

ABSTRACT**DISSERTATION/THESIS/RESEARCH PAPER/CREATIVE PROJECT:** What to Expect

When You're Adopting: The Rhetoric of Adoptive Parental Identity Construction

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For this research paper, I conducted empirical research of an online message board, arguing that it is a site in which transnational adoptive (TA) parents used writing to construct familial identities that would suit the circumstances of their new family formation. Such novel identity construction is important for TA parents, who are largely middle class, white, and grew up in families in which biological kinship was the cultural norm, since they must begin to question the cultural, racial, and familial assumptions that have shaped their worldview and construct a new familial identity that incorporates an untraditional family makeup that is transracial, against a backdrop of biological and racial homogeneity, and adoptive, against a culture that foundationally assumes that families are grown through genetic kinship. The online writing community I will examine consists of individuals who have adopted or who are planning to adopt from Ethiopia. This online community, which corresponded in an asynchronous online discussion forum, was formed after Children's Home Society and Family Services, a non-governmental organization that facilitates both domestic and international adoptions in the United States, established an internet message board in July 2005. I will analyze how acts of writing in such a message board construct the kinds of adoptive familial identities that emerge in

the site and explore how these parents use writing to resist normative biological family identity by constructing an adoptive family narrative answering the research question, “How is writing used in an online community to construct adoptive familial identities?” I conclude that participants in the forum use writing, facilitated by the online forum, to construct a performative framework, which I call an *adoption narrative*, by which to enact and construct a cohesive adoptive familial identity.