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ABSTRACT

There are over 1.5 million adopted children in the U.S. Extant literature primarily examines these adopted children, not their parents, in terms of identity, coping skills, stigma, and more. We know little about how adoptive parents establish their identity as parents without going through the visual and biological transition as women who give birth do. There is a need for research on the intersection of marketplace resources and communication in the formation and confirmation of parental and family identity. We draw on consumer culture theory, which illustrates how consumer coproduce their identity, or sense of self, through market-based materials. In this study, we examine relationships among family identity, narratives or storytelling, and the marketplace resource of an online interface. More specifically, in this study, we explore how individuals create and confirm their new identity through storytelling in an online social network setting. Technological advances in the past two decades have allowed more informal and more frequent communication among individuals in groups, which, in turn, have allowed adoptive parents to connect across the country in ways that provide substantive support to each other. These social network connections provide both support and adoptive parent identity confirmation. The focus of this study is on international adoptions and the social networks available to and utilized by current and future adoptive parents.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Elise Johansen Harvey earned her PhD in Marketing at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln in Lincoln, Nebraska and is currently an Assistant Professor of Marketing and Coordinator of Start:ME Spartanburg Microbusiness Accelerator at the University of South Carolina Upstate in Spartanburg, South Carolina.