



Are you my mother?

Identity issues related to

- adoption
- intercountry adoption
- donor conception
- surrogacy



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For 25 years VANISH, Victorian Adoption Network for Information and Self Help has supported:

mothers, fathers, daughters, sons and families separated from each other by adoption and; latterly by donor conception



This paper looks at:

- No 'right to parent'
- 'Rights of a child' not to be separated from their parent/s
- Convention on the Rights of the Child
- Ethics
- Victorian legislation



- Adoption and Permanent Care
- Identity issues
- Donor conception and Surrogacy
- Questions for practice

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- An estimated 250,000 adoptions took place between 1950 and 1975. The mothers who had their babies taken were unmarried and often told not to reveal their story.



Lifelong Problems

- Loss, grief and trauma
- Unknown, complex, confused identity
- Unsure of ethnic origin/s, loss of culture, loss of country
- Loss of child, mother, father, donor, extended family, genetic history



- Unknown character of mother, child, father, family and donors
- No knowledge of the fate of mother, child, father, family and donors
- Fear of worthlessness, not 'measuring up', feelings of shame and loss of confidence



- Fear of being ‘chosen’ or ‘designed’, fear of health history
- Fear of exploitation of mother, egg, donor, birth/surrogate mother
- Trying constantly to please others – or giving up on pleasing anyone



- Difficulty with relationships – fear of being unwanted or ‘left’; leaving first ...
- Nagging feelings - I was never asked whether I wanted to be born and grow up ‘this way’.



Questions

We recommend the following questions to assist with ethical and principled decision making.



- Is adoption, donor conception, or surrogacy in the best interests of the child and the adult they will become?



- Will the child and the adult they will become, know all the elements of their genetic history: mother, father, eggs, sperm, surrogate/mother/s, siblings, and relatives?



- Will the child and the adult they will become, meet and maintain contact with all those who have birthed, provided genetic material or carried them?



- Will the child and the adult they will become, have a full and complete medical history?



- Will the child and the adult they will become, be disadvantaged by this birth process?



- Will the child and the adult they will become, suffer any racism or cultural confusion from lack of knowledge of ethnic identity or connection with culture?



- How will the child and the adult they will become, feel about the sums of money that have changed hands: will they feel bought or designed?



- What ongoing expert support will be available to them, throughout life, to answer these questions and others as they arise?