



IDENTITY WORK AND DIRECT QUOTATIONS IN THE PRESS RELEASES AND ON THE WEBSITES OF A DANISH TV DOCUMENTARY ON TRANSNATIONAL ADOPTION

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This article concerns identity construction through timescales and by different actors, with direct quotations as the phenomenon in focus. The Danish public broadcasting channel, DR, produced a documentary about transnational adoption during 2002-2003. DR followed five prospective adoptive couples for a year, concentrating especially on their affective labour. After editing, DR broadcast the five-part documentary series entitled “When the Stork Fails” (*Når storken svigter*) between September and October 2003. The satellite texts of the programme (press releases and websites) had many ‘direct’ quotations from the documentary, apparently culled to stir media or viewer interest in the episodes. The quotations were used as examples of ‘authentic’ suffering, and they constructed the prospective adoptive parents as economically and morally normal citizens. However, a closer look at the texts reveals that one couple was treated differently *vis-à-vis* direct quotations. This difference reflects DR’s bias towards the official decision makers in a contested case.

Keywords: identity production, direct quotations, TV-documentary, transnational adoption

1 INTRODUCTION

In the Scandinavian countries, transnational adoption is state-controlled and subject to an official institutional procedure with various gatekeeping phases. For instance, prospective adopters have to produce extensive applications and various legally binding documents in which they show their ability - legally, financially and emotionally - to adopt (McIlvenny & Raudaskoski 2005). They also meet with social workers for interviews, home assessments and discussions. Adoption is moreover a highly affective process for the applicants, and hence their decision-making to adopt is usually troubled in many respects. The process involves at least a ‘traversal’ (Lemke 2002) from the presumed ‘normal’ course of biological parenthood to a set of practices and concerns they might not have been aware of at all. Once engaged in the official

institutional process, the prospective adoptive parents wait for the official decisions about their ability to adopt, and later, after selecting an approved adoption agency, they wait for the referral of a child from their selected 'sending' country (Telfer 1988). In this complex process, the prospective adoptive parents engage in situated and mediated discussions with a range of actors, such as state and agency officials and other adopters, and their discursive nexus, the discourses they are engaged in, is thus forcibly or voluntarily enlarged.

The Danish public broadcasting channel, DR, produced a high-profile documentary about transnational adoption during 2002-2003, which was broadcast nationally between September and October 2003. The documentary has since been shown in several other countries, including Norway and Finland. Instead of drawing upon the 'experts' in adoption circles (e.g. social workers, researchers and adoption agencies) as sources, DR followed five prospective adoptive couples for a year, concentrating especially on their affective labour. Thus, some adoptive couples were hooked up for a year with a team consisting of a journalist and a light-weight camera crew, and the end result of the journalistic work was the documentary series entitled "When the Stork Fails" (in Danish, *Når storken svigter*).

Not only was the documentary series broadcast on national Danish television, there were a number of 'satellite texts' accompanying it, namely written press releases, a hypermodal website, an asynchronous discussion forum and a synchronous online webchat. The ancillary texts were designed to be used to persuade people to watch the programme. These satellite texts used heavily direct quotations from the episodes.¹ However, as seems to be typical for press releases (cp. Jacobs 1999), these quotations were often changed slightly and also placed in a different narrative order than the original 'story', such that the mini-stories that the website and the press release offered were sometimes different from that in the televised episode. The press releases are often written to be quoted further, so the direct quotations were used as a mediational means (Scollon 2001) for other actions to take place. Most of the comparable texts in the press releases and on the websites were identical in content.²

The people who participated in the programme did so as individuals, but also as actors in a complex *nexus of practice*³ (Scollon 2001), as well as members and representatives of the category of people who have been through or are in the process of adoption. The reasons for these couples'

¹ Much research has been done on direct quotations (or direct reported speech), for example in discourse studies and conversation analysis (e.g. Buttny 1997; Caldas-Coulthard 1994; Hamilton 1998; Holt 1996; Jacobs 1999; Leudar & Antaki 1996 and Meyers 1999).

² In a personal e-mail exchange, a DR information officer says that typically the press release is written first by one person and then more or less copied to the web site, that is, that any differences are the result of changes to the press release.

³ By *nexus of practice* Scollon means "the intersection or linkage of multiple practices such that some group comes to recognize as 'the same' set of actions" (2001: 150).

participation in the programme are varied (e.g. to be on 'reality TV' or to become famous or to help others in a similar position), but as (future) adoptive parents they were also part of a community of practice, for example, in adoption associations. Therefore, it was in their private and network interests for the larger public audience to understand what adoption is about. The state media channel (DR) wished to make topical programmes of interest, and the programme series turned out to be successful in terms of audience ratings: there were over one million viewers for each episode, about twenty percent of all Danes. The fact that a documentary has been made about transnational adoption demonstrates that adopters are somehow worthy of attention, somehow 'different', but, as the analysis will show, the Danes were 'educated' through the programme about how economically and morally 'normal' these people are – no challenges were made to the fundamental cultural assumptions about what a parent is and what being a parent means (cp. Lemke 2003: 4).

By participating in the making of the television programme, the (prospective) adoptive parents not only presented a certain account of their identity that mostly referenced their suffering and pain, they also opened up the possibility for a small number of the viewers to show their 'active attitude' towards their pain and frustration, and the suffering of the distant 'child-to-be-adopted' (Boltanski 1999). This was because DR had provided the possibility for those with Internet connections to chat online with the couples featured in each episode immediately after the episode had finished its first broadcast.

The documentary would be an interesting object for discursive analysis in itself in that it was built up almost completely from the prospective adopters' voices and practices. It was assembled by combining observation (they were followed through various stages of the process) and testimonials (their answers to interview questions from which the questions were edited out). There were also two types of testimonials: those mainly about the past and how the people feel about things in general (typically situated in the interviewees' home), and those about how the persons feel at that very moment (typically produced in connection with some other ongoing activity). Thus the episodes looked a lot like (auto)biographical narratives. It has to be kept in mind, however, that the edited version of the raw materials is necessarily DR's, and not the participants', version, since the documentary is both virtual and artifactual: "it is not given but actively produced, sifted, invested, performatively interpreted by numerous apparatuses which are factitious or artificial, hierarchizing and selective" (Derrida & Stigler 2002: 3). Hence, one cannot assume anything about the situated "relational notions of identity" - the activity-bound production of talk that Lemke discusses

when referring to Gergen (1994) - which took place when the couples actually said the things they said.⁴

In the present article, Lemke's (2003) discussion of identity is used as a starting point. Lemke focuses on the various theories of identity construction, and also on the individual and his/her construction of identity both in situ and over longer time-scales. However, he does not discuss data or methods of analysis, but only gives hypothetical examples of how persons might feel or what they might say in different situations about themselves⁵.

The research question in this paper is: What kind of identities are constructed and mediated through the use of quotations, and what consequences might those constructions have?

2 SATELLITE TEXTS AND DIRECT QUOTATIONS

To give an illustration of how a direct quotation was used in press releases and on websites, Example 1 presents a transcript of the talk-in-interaction heard in the first indoor televisual shot after the introduction sequence in the last episode of the series.⁶ The interaction took place in 'South Africa at Morten and Winnie's guest house', according to the visual caption before the clip. (The English translation appears first, followed by the segment in the original Danish language in brackets.)

(1)

Morten: hello: (.) u uh (2.4) ((whistle)) (0.6) hi (.) >she just won't do it< (2.5) WINNIE:!(he:::)=

Winnie: =yeah

Morten: .he HEE::LP (h:::) (1.9) she bloody won't eat it- she bloody won't have anything at all.

(Morten: hello: (.) u uh (2.4) ((fløjt)) (0.6) hej (.) >det gider hun bare ikke< (2.5) WINNIE:!

(he:::)=

Winnie: =jaer

Morten: .he HJÆ::LP (h:::) (1.9) hun vil sgu' ikke æde det- hun vil sgu' ikke spise noget som helst.)

Both the website and the press release about this televised episode used a direct quotation that appears at the very start of the episode. In Examples

⁴ A good example of the decontextualisation that necessarily, and sometimes more drastically takes place can be seen in how two apparently adjacent turns-at-talk were split apart and used in the introductory examples for the two last episodes: At the beginning of the fourth episode, Lotte says (to Mikael) *If it doesn't work out now, you mustn't think that I couldn't apply again (hvis den ikke går nu så skal du da ikke tro at jeg ikke kunne finde på at søge igen)*, and in the fifth one, Mikael says in a low voice (*inhale*), and *if it works out it will, and if it doesn't, then one has tried, anyways (h: og går den så går den og gør den ikke så har man da prøvet)*. From the body posture and gestures one could claim that Lotte's turn is a reaction to Mikael's, that is, that they were produced in the opposite order. The most important point is that one was a comment/reaction to the other, instead of the couple emphasising separately how they anticipate failure.

⁵ The situated production of identity has been a central interest in discursive psychology (DP) and recently conversation analysis (CA) and membership categorisation analysis (MCA) has become a rich method of analysis to see how that 'identity work' is negotiated in morally accountable ways (e.g. Antaki & Widdicombe 1998).

⁶ In the beginning of each episode, there is the same introduction, both verbally and visually to the five couples who were followed for a year, and after that some examples that either remind the viewer of the previous episode or orient them to the episode in question.

2 and 3 below, we see how the quotations appeared in the press release and on the official programme website respectively.

(2) Når storken svigter (5:5)

Winnie og Morten har modtaget deres otte måneder gamle datter i Sydafrika. Men det går ikke helt, som de havde forventet. Lotte og Michael skal til første møde med amtet, og det er alligevel ikke helt så ligetil for dem at blive godkendt. Se hvordan det går dem i sidste afsnit af dokumentarserien "Når storken svigter".

- Winnie - Hjælp!, lyder det fra Morten. Han er sammen med sin kone Winnie i Sydafrika for at hente Johanna på otte måneder. De har allerede taget hende til sig og passer hende. De venter kun på, de sidste juridiske formaliteter afsluttes, før de lovformeligt kan vende hjem til Danmark som forældre til den lille pige. Men lige nu koncentrerer de sig om Johanna, som lider af en skrækkelig diarre, der ingen ende synes at tage,

(When the stork fails (5:5))

Winnie and Morten have received their eight-month-old daughter in South-Africa. But things are not going quite as expected. Lotte and Michael have to go to a first meeting with the county, and it is not totally straightforward for them to be accepted. See what happens to them in the last episode of the documentary series "When the stork fails".

- Winnie - Help!, says Morten. He is together with his wife Winnie in South-Africa to fetch Johanna who is eight months old. They have already adopted her and take care of her. They are just waiting for the last juridical formalities to be finalised before they can legally return home to Denmark as the parents of this little girl. But right now they concentrate on Johanna who is suffering from a horrible diarrhoea which does not seem to stop at all.)

(3)

Winnie - Hjælp!, lyder det fra Morten. Han er sammen med sin kone Winnie i Sydafrika for at hente Johanna på otte måneder. De har allerede taget hende til sig og passer hende. De venter kun på, de sidste juridiske formaliteter afsluttes, før de lovformeligt kan vende hjem til Danmark som forældre til den lille pige. Men lige nu koncentrerer de sig om Johanna, som lider af en skrækkelig diarre, der ingen ende synes at tage,



DR:

[Hør montagen
Bombay Børn](#)

Andre officielle

[AC Internationale
Børnehjælp](#)

[DanAdopt](#)

[Adoption.com](#)

[Alt om adoption](#)

[Civilretsdir.](#)

In both Examples 2 and 3, the position of the quotation (“Winnie, help!”) is the same: at the beginning of the story. However, the meaning of the quotation (see Example 1) is transformed because it is now connected with their child’s bad diarrhoea, not her difficulties with eating. This kind of ‘redesign’ was not uncommon.

3 IDENTITY WORK

As direct quotations were frequently used in these satellite texts, and – as has been documented elsewhere – direct quotations can make a text livelier and therefore more interesting to read, the aim was to determine what kind of identities are constructed through these direct quotations. As Lemke (2003) and others see identity construction as an individual project, the emphasis has traditionally been on what a person says, when and to whom. Direct quotations could be seen to borrow from this kind of identity construction, adding to the authenticity of the person portrayed, but - as will be shown below - the person is depleted of his or her performative power and his or her words will be split up and rearranged to form another story line.

In the case of the filming of the documentary series, the prospective adopters repeatedly performed their identities locally. (And could do it again in the chat room discussion which took place after each episode.) Yet, as a consequence of DR’s selection and editing, the viewers encountered a remediated version of their talk, and, as was mentioned above, this was DR’s version, their selection of the participants’ talk chosen in order to build up a poignant programme.⁷ The direct quotations in the satellite texts are another intertextual resemiotisation (Iedema 2001) of the original talk, and as has been shown above, they are sometimes adapted from the ‘original’ (the televised episode), to convey new meanings in the genre chain (e.g. Fairclough 2001). The documentary producers thus “immediately and totally reappropriated” (Derrida & Stigler 2002: 37) the adoptive parents’ utterances. They were taken out of the context of production (out of the “singular, unrepeatable moment” - Derrida & Stigler 2002: 38) as semiotic material that might change meaning during the process. Those utterances were elevated from being part of a fabric of unfolding talk/interaction to being ‘statements’ or ‘testimonies’, not just about how the participants felt and thought at that very time of the utterance, but how they in general feel and think about transnational adoption itself and all the processes that accompany it. That is, their local, situated identity production is galvanised. The quotations are circulated to another context, that of a written press

⁷ For the media producers, the timescale was extended: from their initial contact with an adoption agency, through which the potential adopters were first contacted, then filming them for a year, editing a programme, producing websites and press release documents, broadcasting the episode, and monitoring the chat room discussion. For the viewers, the satellite texts might be encountered over a period of a few months, but it was only possible to participate in the chat room immediately after viewing each episode.

release or to a website, and are now surrounded by text produced by others. When the circulation of quotations is traced across sites, one can follow certain objects, produced by certain people, and occurring in certain stories about them (cp. Green 1999: 409; Marcus 1995). The quotations are locally produced, most often in the interviews about the participants' life world, but in press releases and on the web (and of course in the edited programme itself) they become part of a media system that is national and nowadays even global when the documentary is bought to be shown in other countries.

When the direct quotations in the press releases and on the website are examined, it is clear that at least two kinds of identities are emerging, one before the adoption and the other after the child has been acquired.⁸ Before adoption, the parents are depicted as fulfilling their societal and emotional needs (e.g. of having the same experiences as others) as one can see in Examples 4 and 5 below.

- (4) "It's very hard to know that one won't ever have a baby in the tummy", says Nanna in the first episode of the series 'When the stork fails', but at the same time she is aware that she can love a little adopted child to the full.

("Det er meget svært at vide, at man aldrig får et barn i maven", siger Nanna i første episode af serien 'Når storken svigter', men ved samtidig med sig selv, at hun kan elske et lille adoptivbarn fuldt ud.)

and

- (5) "I don't want to be him, the strange one, but rather one of the crowd," says Stig, who thinks that couples without children can become a little peculiar.

("Jeg vil ikke være ham den underlige, så hellere en af massen", siger Stig, som synes par uden børn kan blive lidt sære.)

The 'normalcy' that is produced in these two examples might be highlighted by the fact that 99 % of Danish women give birth to at least one child; thus, the general anticipation to have one's own biological child is high. To use the terminology of nexus analysis, the (historical) body of Lotte cannot have the experience so highly expected, but she would still be capable of participating in the interaction order of childcare. For Stig, participating in the interaction order would guarantee also that his (historical) body in general would not be seen as 'peculiar', that he would be perceived as an average guy. A family with children is constituted as a normal social good (Gee 2005), a right thing to do, to desire or to contemplate.

⁸ The research methodology used in this paper is a combination of methods to do discourse analysis where the constitutive role of language use is acknowledged (e.g. Gee 2005), and it borrows especially from nexus analysis (Scollon & Scollon 2004), in which any mediated (social) action is seen to be an intersection of 'historical body', 'interaction order' and 'discourses in place'. As was mentioned earlier, discursive psychology offers tools for analysing identity construction in talk. By combining the situated constructions with their textual representations, talk and text research are brought together, not just to show how intertextuality works, but, also, how this might have consequences for the original speaker's identity.

After the adoption, on the other hand, the everyday harsh reality is the focus, and the adopters' feelings of inadequacy as parents and the tension between the partners are highlighted, as illustrated in Examples 6 and 7.

- (6) One feels oneself to be inadequate, and I think that I am a bad mother, states Winnie.
(Man føler sig utilstrækkelig, og jeg synes, jeg er en dårlig mor, konstaterer Winnie.)

and

- (7) "Would you mind taking her – so I can take some initiative. Because what you're doing is not fast enough", says Vibeke decisively when it takes Stig a little too long to choose the right product. ("Gider du at komme og tage hende - så tager jeg nogle initiativer. Fordi det der, det går ikke stærkt nok", lyder det bestemt fra Vibeke, da Stig er lidt for længe om at vælge det rigtige produkt.)

Not only is the relationship with the partner at issue, it is the 'relationship' with oneself that is in difficulty. The troubles are mediated through (interview) talk about inner feelings (6) or through a report on an episode observed where talk was a prime mediational means (7).

Thus, both before and after adoption, the parents are constructed as emotional societal beings with the normal wish to have a child, and the normal problems of parents with children, that is they are seen as ordinary Danish couples.

However, there was an exception. In the documentary, one couple, Lotte and Mikael, were followed from the very beginning of their official adoption process, that is from when they were initially filling in their application papers. In the television programme it was made clear that there might be a potential obstacle to the success of their adoption process: Lotte's depression in the past. In the programme itself, they were depicted in more or less the same way as the others, as desiring to be a normal family with a child. However, the website and press release of the episodes they were in (the last two of the five that were broadcast) treated them differently from the other couples vis-à-vis direct quotations. They were not quoted at all in the press release or on the website of the penultimate episode, and in the last one it was only Lotte who was quoted (in the other cases, there was a balance between selecting quotations of speech from both partners). This is what the website looked like:

Nervøs før møde

Amtet skal godkende Michael og Lotte som adoptivforældre. Det gælder både med hensyn til parrets rent faktuelle forhold som økonomi osv. Men også om de vil være i stand til at yde den personlige indsats, der skal til for at tage et lille barn til sig. Og her bliver Lotte en smule nervøs. Hun fik for mange år siden fjernet æggelejerne ved en fejl under en operation og konsulterede efterfølgende en psykiater,



Det er for længst tilgivet og accepteret, og jeg er videre i mit liv, fortæller Lotte. Alligevel er hun bekymret over, hvordan amtet vil opfatte situationen. DRs journalister følger med, da parret skal til deres første samtale med amtet,



- Jeg synes, det gik rigtig godt. Men jeg er nervøs for, om de accepterer de ting, vi har sagt, fortæller Lotte efter besøget.

Ventetid

Nu er det bare hjem og vente ved telefonen. Og da den ringer modtages beskeden med moderat glæde. Amtet vil gerne have, at Lotte taler med en psykolog, inden den endelige afgørelse træffes. Nu ligger en evt. adoption pludseligt langt ude i fremtiden. DRs journalister besøger igen parret et halvt år senere, da afgørelsen kommer fra amtet.

- Jeg ved ikke, hvad jeg vil gøre, hvis ikke jeg bliver godkendt, siger Lotte, inden afgørelsen falder.

Examples 8, 9 and 10 are all quotations from the website:

- (8) Many years ago her Fallopian tubes were mistakenly removed in an operation and she consulted a psychiatrist afterwards,
It has been for a long time forgiven and accepted, and I've gone ahead with my life, says Lotte.
(Hun fik for mange år siden fjernet æggelejerne ved en fejl under en operation og konsulterede efterfølgende en psykiater,
Det er for længst tilgivet og accepteret, og jeg er videre i mit liv, fortæller Lotte.)
- (9) DR's journalists follow when the couple have to go to their first interview with the county,
- I think it went really well. But I am nervous about whether or not they accept the

things we have said, says Lotte after the visit.

(DRs journalister følger med, da parret skal til deres første samtale med amtet,

- Jeg synes, det gik rigtig godt. Men jeg er nervøs for, om de accepterer de ting, vi har sagt, fortæller Lotte efter besøget.)

(10) - I don't know what I will do if I won't be approved, says Lotte before the verdict is pronounced.

(- Jeg ved ikke, hvad jeg vil gøre, hvis ikke jeg bliver godkendt, siger Lotte, inden afgørelsen falder.)

All the direct quotations deal with Lotte's past problems and the possible consequences that might have in their adoption process. The direct quotations form a continuum from Lotte's claim that she is healed (Example 8), to how she articulates that their discussion with a social worker went well (the subtitle for this section in the press release and on the website was *Nervøs før møde* — 'Nervous before meeting'). The first quotation in Example 8 shows how Lotte chooses "the fixed semiotic options provided by our culture and its constraints" (Lemke 2003: 2): Instead of challenging the rules about psychiatric problems and adoption (which have been loosened anyway), Lotte goes for the more culturally acceptable and strategically safer option when she claims forgiveness and forgetting. The quotation from her could be analysed with discursive psychology (DP) as a reality description, and, as DP (drawing on Wittgenstein) has pointed out, a person's feelings are hard to dispute, they have to be taken at face value (e.g. Wiggins & Potter 2003: 521). The latter part of the quotation in Example 9 — *Men jeg er nervøs for, om de accepterer de ting, vi har sagt* ('But I am nervous about if they accept the things we have said') — is ambiguous, as acceptance could point both to their honest account of their life and relationship or to a performance that is 'sold' to the social worker. In any case, there is a clear emphasis on Lotte's nervousness in this section. A third mention of 'nervous' can be seen in the text around the quotes in *Og her bliver Lotte en smule nervøs*, 'And that makes Lotte a bit nervous'. The emphasis on nervousness on its part builds a certain significance (cp. Gee 2005) in relation to Lotte's past and present: a 'natural', even required, feeling for anybody involved in a gate keeping process becomes more an issue of the constitution of the historical body (cp. Scollon & Scollon 2004). Is this a person (still) inclined to mental instability? When Lotte's future action description (see Example 10) appears after these quotations, instead of it being heard as an emotional outburst that anyone willing to adopt would come up with, it now in its mediated form conveys a more disturbing message that questions Lotte's claim about her being healed.

In this case, the press release (see Example 11) had one more direct quotation (which was omitted from the website):

(11)- Because we want to have a child together, and that we cannot get for biological reasons, says Lotte, whose Fallopian tubes have been removed.

(Fordi vi gerne vil have et barn sammen, og det kan vi ikke få af biologiske årsager, fortæller Lotte, som har fået fjernet æggelederne.)

It is interesting to see how the 'original' utterance (see Example 12) which appeared in the broadcast TV episode has been reformulated in the direct quotation above:

(12) Lotte: because we want to have a child together and that we cannot get (.) biologically (.) that's why we want to adopt

(Lotte: fordi vi gerne vil have et barn sammen og det kan vi ikke få (.) biologisk (.) derfor så ønsker vi at adoptere)

The press release, even though it appears to be formulated to describe, similarly to the other couples, their reasons for and sorrows in trying to achieve parenthood, it does not directly quote *derfor så ønsker vi at adoptere* ('and that's why we want to adopt'), but, instead, adds an account of Lotte's biological or medical condition as the reason for adoption. The text disconnects Lotte's original connection (12) between childlessness and adoption as a logical next step, and in 11 it reconnects childlessness with the problems that her historical body has experienced in the past (cp. Gee 2005).

Thus Lotte is medicalised throughout the direct quotations, and at the same time, the emphasis is shifted from the individual 'troubles' to become a parent to the official procedure and its gatekeeping phases. Even though the last quotation on the website brings in her feelings, in this context the quotation serves as depicting her an unstable rather than unhappy person. With adoption, strong feelings and emotions are acknowledged and in some ways a prerequisite for a 'normal' prospective parent, but this is the case only in relation to their desire for a child, not in relation to their ascribed psychological problems. Even though the quotations are word-for-word as such, the interaction order (e.g. Scollon & Scollon 2004) in which the original talk was done, and the actions or activities, such as answering questions in an interview, it was partly accomplishing (e.g. Gee 2005), are no longer identical/matching.

The introductory appetisers at the beginning of the fourth and fifth episodes discussed in footnote 1 were also hinting at the possibility that this couple's application might be rejected. Indeed, the couple did not get official permission to proceed to adopt in the end, which was also remediated in the last episode of the documentary. Since the appetisers suggested that possibility, the website and the press releases on their part 'misrepresented' the couple by treating them differently from the others in how they used their direct quotations. In this sense they took the side of the official establishment instead of being neutral. Of course, the couple's participation in the programme might have been strategic, in the sense that they might have attempted to enhance their chances since they

would open up not just for an official but for a literally public scrutiny about their wishes and potential problems (implying that they had nothing to hide). Then again, they would have to talk about these problems also because they would need to show that they have a disinterested stance (cp. Potter 1996). In constructing the episodes and the satellite materials, DR was incumbent to remain neutral.

In the chat room, Lotte and Mikael were the only couple whose attempt at adoption was clearly and sometimes heatedly challenged.⁹ Whether the challengers had seen the website, not just the episodes, is unclear (though one always had to go to the chat via the website), and therefore no claims can be made about a connection between their attitude and their 'reception' of the website. In any case, Lotte's statement (in Example 8) about having overcome the trauma of the past was noted, and it was quoted and challenged on the basis of what she had said in the previous episode. Thus the chat room provided a possibility for 'opening up' the identities that the documentary and its satellite texts had unavoidably constructed.

4 CONCLUSION

It is clear that the DR website and press releases used direct quotations in order to stir interest in the series in the mass media and to build a potential audience. Nevertheless, they were also redesigned, in that the quotations were altered (e.g. in content and in placement) to acquire new meanings, to tell a different 'mini-story', another version of the story of the participants and their identities, with a variety of consequences. For example, one can wonder how strongly the ascription of Lotte's troubled identity in this programme is seen by others as implying that she is morally not worthy to take care of an adopted child. Unfortunately, there were only at most fifty people in the online chat room to hear about the more positive evaluation of Lotte as a caregiver (see footnote 9); these few people had the possibility to discuss the programme, the mediation of the 'past' in the 'present'. When Lemke (2003) wonders about situated and longer-timescale identities, Lotte's case serves as an important reminder that this identity work is not just up to an individual, but that especially the mass media and increasingly the new media have important roles to play in the identity construction of individuals (and groups for that matter). Also, Lemke (2003) rightly reminds us of the notion of situated identity construction, but we have to be aware that the direct quotations from the couples on a website or in a press release have travelled a long distance both in time and space from the embodied situated identity production in which they were uttered (and from the time/space called 'self' whose desires and fears were at stake).

⁹ In the online chat room it became clear that Lotte had been deemed by another psychologist to have been an excellent caregiver to Mikael's daughter from his first marriage.

Moreover, those mediated identity productions, divorced from the bodies and lives of the participants, are potentially more influential and longer-lasting than the speaker's attempts *in situ*, and might come back to haunt them. For instance, the projected identity (Lemke 2003: 3) can turn into a fixed projectile, as happened in the chat room (cp. Prior 2003 on documents that 'strike back', become counter-agents to oneself). In that case, the mass media using direct quotations is not just a conforming identity resource (Lemke 2003: 12), but has fixed one's own identity, and in one's own words.

Finally, the findings can be interpreted in terms of new discursive forms of governance (e.g. Iedema 2003). In the making and broadcast of the documentary, there are many actors: DR with their narrative and legal power, the parents with their situated activities and (regulated) emotions, and the official state adoption system and the adoption agency. In the process of mediation, certain meanings about adoption (adoptive-parents-to-be and children-to-be-adopted) were circulated, stabilised and made more durable. When identities are unavoidably produced and 'consumed' in this assemblage of people, media, persons of interest, and political parties, it is clear that identity and politics are closely related.

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