

Adoption and how it affects identity

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What is adoption? Adoption is defined as a process in which a person assumes the parent role of a child, and permanently has all rights and responsibilities of that child, just as if they are the birth parents. Adoption, for the most part, is a beautiful thing, giving children a chance to live the life they deserve if for some reason their birth parent/parents could not give them that. In the paper, "Adoptive Identity: How Contexts Within and Beyond the Family Shape Developmental Pathways" by Harold D. Grotevant, Nora Dunbar, Julie K. Kohler, and Amy M. Lash Esau, the paper focuses on adoptive identity, how identity is influenced by social changes, and what the different contexts of development are. (Grotevant et al. 379) I will support the author's claim which is that "there is a variety of arrangements of types of adoption that influence the process of adolescents' adoptive identity development." (Grotevant et al. 380) I will argue the author's claim which is "how adoptive identity is negotiated and enacted in relational contexts within families." (Grotevant et al. 383) I will prove and argue the author's claim through facts, research, personal experiences, and opinions. During my research, I have come to the realization that there are many different types of adoptions. According to "Adoptive Identity: How Contexts Within and Beyond Shape Developmental Pathways," there are several types of adoptions that can affect the child's identity development such as stepparent adoptions, heterosexual married couples who are choosing to adopt usually because of infertility, international adoptions, transracial adoptions, and adoptions by a single parent. (Grotevant et al. 380) I believe that all these different categories of adoptions will influence a child's identity, especially the adolescent's involved in homosexual and transracial adoptions because of the difference of appearance, culture, and way of living between the

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adopted child and parents may be vastly different. (Caughman, 2012)

Especially as a young child, in transracial adoptions, the adopted adolescent might not understand why he or she looks different from their parents. By looking so differently, from their parents, the adopted child may start feeling as if they don't belong and the feeling of being an outcast would definitely shape a child's identity. (Grotevant et al. 383) The affects on a child being adopted by a homosexual couple, even though we live in a much more tolerant world today than we did a decade or so ago, and although I am not suggesting that homosexual couples should not adopt children, I feel like in reality they can still be faced with some dilemmas and identity issues that children adopted by heterosexual couples may avoid. One, they might feel a sense of confusion with their own sexual identity as they enter puberty, having come from a home with a homosexual couple, while most children are raised in heterosexual couples. They might even feel a sense of embarrassment and disgrace and suffer ridicule at the hands of their peers, affecting their identity and making them see themselves as an outsider.

Single parent adoptions, although not as much of a dilemma as homosexual couples, may also pose possible issues for adopted children's identities as well. Single parent adoptions have been increasing at a steady rate over the last decade, but still is much less than married couples. Why? One reason is because many domestic adoptions the birth mother would prefer the child to be adopted by married couples and although there is no guarantee that a married couple will stay married, they have a better start at providing the child the life they deserve and are more capable at providing an intact, with less social ills than a single parent, which could possibly affect the child the child's identity as it develops and grows because he or she was raised in a

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home where just being raised by a single parent is not a society norm compared to married couples. (Timm, Mooradian, and Hock 2011) The different types of adoptions will affect the child's identity, just like the authors claim, especially in homosexual, interracial, and single parent adoptions. Other types of adoptions the article mentions is closed and open adoptions. " Adoptive families vary by degree of openness with birth family members, ranging from adoptions who are confidential and closed, to those who are open." (Grotevant et al. 383) The child's identity is often effected depending on the relationships between the adopted child and new parents and how much information they choose to disclose. The amount of information about adoption and where the child came from all depends on if the adoption is open or closed. (Grotevant et al. 383) Each kind of adoption will affect the child's identity, just in different ways. Open adoption is when the biological parents and the adoptive parents have a relationship and exchange information and can also contact each other, through phone, emails, or even in person. Closed Adoption is when the biological parents' information is kept sealed and the adoptive parents don't even have access to it. Both of these types of adoptions would affect the child's identity. For closed adoptions, I think this would affect the child's identity quite a bit, just how the author's claim that different type's of adoption would affect the child's development. The child would probably have a hard time accepting the fact that he or she were adopted since they would never know where they came from. This idea would always be in the back of their mind and would be with them as the grew older, being a part of how they identify themselves. As for open adoptions, this would also shape how the child develops his or herself. If the child always had some sort of relationship with

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their birth parents, I feel how they would see themselves as a person would be affected because they wouldn't be sure where they belong. Part of them would feel as if their adoptive parents were their family, but having their real parents in their life, would make them feel other wise because nothing is as strong as the bond between mother and child. The child may always feel as if they don't belong or should be else where with his or her birth parents, making them identify themselves as somewhat of an outcast. The second claim the authors make in this paper is how adopted identity is created by the relational contexts of the family they are adopted in to. I disagree with this claim because I feel no matter what even if the child has a good relationship with their adoptive parents, they still will feel confused about their situation and won't feel as they are 100% a part of the family. One of the most important factors to the development of love and trust is able to bond with the adoptive parents. Since the lack of the biological bond between the adopted child and adoptive parents is present, this may cause trust issues in the adopted child. (Wegar, 1995). This just proves my claim that the relationship with the adoptive parents does not affect the adopted child's identity at all because they are not her or she's birth parents, and nothing is able to compare to that connection. Relational contexts of the family is referring to what kind of relationship the adopted child has with her adoptive parents, how they choose to tell the child about the adoption and what information to disclose and how comfortable the child feels about talking to her adoptive parents about internal issues he or she may be facing about the adoption. The paper tells a story about a young women who met her birthfather for the first time and how it helped her develop her identity. She talks about how she had " so many questions" and how she " would sit

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and think about it all the time." She felt "so confused" because she felt as if she didn't have a lot of people to talk to because she "knew of no one else who was adopted." She discusses how her adoptive mom was always there but it just wasn't the same, until she met her birth father then she felt as if she understood herself so much better. (Grotevant et al. 383, 384) This proves that her relationships with her adoptive family, although she states they were always there for her, weren't apart of shaping her identity and it was not until she met her birth father that she felt as if she knew where she came from and knew herself more. As the adopted children grow up and develop into adolescents and teenagers, they start to try to discover who they are as a person and what is their identity to by discovering someone or something they can relate too. Clearly, adopted children don't have a biological parent example that they can rely on (Horner & Rosenberg, 1991), unless the adoption was an open adoption and then in that case the adoptive adolescent was able to develop a relationship with their adoptive parents and biological parents. I feel like no matter how close the adopted child is to her adoptive parents they will always wonder what if and feel as if they don't know themselves very well, until they meet their birth mom or dad and have the opportunity understand themselves. I feel as if this story the paper shares with the readers proves that the adopted child's identity is not shaped through the relationship with the birth parents what so ever. A personal experience I have witnessed is also another reason why I feel the way I do about adoption and how the relational context within the family does not affect the adopted child at all. I was recently talking to my grandparents about this topic and they told me a story about a friend they had back in high school, who got pregnant and chose to give her child up for

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adoption once she was born. The adoption was an open adoption and every year the adopted parents would send the birth mom letters on her child's development and pictures. Although, it was an open adoption, the daughter never met her birth mom in real life so she was always very confused, wish she had more answers, and always saw herself as a lost soul. She was very close to her adoptive parents but felt as if something was missing. When she got married and was pregnant with her first child, she decided to meet her birth mom. She and her birth mom now have a close relationship, are in each others lives, and she finally found out the answers she was looking for and didn't seem so lost within her identity. This experience I have had just proves the author's claims about the relational contexts in the family are false and that the adopted child will not discover his or her identity until the questions are answered about their situation or they can actually meet their birthparents face to face. In disagreement to my belief of the paper's claim, during my research, I found quite a few sources that were counterclaims to my belief in regards to the authors' claim from the " Adoptive Identity" paper which states " how adoptive identity is negotiated and enacted in relational contexts within families." According to the online book " Adoption Quarterly" by Tina M. Timm, John K. Mooradian, and Robert M. Hock, it states that " family integration is the process of adding a new family member. When this happens, it obviously changes the equilibrium of the family." and that " many children don't feel as if they belong in the family because everything has changed so much since they have arrived" causing them to feel " alone," " not wanted," and " rejected" from the family. (Timm, Mooradian, and Hock 2011) This source obviously concludes that the child's identity is shaped through the relationships within the family but I still strongly disagree.

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According to my personal experience, the story I read in the "Adoptive Identity" paper, and other research, I still believe that many kids don't create their identity until they have met their birth parents, have learned all about them, why they were adopted, and/or accepted the fact that they are adopted. I honestly don't believe that the family relationships with the adopted child affects his or her identity at all. I think what influences the adopted child's identity is the fact of them being adopted, the fact they don't know who they really came from, and why they were adopted; that's all the aspects that make up an adopted child's identity. Not that family relationships. Adoption is obviously a beautiful thing that gives so many unfortunate children a chance at a great life they deserve. But, it can also cause the adopted adolescent to feel confused, rejected, lost, or like he or she does not belong in the family. The different types of adoption such as interracial, homosexual, and single parent adoption can really effect the adopted child's identity and how he or she see's themselves because of the abnormal, confusing situation they are in by having two dads, or two moms, white parents when the child is black, or just one mom. All this could be very confusing for the adopted child causing themselves to feel lost. The only true way for the adopted child to feel as if they know their true identity one hundred percent is have some sort of relationship with their birth parents. How one's identity is perceived to themselves is a very fragile thing and can easily be affected negatively because of adoption and the certain effects that may come from being adopted. Works Cited 1) Timm, Tina M., John K. Mooradian, and Robert M. Hock. Adoption Quarterly. U. S. Department of Health and Human Services, 6 Dec. 2011. Taylor & Francis Online . Web. 5 Dec. 2012. . 2) The "Two Sets of Parents" Myth. Independent Adoption <https://assignbuster.com/adoption-and-how-it-affects-identity/>

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