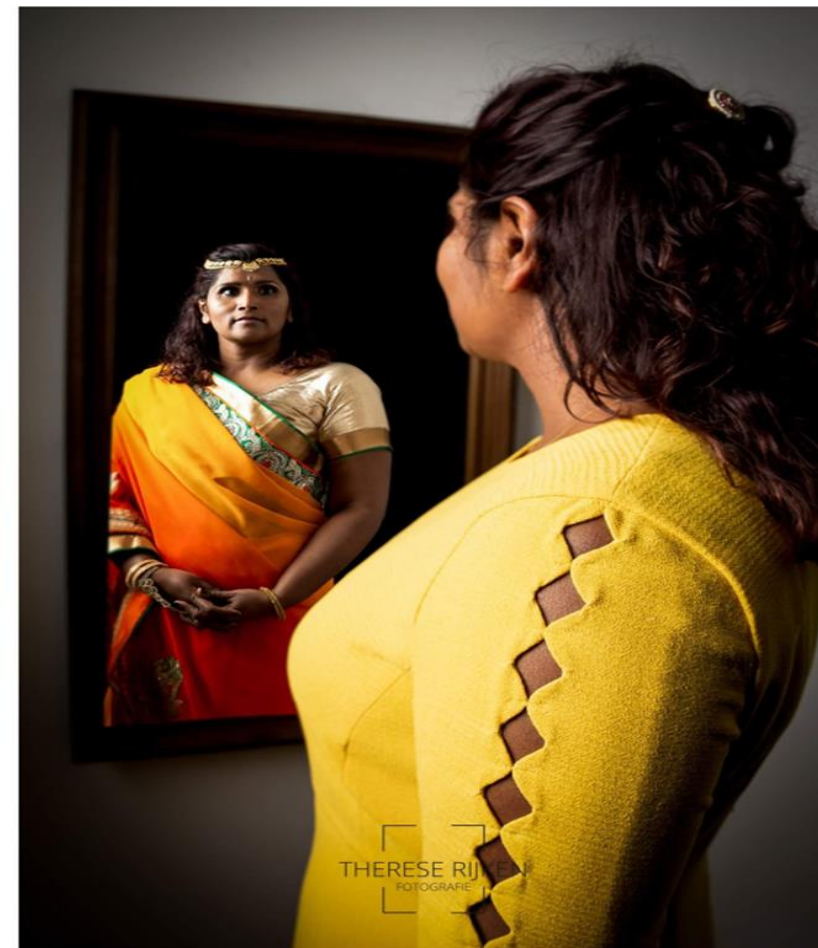




Changing the narrative on adoption; the dynamics of separation and adoption

INTERNATIONAL ACADEMY OF FAMILY LAWERS
6 December 2024

Source reference: Studio Vong



Bina Coaching: Adoption Coach | Systemic Work & Family Constellations | Body-Oriented Trauma Work

HAN University of Applied Sciences: Co-developer & Lecturer of the Minor on Separation

INEA: Project Leader for Training, Development, and professional development @ INEA

Main themes

- Separation and adoption
- The **history** of adoption in the Netherlands
- **The impact of intercountry adoption**
 - Migration and forced displacement
 - Dynamics of separation & adoption
- The **importance** of ancestry information
- The **role** of family lawyers in intercountry adoption

The different narratives surrounding adoption

What's your story?



Statements

- I know the first name given to me at birth
- I know my family name (surname)
- I know my birth date (day, month, year)
- I know my actual age
- I know the language I (or my family) originally spoke
- I speak my native language
- I know the names of my parents
- I know if I have any siblings
- I know if my parents are still alive
- I know if and when my parents passed away
- I am celebrating Christmas with my birth-family this year
- I have been able to celebrate Christmas with my birth-family for the past 25 years

Separation and adoption

Source reference: Studio Vonq

Separation and adoption



Separation and adoption

- **Separation**, refers to the fiscal, physical and emotional process of a child being separated from their blood related parents.
- **Relinquishment**, on the other hand, refers to the legal process where a parent voluntarily gives up their parental rights, allowing the child to be adopted. This is a conscious and often difficult decision made by the parents.

The difference in the use of words has a very significant impact on the identity development and self-image of adoptees.

Impact of Separation and adoption

- *Adoption is the acceptance of a person as a child. Legally, adoption breaks the family bond between biological parents and their child, while simultaneously establishing a new, legally valid family bond between adoptive parents and this child, with all associated rights and obligations.*
- Adoptees lose their original identity through the adoption process
- Adoptees become first-degree children of their adoptive parents but remain, despite their Dutch passport, individuals with a migration background.
- Adoptees grow up in families and environments where they often do not share a biological connection or physical resemblance with those around them.

Separation, adoption and trauma

Early childhood trauma often has a more prolonged and profound effect on a child's development because it influences the foundation upon which the child builds their emotional, cognitive, and social skills. The brains of young children are still developing, which means that traumatic experiences during this period can alter the architecture of the brain

The impact of Early Childhood Trauma:

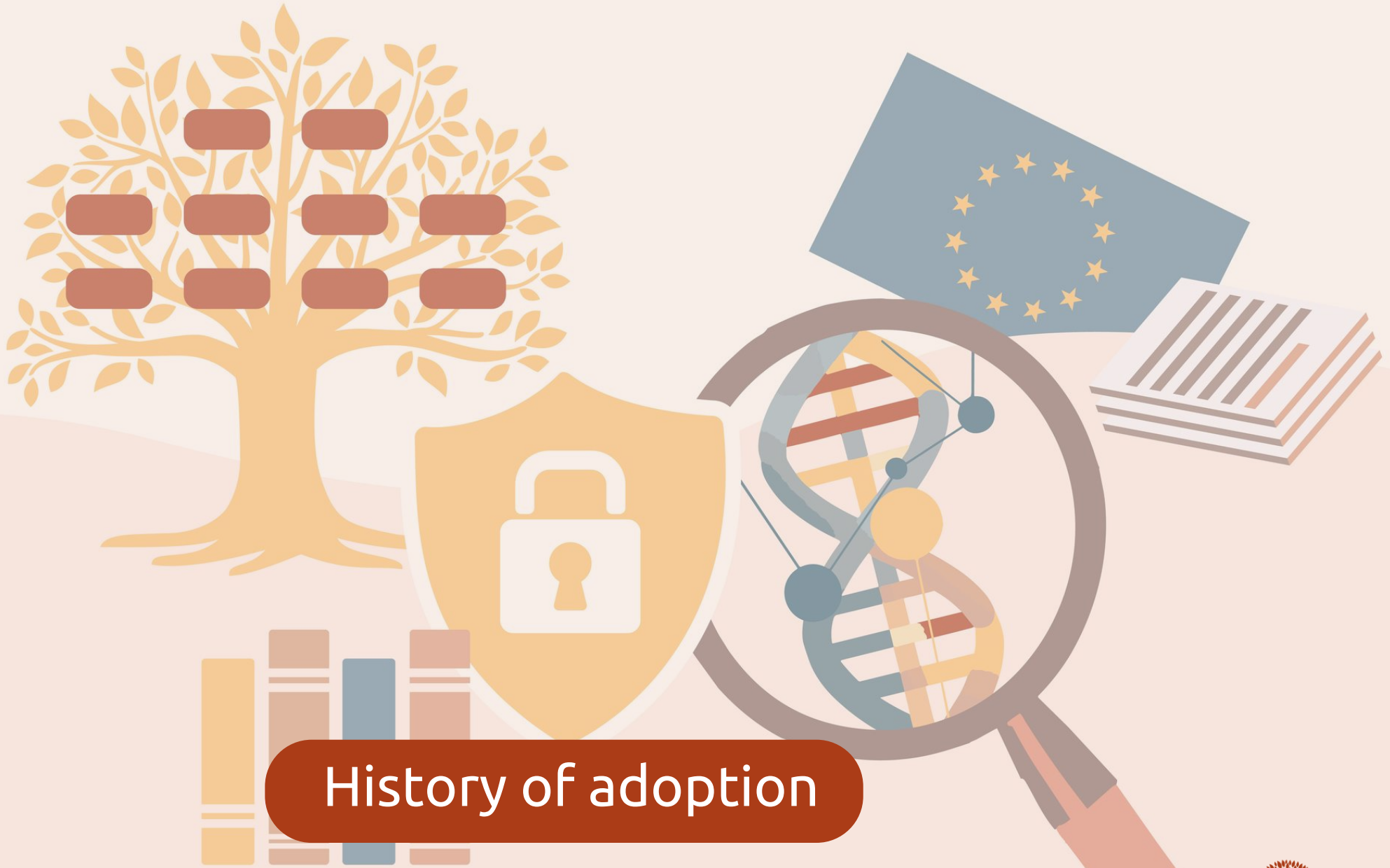
- **Safety & Attachment:** Difficulty trusting others or feeling safe.
- **Emotion Regulation:** Challenges in processing and expressing emotions healthily.
- **Cognitive & Behavioral Development:** Issues with learning, concentration, or stress management.
- **Body Memory:** Traumatic experiences not stored in memory but felt in the body.

Normal Reaction, a typical response to significant or abnormal events.



History is not just the story of the past. It is also the story of the relationship between the past and the present.

Robert John Morris



History of adoption

History

1780 BC
Mesopotamian

Midle Ages
The emergence
of children's homes
& Churches

1945
Jewish war
foster
children

1963
Social welfare

The
Romans

Midle Ages
Foster-like
servitude

1956
The first adoption law

History adoption Laws

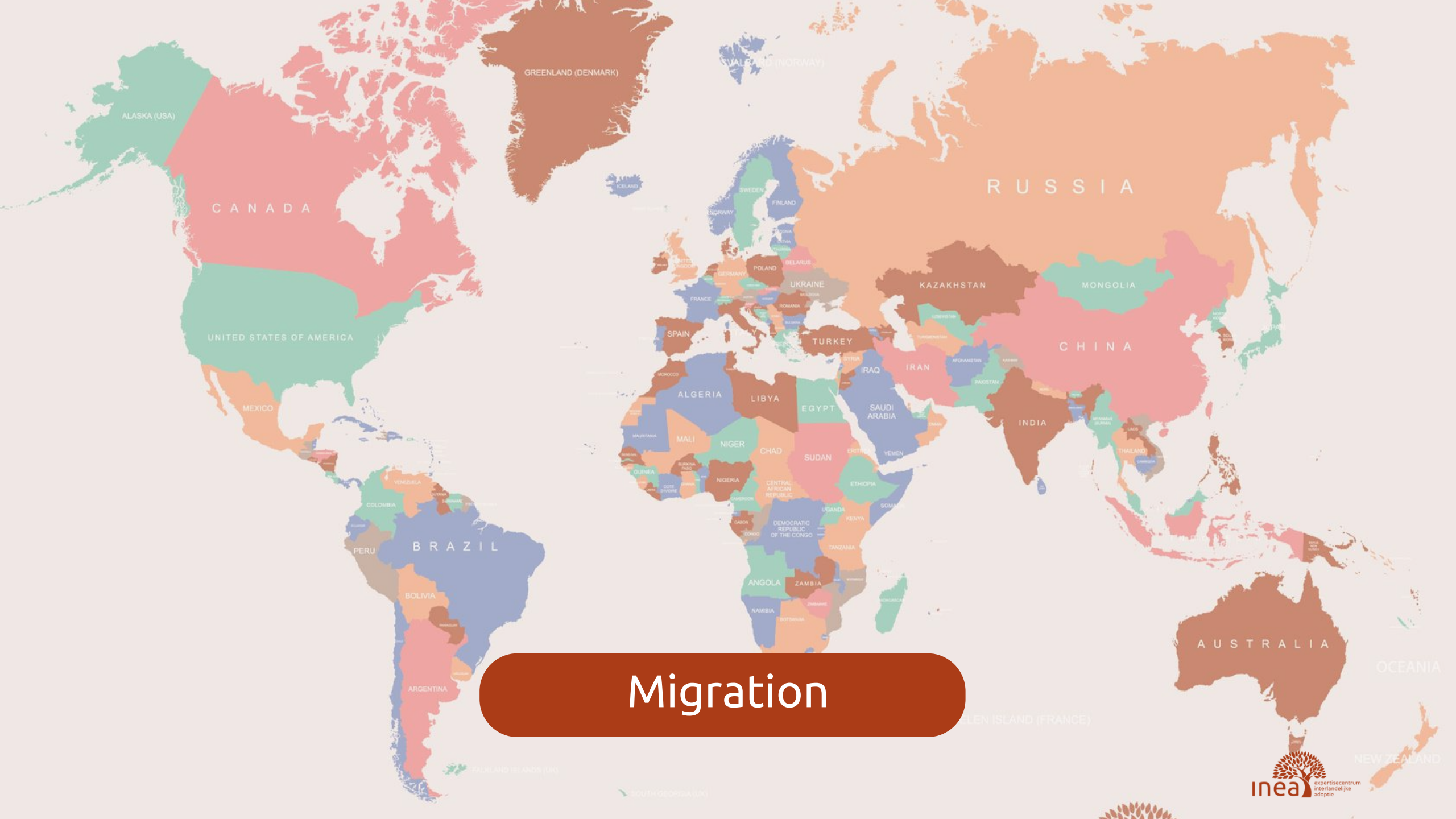
1956
Adoption Law

1988
WOBKA
Law on the
Admission of
Foreign Children

1970
Intercountry
adoption increases

1995
The Hague Adoption Convention

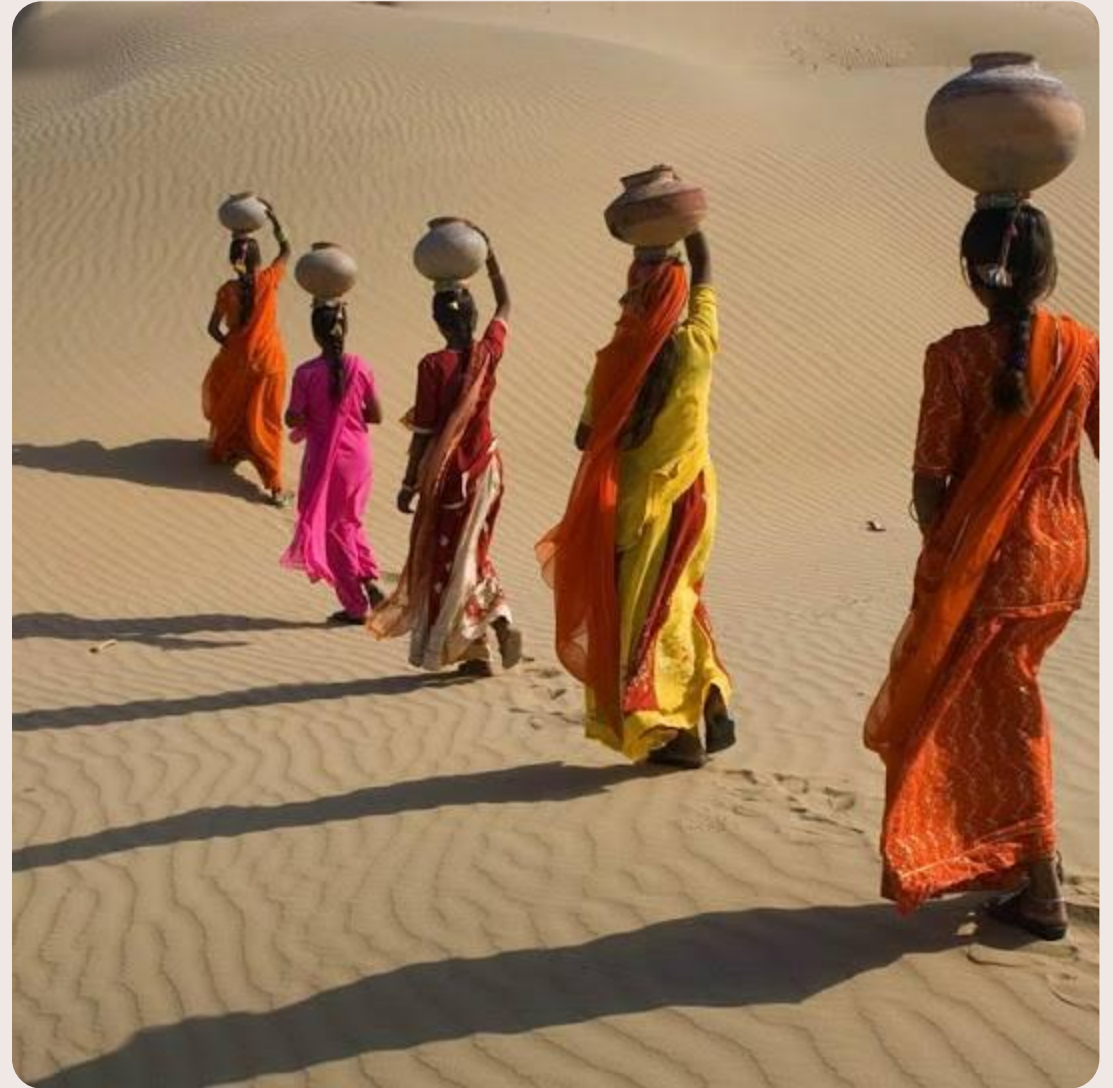
*Adoption laws: 1851 USA, 1873 Canada, 1895 Nieuw Zeeland
1923 Frankrijk, 1926 Engeland, 1940 België & Duitsland (lebensborn), 1956 Nederland*



Migration

Migration

- A geographical movement of a person
- People thus cross a cultural boundary



Forced migration

- Is a voluntary or forced movement (displacement) of a person or persons away from their home or home region.
- The UNHCR defines 'forced displacement' as follows: Displacement as a result of persecution, conflict, general violence or human rights violations.



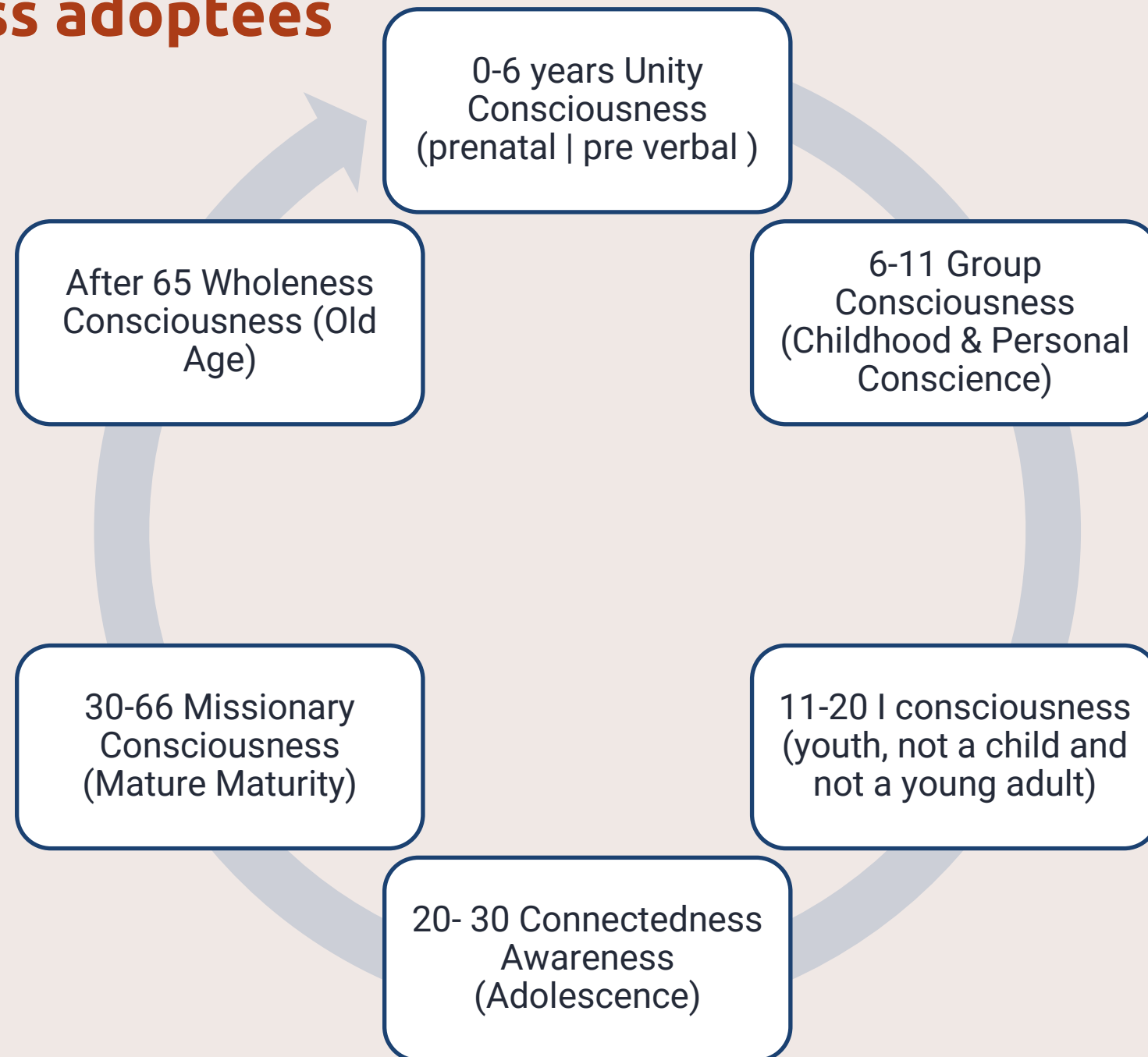
Migration vs Autonomy



Do you know who you are?
Before the world told you who you should be?



Awareness process adoptees



Loss in Separation and adoption

Loss Mother, Father, family

Pre verbal | Early childhood trauma

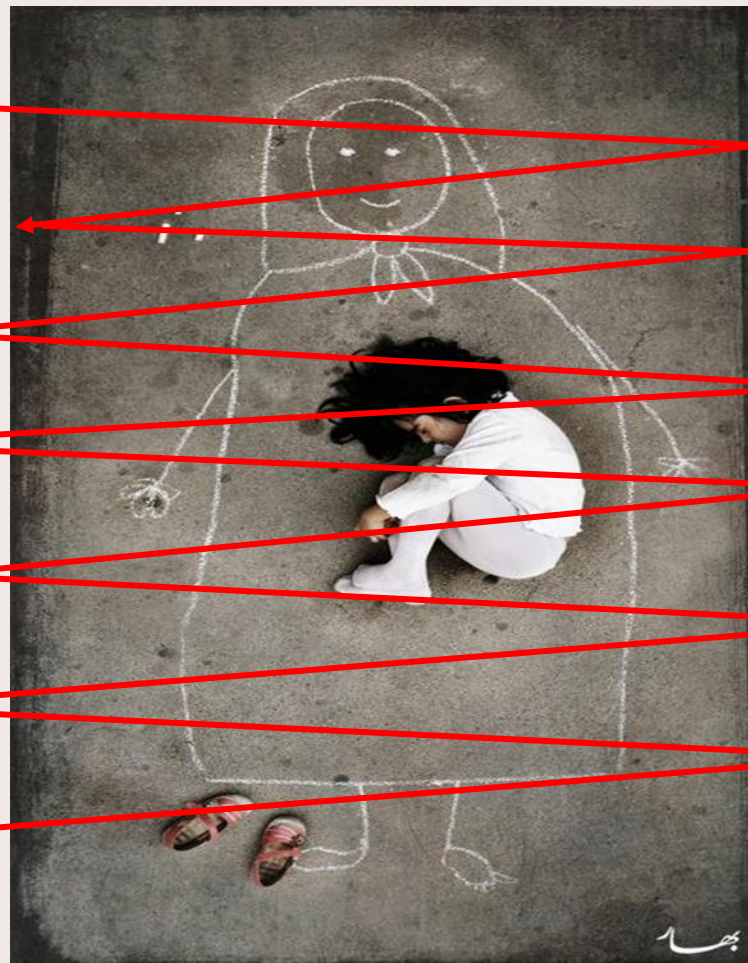
Segregatie & integratie

Assimilation

Awareness of silent loss

Herstel & Verlies werk

Giving meaning



Forced separation

Forced displacement

Dual Identity

Accommodation

Solidified mourning

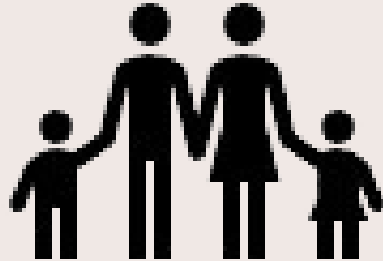
Reculturation

An illustration featuring a central globe of the Earth, rendered in shades of blue and orange. Four hands of diverse skin tones (dark brown, light brown, and orange) are shown gently holding the globe from the top, bottom, and sides. The background is a light beige color, decorated with several large, stylized autumn leaves in various shades of yellow, orange, and brown. A dark brown, rounded rectangular box is superimposed over the center of the globe, containing white text.

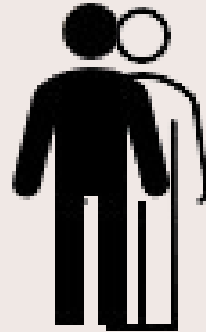
The narrative is always changing

Balancing between two worlds

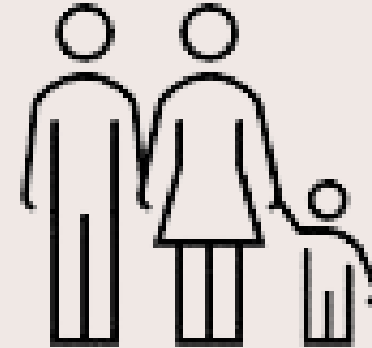
- Family of origin



- Dual identity



- Adoption family

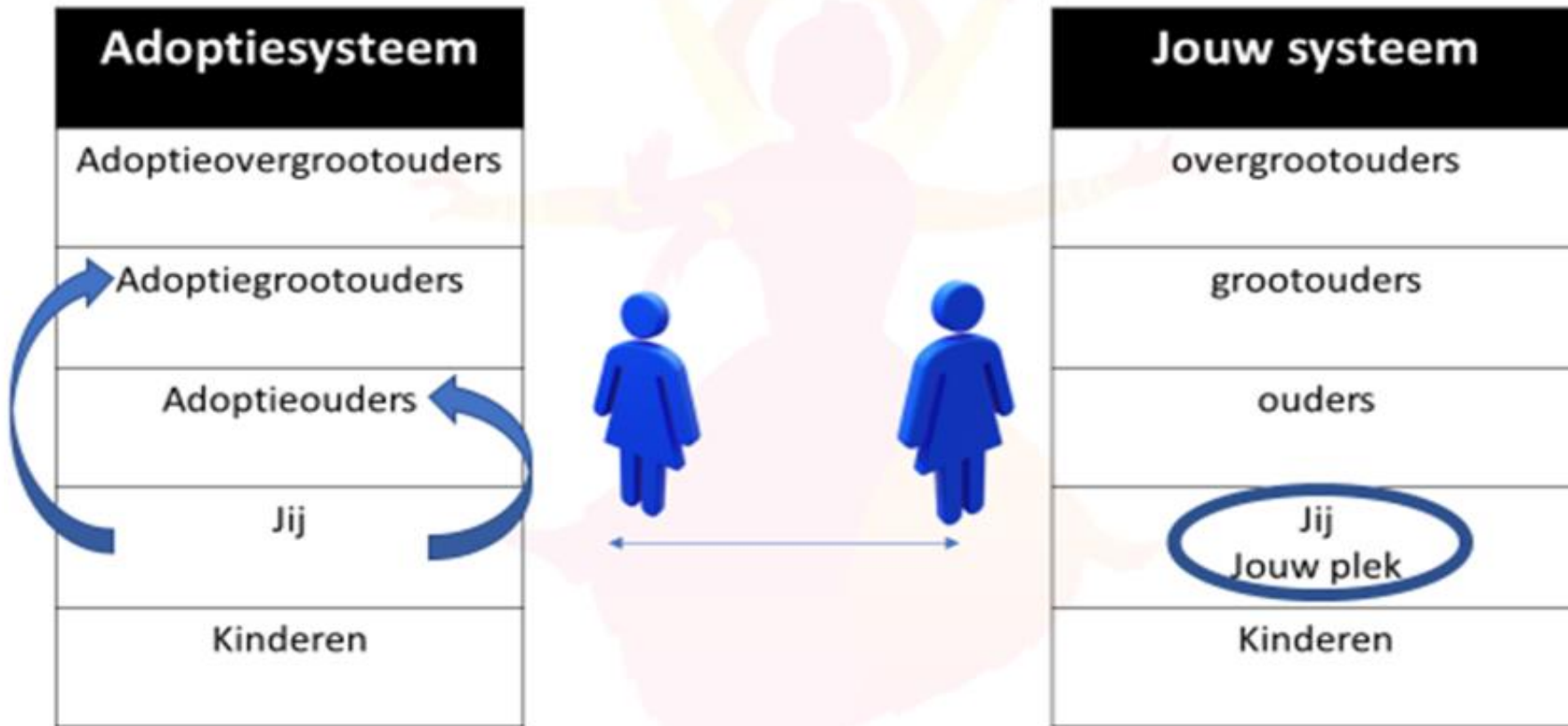


Intercountry means between countries

Legal family ties can be cut, but blood ties cannot.

This often causes psychological and physical suffering!

Plek in jouw Systeem en in jouw Substelsiem



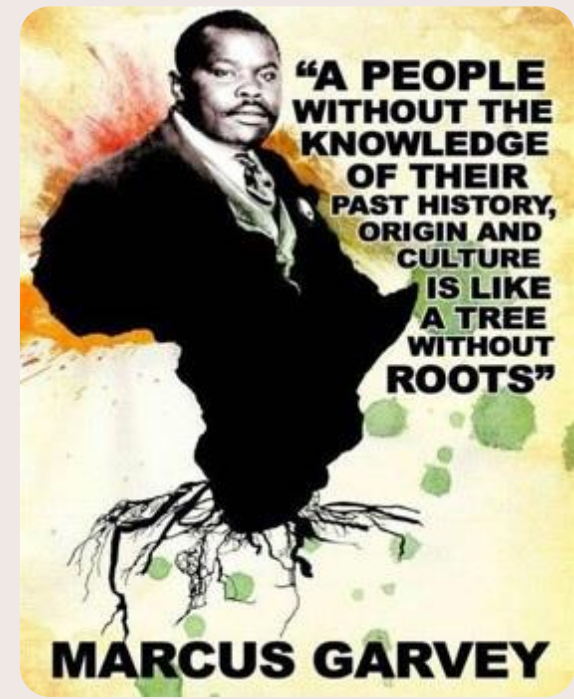
Importance of ancestry information; adoption files and post adoption

care



Reasons for search and/or legal action

- **Right to exist** (can I be who I am or want to be)
- Deep desire to know who you are
- Lack of family/ not knowing ypur family
- Double Identity
- Implicit memory
- Feeling (un)loved
- Psychological suffering, addiction, suicidal thoughts and physical complaints
- No longer being able to take advantage of the opportunities given
- Identity issues
- Identity Restoration
- Revocation of adoption
- Illegal adoptions lawsuits



Joustra Committee; The consequences for adoptees

- **Fortunately, most adoptees are doing well** / offered many opportunities. The committee sees the fact that they are doing well under the circumstances as a sign of their **resilience**.
- **Many have lost too much:** growing up with their own family, their own culture and in many cases knowing their origins.
- **Splitting;** Connecting the reality in their native country with the reality here is a daily task for many, and sometimes impossible because the information about origin is lacking.
- **Unfortunately,** there are also adoptees who face significant challenges. Research commissioned by the committee indicates **that adoptees experience psychological and other issues at above-average rates.** Consequently, they rely on social services **16%** more often than individuals without an adoption background.

Joustra Committee; The consequences for adoptees

- The Swedish Karolinska Institute in Stockholm shows that adopted children from Asia and South America are more likely to experience maladaptive behaviour and psychiatric problems as young adults than their non-adopted contemporaries.
- Adoptees are 3 to 4 times more likely to commit suicide



The impact of relinquishment and adoption, by Paul Sunderland





*Enriching
insights*



Thank you for your attention

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