predominance of collective well-being over each own. This joint project of parenting, felt as an unquestionable duty, would act as a strengthener of permanence, along with the relevance of the common project. In this regard, faced with the question of the empty nest, beyond the children, of the meaning found in the couple itself, silence and perplexity arise.

Another valuable aspect regarding the commitment in the common project is that, despite the difficulties and challenges of adoptive parenthood, the couple returns to experience themselves as fruitful and fertile, increasing the bond to move forward, and in a very significant way, making them feel lighter and leaving the pain of infertility in the past.

In terms of commitment, one can affirm the presence of self-transcendence in the couple, beyond their relational difficulties, as well as the community making sense in it.

By way of more general conclusions, it is possible to affirm that these couples who seem to have a handicap at the crossroads of adoptive parenthood, there is a double effort of elaboration and personal activation to find their personal resources to stay together, and above all, to carry out their adoptive project. Therefore, it is not so much the difficult milestones that determine their development, but rather the ways of dealing with such situations and activating themselves personally.

It is also possible to affirm that beyond complex milestones, conflicts or disorders, the deficits in FMs do not act as impediments or radical determinants for the exercise of parental functions. In this case, therefore, there could be a complex or difficult adoption, but not failed or unsuccessful, with one exception.

With regard to FMs, there are greater difficulties around the third fundamental pillar of existence. This aspect is striking and would require further study and reflection.

Regarding couples at the crossroads with adoptive parenting, bearing in mind that they were evaluated, diagnosed, educated during the adoption processes, it is important to indicate that their future cannot be predicted through evaluations. This observation leads to persevere in the need to rethink the work with the couple in the processes of the adoptive journey to activate personal resources. In doing so, couples could build their postadoptive

project with the necessary plasticity, establishing flexible attitudes and developing creatively the road of adoption, making use of their capacities and in dialogue with each situation.

Similarly, the lack of professional support and appropriate opportunities of development is emphasized.

Finally, the evolution of the couple at the crossroads of parenthood is observed as an opportunity for transformation, and maturation for the community that conforms the couple, fulfilling the expansion of one's own by the "us", so that both can be experienced as "contributing together to the children and the world".

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