

## The experience of adoption in a biographical narration of adoptive parents

Arkadiusz Wąsiński

### Summary

The aim of the study was the analysis of key motives for adoption in the context of life experiences of childless couples. This article covers the selected aspects of the qualitative analysis of the biographical narrations obtained during the narration interviews conducted with Polish and French adoptive parents. The study was conducted using the biographical method.

The choice of adoptive parenthood depends on achieving inner readiness to undertake an existential challenge. In general, this challenge involves acceptance of oneself and one's spouse in the context of infertility as well as a new dimension of parenthood.

The interpretative and cognitive character of biographical narration gains a particular meaning in the case of significant events and experiences identified by the states of loss and pain, as well as of opening to another human being and presenting them with love. This includes the experience of infertility and adoption of a child. It is then, when a man facing the key choice between the alternative and often excluding one another, "projects" describing himself in the future must opt for one of them. This choice is impossible to make without constructing a complex biographical narration that facilitates intellectual work through the difficult experiences and re-construction of oneself.

In the diversity and unpredictability of the individual biographical narrations, which are the "projects" of personal autocreations of childless spouses who are oriented to achieve the readiness to adopt a child, a particularly inspiring cognitive value may be found.

### adoption / autocreations / biographical narration / childlessness

The essence of adoption is to achieve by parents the readiness to leave the trenches of their own desires and wants, freeing them from an egocentric, egotistical and all-egoistic perception of adoption from their own perspective where a child becomes an instrument to fulfil their own individual needs. Mental transformation of childless spouses results from autocreations acquiring of the willingness to overcome themselves, their imperfections, fears and desires, which points them towards the realisation of values which they acknowledge as meaningful in their life. It is the starting point for accepting

another human being, like them imperfect [1]; living, like them, with the sense of emotional rejection and abandonment. Moreover, in the case of adoption, a human being almost completely dependent on them. This autocreations acquiring of the readiness to overcome themselves opens childless couples to discovering and awakening the parental love towards a child – another human being, a neighbour [2]; it shapes the need to understand the other in a family community and learn the skill of dialogue to achieve mutual communication.

Autocreations of childless spouses acquiring the readiness to adoption does not precede the act of adoption in a legal-procedural aspect but rather is a *sine qua non* for them to even seriously think about such a step and later to accept this

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Arkadiusz Wąsiński<sup>1</sup>: <sup>1</sup>Warsaw Pedagogical University, Department of Social and Pedagogy Sciences in Katowice. **Correspondence email:** arkadiusz.wasinski@gmail.com

challenge. It is a process of mental transformation in thinking about oneself, about one's partner (wife, husband) and one's own life [3]. The transformation refers to crossing the symbolic line that separates the perception of oneself as a potential parent (mother, father) in the biological sense and the perception of self as a future adoptive parent. The flexible borders seem to prove how great a transformation is symbolised by auto-creation and how much it means in the life of a married couple. They are identified by:

- accepting by spouses the stigma of infertility in relation to themselves, to each other and to their marriage;
- mental liberation from perceiving parenthood in the "blood ties" category; giving up insemination support treatment;
- developing a new vision of marriage and family as a loving community of genetically unrelated individuals;
- overcoming the barrier of strangeness in the anticipated relationship with a future child;
- informing people from the closest circles about their plans for possible adoption;
- acquiring the readiness to accept both the child as a person and their social background unconditionally;
- creating a positive attitude towards the child's mother (parents) involving an attempt to gain understanding and empathy for her (their) situation and decision to renounce parental rights [4];
- finally, contacting an adoption centre, undergoing the qualification-preparatory procedure of adoption, completed (in case of a positive outcome) by adopting a child (children) and creating a family.

#### **Practical aspects of conducting the study in the light of adoptive parents' experiences**

Adoption is such a personal experience for the parents that conducting biographical research, by means of the narrative-biographical interviews method, creates an opportunity to grasp its subtlety [5]. They become aware of the necessity to open up before a researcher who turns from a listener into an analyst deconstructing

their biographical narrative and, simultaneously, an interpreter [6]. The source of this distancing towards the researcher, who leads them to "uncover" themselves, their personal and even intimate sphere of experiences, is the fear of not being understood and of having their narrative misinterpreted. The grounds for such fears is the researcher's lack of experience in infertility and unwanted childlessness, as well as in the sphere of experiences linked with acquiring the readiness to adopt a child. The additional reason for keeping their guard up is the awareness that their life stories do not involve the narrator only but are a biographical revelation also of their closest family members. Their stories concern equally the narrator, their spouse and children [7].

Sharing the key biographical events that focus on infertility, unwanted childlessness and adoption is difficult also for social reasons. It is about the narrators' difficult experiences stemming from the often deprecatory attitude of their family, neighbours and friends towards their inability to procreate. In the public social debate the focus is on the strategies for prophylactic and interventional control of fertility as an inseparable result of sexual activity. Thus, fertility and procreative capabilities are considered virtues of contemporary humans, something given to everyone who reaches sexual maturity. Despite the fact they are often approached as a problem that limits the freedom of sexual activity, those virtues are the source of belief in one's self-causation and self-determination. It is up to the individual whether to choose procreation-oriented life or not. Simultaneously, narrators are deprived, against their will, of the possibility to decide about themselves in the context of procreation. This helplessness underlies the suffering trajectory of infertile individuals and marriages (relationships) who cannot have children born of themselves [8].

Keeping adoption open and known to others is not easy due to the social dimension of this phenomenon [9]. Surely, during the past dozen or so years, much has changed in Poland in this area. One can recall many initiatives that popularise adoption through book publications, scientific conferences, campaigns undertaken by adoption centres or nationwide campaigns launched by the media (e.g. *Adopcja po polsku* [10]), all

of them aiming at breaking the social taboo and addressing difficult questions regarding adoption. However, despite the gradual improvement of social perception in this area, adoption is not generally viewed as the only one and best solution to the problem of unwanted childlessness. There is a belief that still dominates in thinking about adoption, namely that it manifests the failure of procreation. This is the source of the common fear of the social perception of individual or marital "weakness" and the tendency to avoid adoption or to hide that fact before the world.

Infertility and sterility cause profound psychological discomfort. Contrary to other limitations and dysfunctions, this body dysfunction is perceived as an embarrassing and even shameful weakness. Moreover, a weakness that translates negatively into the sense of self-worth and the meaning of life. It is particularly strong during confrontation with other people, especially families who do not experience problems with conceiving. The scale of difficulty to accept infertility grows, especially when confronted with situations such as unwanted pregnancies, teenage pregnancies or children born of adults not coping with life. The feeling of hurt is similarly hard to deal with when the younger generation of family members or close friends become parents.

Adoption is another, non-procreative way of becoming parents (mother and father), however, it socially confirms the procreative inability of spouses and single persons. Even though, for many reasons, it is a joyful event opening a new phase in life, it does not erase the awareness of one's own (and the marriage's) infertility, but is shaped upon the acceptance of that fact. Therefore, it is a difficult subject of conversations which, in order to be of cognitive value, must be sincere and to be such, they need to be based on the narrators' trust towards the researcher. The narrators open before the researcher, picturing their experiences, reflections and biographical events treated as very significant aspects of their personal existence [11].

Thus, conducting the narrative-biographical interviews with parents who have adopted a child (children) is not an easy task [12]. It requires from the researcher not only good orientation in the topic but, first of all, credibility and trust in the eyes of adoptive parents. The par-

ents, having been through numerous examinations, medical treatments, then diagnostic, psychological and environmental tests carried out by adoption centres (organisations), usually do not react well to a request to participate in another study. They often admit that they have a sense of being humiliated due to the fact that people without fertility problems can have children whenever they want without fulfilling a number of conditions allowing them to become parents. But they, to become adoptive parents, had to come a long way through procedural restrictions, difficulties and uncertainty before they could create a family. Besides, they are often not interested in making the adoption fact public.

Overcoming this reluctance is crucial for conducting the research. An important element at this stage is presenting the reasonableness of the research. The convincing argument was an opportunity to share the adoption experience without the risk of receiving any feedback that would value their biographical path. Additionally, they identify their past experiences leading to adoptive parenthood with the necessity to accept the objective treatment by medical personnel and staff handling the adoptive procedure. It is different with biographical research. Here, it is the parents who are deciding on the form and content of the narrative interview. Narrative biography shows their infertility, unwanted childlessness and adoption from their biographical perspective, embedded in their sensitivity, experiences and language.

### **Family models from the perspective of the narrators' family experiences**

Due to the compact character of this paper, the analysis and interpretation of the narrative-biographical interviews is limited to the aspects related to understanding the family model and the attitude towards unwanted childlessness expressed by the narrators. The research was conducted in 2009–2012 on Polish and French childless couples who finalised their adoptive procedures in Poland.

### Daniela and Przemek

Daniela and Przemek agree to a large extent on the definition of the desired vision or model of their own family. This is undoubtedly due to a specific sense of dissatisfaction they experienced in childhood. What they both have in common are difficult experiences in their family homes, a similar sensitivity in perceiving themselves in relation to the world and the desire to build their life in a way that is completely different to their parents'. Even though the foundations of their difficult experiences differ – caused involuntarily or voluntarily by their parents – they were both greatly affected by them. This involves some sort of loss connected with – in the case of Daniela – the feeling of non-fulfilment due to her father's death and its lasting effect on the relationship with her mother and siblings, and the functioning of the whole family; in the case of Przemek – the feeling of being hurt by his father. Alcohol addiction and a destructive life attitude of Przemek's father triggered the process of family disintegration and finally resulted in its breakdown as well as breaking Przemek's relationship with the father.

Przemek openly declares a definitive separation from family patterns, marked by father's alcoholism and acts of family violence:

"Father was a drunkard. I remember when um... long weeks, when after the 15th, the salary day, dad wasn't home for a week, sometimes two, he just didn't come home... He just wasn't there at all. And when he came he was drunk, there were rows, and such, you know, running away from home to grandma... And then, for some time it was that um after running away from home, we stayed at grandparents'. I um, ate dinners there, we ate there, we lived there for a while... And I remember these times were so, so hard... and..., well, I wouldn't want to say more 'cause it's, cause for me it's quite... hard experiences... And I wanted, when I remembered... I didn't have any pattern of family before, for sure I wanted to have a family that would be different from what I saw. So... there would be no alcohol, violence... I was sure I wanted to go in that direction."

Daniela's separation from family patterns has different grounds. It involves the incompleteness of her family and the consequences of that

– the reconstruction of the family, of the relationship with her mother after she married another man and her relationships with the stepfather and the sister born of that marriage. She states squarely:

"I was afraid that, that um... well, I can say that somehow I was afraid that my family would be incomplete... for example, that one of us was dying, you know? And this family is incomplete again. I feared that very, very much and I didn't want that so much... So it's that, simply this safety, and this completeness of the family because, let's say, I've always missed dad... and I wanted my family to be complete."

Their vision of family consists of the following elements: safety, life stabilisation and fellowship of people who appreciate their mutual presence and, above all, love each other [13]. The statements by Daniela and Przemek reveal a well-thought out and agreed model of their own family. It involves quite obvious traces of their previous discussions and mutual discoveries as for the vision of the family they plan to create within their marriage. Their vision of family integrates the need of both spouses to separate from the patterns derived from their family homes and clearly determines the priorities around which the family life is to be organised. In the psychological layer they are: safety, acceptance, love and respect [14]; in the transcendental layer: faith in God; and in the social layer: practising their religion and engaging in the life of the church community:

"We are in the Home Church Movement, both of us. We lead the music group for children here in the church."

They both emphasise their attachment to the traditional family model. Daniela says: "For me family is a husband, a wife and children", and Przemek says: "For me family is... a real family is a woman, a man and at least one child". Elaborating, Daniela points out, first of all, the safety and structure context:

"And for me family is very important so I... I and all other members felt safe... respected, accepted and safe. First of all, this safety... and this completeness of the family because, let's say, I've always missed dad... and I wanted my family to be complete. But first of all safety, acceptance and love... and respecting one another."

To confirm the value of such family picture she shares the thought originating from observing her husband's behaviour: "And um... and we, I'm speaking about myself and also Przemek, we long to be at home. So we feel good here, we feel safe here, accepted and we are really happy when we are together". Przemek, in turn, points out to the aspect of closeness and openness in a marriage relationship, and to the aspect of expressing one's feelings:

"Here I think, it is important to talk to each other and... to show affection in spite of all... And this is how I see family, as a loving couple, a woman, a man and, um... a child, 'cause it is this chapter of marriage, there is at least one child and you create a family who... who have healthy relations, who love, respect each other."

### Aldona and Dominik

Family experiences of Aldona and Dominik have many contact points which became the source of constructing the life vision in the family they are building. Those contact points are the atmosphere of numerous family relationships and the awareness of having unwavering support in parents. Aldona has two sisters and Dominik has eight siblings. In the narrators' statements, in each of those families one can see a close sense of intimacy and cultivating the tradition of a large family [15]. Their family model is based on their experiences shaped by their family homes, where there were always several siblings and younger children present, including the children of the oldest brothers and sisters (their nieces and nephews being almost the same age as the narrators). Aldona describes this large and intergenerational family home as follows: "And the oldest sister has four kids and, well, it's like that... The oldest one is one year younger than me. So we grew up as age-mates, much... more like brother and sister than a niece [and an aunt] [*a smile*]. Well... and this middle sister of mine, she has three kids". Dominik: "Well, I come from a similar family and I practically grew up with brothers who already had children. When I was, let's say... a teenager they already had kids and... it's like that with those kids... Well, you were taking care of them too, right? Those youngest ones". Their family model

is thus seen by the spouses as a natural continuation of the family life pattern fixed since childhood. Dominik states: "I've always wanted to have children and... you can say that from the first days with my wife, even when we were still engaged I was telling her that 'We've got to have children'." Aldona adds, in a similar tone: "... we ourselves are used to that... we grew up in a bigger company. And we ourselves don't want to stop with one daughter".

Parents are perceived by both spouses as special persons, endowed with respect and authority. In love and parental responsibility they fulfilled their tasks of advisers also in the adult lives of their children. One needs to emphasise that in Dominik's narrative many family threads are oriented around the father, who Dominik holds in high regard and exalts to the position of a model man, husband and father – the head of the family. This attitude is reflected in the statement "He built his own house. This was, one can say, a real man... A house, a tree and, well... many sons [*a smile*]". The event that consolidated this belief was a conversation with his father when in a difficult position of having no job and no resources to provide for the then young marriage. Recalling briefly this conversation, Przemek says:

"We... went to my place, home and my dad said: 'If you want to, you [can] come even with your wife or when you have a kid and I can even give you my room and find you a job where you used to work'... But he told me that: 'I have nothing to be ashamed of because what I have learned and earned is mine'... and he gave me this lesson, you can say, like father to son that... after this conversation everything began... to happen on the 'yes', the positive".

Aldona received similar support from her parents. Her memory of one particular conversation she had with her mother is meaningful:

"About adoption? Well, I already said that it was my mum who gave me the signal that maybe: 'If you can't have, well, [a] biological [child]... Nothing works out. Then why don't you think about adoption? This can also be a lovely child.' And somehow... I followed this track."

What differentiates the family experiences of both spouses significantly and what is meaningful for the family model envisioned by Aldona is that her oldest sister was adopted, the fact which was kept secret from her and her siblings, the

distant family, friends and neighbours. Aldona presents an ambivalent attitude towards that. On the one hand she acknowledges the social reality of her youth and the mentality of people from her parents' and grandparents' generation. Adoption then was something embarrassing, deprecating to the infertile persons who were considered as not fully worthy in their womanhood or manhood. She also sees, from the perspective of being a younger sister, the positive aspects of this adoption such as a harmonious course of family life. On the other hand, she mentions the negative consequences of hiding the fact of adoption, especially in the context of later events that disintegrated the family and seriously weakened the family bonds with the adopted sister. It happened when, as a 15-year-old girl, she suddenly heard the truth from her grandmother. The strong emotional tension this caused, the sister's rebellion and, finally, her rejection of the parents and a serious weakening of the bond with the two younger sisters, resulted in Aldona's fixed anxiety that has increased since the adoption of her daughter Nina. It is the fear of possible rejection by the adopted daughter when she enters adolescence. In this context the following statement is meaningful: "Well... that's why my fears are strong... I mean, I'm afraid I could be rejected... that this moment will be um... some... that in those 15, 16 years not to be rejected, right? So she just doesn't take offence, right?"

### **Nathalie and Vincent**

Their family experiences are completely different, yet are marked with difficulties which influenced their image of a model family and the choices they made in their adult lives. Marriage was for both narrators not only a new stage in life but a gift of its own. Nathalie has found in Vincent full acceptance and willingness to understand her, with the number of psychological issues she struggles with. For her it was a catalyst of love and assurance that with this man she can create a stable, lifelong relationship. Vincent, in turn, has found in the relationship with Nathalie the acceptance and acknowledgment of him as a man of her life. Being aware of her inner tensions and dilemmas, he engaged emotionally in this relationship. From the very beginning of their friendship he was convinced that it is them, first and foremost, who can shape their lives.

Thus, their common fate designed and lived out in marriage is their responsibility [16].

The source of Vincent's struggles was his epilepsy that surfaced in his early childhood. Until he underwent a surgery at 15 years of age, medical treatment had not yielded visible results and the disease, in his opinion, had even aggravated. The major problem was the inability to take control over the sudden epileptic fits, especially when they happened in public places. Seizures happening at school in front of his schoolmates were Vincent's most traumatic experiences. His statements on that are telling: "I got epilepsy when I was 8 and I had seizures at school, it was terrible. Of course, I took medicines but with no result. The surgery was done after some years... when medicine developed and the doctors decided to operate. There was some risk... but they decided to operate. I was still an epileptic but I had fewer seizures". In the psychological layer, Vincent's illness has shaped his view of himself as an epileptic, someone who is ill: "[after the surgery] I was still an epileptic but I had fewer seizures. I got better as the treatment went on. I was still ill during the first year when we met... I stopped taking medicines in 2002". The disease has undermined his sense of being attractive as a man, a potential husband and father and weakened the dynamics in initiating contacts with girls and later women. It has caused the tendency to withdraw from social contacts outside work and to live within the family circle. In the interpersonal (community) layer it has integrated the family, which resulted in strong bonds and deep relationships. These are revealed by frequent contacts in their adult life and deep interest in each other's personal matters. The narrator's parents and siblings are a stable and important support for him. And that was particularly significant when he and Nathalie were making the decision to adopt a child. At that time: "My brothers and sister supported me, they kept calling us, they wanted to know the news. Parents are also satisfied".

Nathalie's childhood and particularly youth were marked with a difficult relationship with her mother and a poor relationship with her father; apart from a short statement that he passed away she does not mention him at all. As she explains, her mother suffered from recurring depression for years. Of course, as a young girl she

could not have prevented it by any means nor could she have been a support for her mother. Moreover, she could not have a proper relationship with her mother, a relationship she needed so much as a teenager. Her remarks prove this: “My mother did not abandon me but she only gave me a minimum... she didn’t give me affection”. The lack of acceptance of this situation caused strong emotional tension and, with time, violent behaviours. On the outside they revealed

her protest and on the inside – the unspoken expectations of a daughter towards the mother associated with the need to be an object of interest and to initiate a dialogue that would help her to understand her emotions. Parts of Nathalie’s statements prove this, for instance:

“...because I’d always got into trouble and ran into troublemakers who caused me more problems... I remember I wanted to run away from them [parents] so I didn’t have to watch this...

**Table 1.** Key motives for adoption in the context of childless couples’ biographical paths

Narrator	Key motives for adoption			
	Individual reflections	Individual critical moments	Common critical moments	Central motive
Daniela	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Desire to have a child felt strongly since the beginning of marriage;</li> <li>- Desire to present her child with affection;</li> <li>- Taking the fact of being the godmother to several children as a spiritual adoption;</li> <li>- Entrusting God with the solution to her childlessness.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Obtaining a permanent position in a kindergarten;</li> <li>- Encouragement from her husband to consider adoption.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Trip to the country with friends and their children, when unexpectedly she had to look after the children;</li> <li>- Critical moment in the interaction with friends’ 3-year-old son</li> <li>- Prayer by the members of the Home Church Movement.</li> </ul>	Showing love to a child she did not give birth to
Przemek	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Readiness to accept a child regardless of its gender and health condition;</li> <li>- Trusting that God will solve the problem of childlessness according to His will.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Encouraging wife to take action towards adoption.</li> </ul>		Willingness to be a parent
Aldona	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Fulfilling motherhood need;</li> <li>- Willingness to copy the patterns of family life experienced at home;</li> <li>- Experiencing the positive and the negative aspects of adoption on the example of her oldest sister.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Critical conversation with her mother who encourages her to consider adoption;</li> <li>- Taking up initiative in talking about adoption to her husband who was not yet ready for it;</li> <li>- Husband’s statement during a telephone conversation that he is ready to adopt a child with serious health complications.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Creating a full family based on the families both spouses come from;</li> <li>- Overcoming difficult financial situation;</li> <li>- Critical conversation of spouses about adoption after the visit of priest in their house;</li> <li>- Clear signals of support for their plans from families on both sides.</li> </ul>	Strong desire to have children
Dominik	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Desire to fulfil parenthood need;</li> <li>- A child is a gift from God;</li> <li>- Adoption gives spouses an opportunity of common and experienced with the same strength awaiting a child and building a relationship with it.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Finding stable employment and possibility to create better life conditions;</li> <li>- Conversation with the priest during his Christmas visit was a critical moment in thinking about adoption;</li> <li>- Understanding that adoption is another, equally valuable means to find fulfilment in parenthood.</li> </ul>		Creating a complete family, best with several children

*table continued on next page*

Nathalie	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Doing something good for an abandoned child;</li> <li>- Desire to be a grandmother;</li> <li>- Perception of adoption through the prism of mercy and faith in God instilled by her grandmother (the only person who gave her warmth and love as a child).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Conversation with psychotherapist about solving the problem of childlessness caused by infertility;</li> <li>- Encouragement from a friend whose cousin has adopted siblings through the Oeuvre de l'Adoption organisation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Long talks about deciding the priorities regarding the marital future and the vision of parenthood;</li> <li>- Lack of parental satisfaction from being a foster family;</li> <li>- Common decision about being ready for adoption;</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Completeness of family and creating a chance for a better life for an abandoned child</li> </ul>
Vincent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Desire to create a complete family;</li> <li>- Willingness to have a healthy, European-looking child;</li> <li>- Adoption identified as an opportunity to fulfil oneself as a parent;</li> <li>- Willingness to transfer the family property to a child;</li> <li>- Need for continuation of family traditions and family name.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Conscious resignation from further treatment due to his age and wife's health condition;</li> <li>- Critical conversation with work colleague who has adopted a son from the Philippines.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Informing Vincent's family about their decision;</li> <li>- Receiving support from Vincent's family.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Continuation of family patterns learnt at home</li> </ul>

My mother did not abandon me but she only gave me a minimum... she didn't give me affection... I was troublesome... I did stupid things, now I have a son just like me".

This deepening frustration hindered her entering into lasting relationships with her adult partners and caused her to experience existential void. It led to Nathalie living day to day without a clear goal, with the awareness of unresolved issues in her relationship with her mother and father [17]. It was then that she became convinced that escaping the past is the way to solve those problems. "After [my parents] passed away I sold this house in the country, I didn't want to have it, those memories, it was a small farm, just to survive, nothing big. Sell it and forget, that's what I had thought". Nathalie tried to change this situation in many ways, through her own resolutions and conscious autocreation and through psychotherapy which she undertook at the age of 28 and continued for 10 years, until a momentous change took place in her life. The critical moment in her life (she was 38) was the friendship with Vincent that turned into love and shortly led to marriage. Marriage with Vincent was also therapeutic, it allowed her to distance herself from her mother, her family home and from emotionally harmful memories, and to end the long escape from herself. These words are meaningful: "I remember that my mother was depressive and I couldn't help her, I can explain that to myself because now I'm an adult...".

In defining the family model, Vincent and Nathalie's narrations reveal a common category – "family completeness" which is, simultaneously, a chance to deepen their marital love and fulfil oneself in parenthood. They assign a double meaning to parenthood – awakening love to a child, which they had not experienced until the adoption and which was crucial for both of them; and accompanying another human being in discovering the world and finding their place in it. For Nathalie this means, among other things: "Being only the two of us, we missed someone, to be complete you need to have a child... With time, he will feel at home with us, he will get an education and a profession, maybe he will have children and I will be a grandma. It's my dream". For Vincent: "A refuge, gives support when needed... Before adoption it was not complete and now I took off in life again".

The variants of achieving adoptive readiness by childless couples – graphic presentation

Family experiences of spouses and their individual needs, expectations and aspirations form diverse biographical paths [18] which are presented in Table 1.

## CONCLUSIONS

One can find particularly inspiring cognitive value in the diversity and, largely, unpredictability of individual "paths" of personal autocreation or conceptualised holistic autocreative strategies of the childless spouses who are oriented

to acquire readiness for adoption [19]. However, it is impossible to gain insight into it without the participation of the authors of those strategies, who, because of their infertility, have experienced the autocreating of readiness for adoption, believing this choice to be beneficial. This, in turn, is fully possible by means of the biographical method based on the narrative interviews technique. After all, no other research method would allow to obtain from the interviewed couples such mature and internally complex material which describes the course of the critical and secondary events while determining one's own role in them, complemented with original explanations and interpretations of the meanings assigned to them. Only the spouses may reveal, in a reliable way, the most personal reflections and analyses of their own behaviours, feelings and attitudes. The narrations become then authentic, vivid pictures of past events and experiences that form a coherent story, the couple's life story. The advantage of this method is the explanatory-interpretative layer that enriches the facts with the depth of individual meanings and personal *logos* of the spouses.

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