Adoptive Parenting and Its Challenges in Buchi Emecheta's *The New Tribe*

By

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Abstract

Buchi Emecheta's *The New Tribe*, tells the story of a couple and the challenges they face in parenting their two adopted children. This paper examines adoptive parenting and its challenges in this novel. The aim is to create awareness among prospective adoptive parents that adoption holds unique challenges and how to handle these challenges when they occur. Sharon Kaplan Roszia & Allison Davis Maxon's 'Seven Core Issues that Adopted Children Face' form the framework for the analysis of the adoption-specific challenges in the novel under study. The paper demonstrates that the adoptee's feelings of loss, grief and abandonment in addition to crisis in identity formation and insecure attachment are some of the challenges adoptive parents may encounter while parenting the adoptee. The paper submits that the adoptive parents' engagement in strategies such as acknowledging and understanding the 'core issues' adopted children face, promoting effective communication pattern and building secure attachment pattern with the adoptee will foster a healthy development of the child**.** The paper recommends that prospective adoptive parents should undergo pre-adoption training so as to keep abreast of adoption-specific challenges and the strategies to employ when they occur.

Keywords: adoption, adoptive parenting, African novel, Buchi Emecheta, African female novelist

Introduction

Adoption according to Joana Soares et al. "is a way of creating or expanding a family that offers the adopted child the most personally, socially and legally stable caregiving option and gives the adoptive parent an alternative towards

parenthood" (1). There are many motivating factors for adopting a child. Joana Soares et al. identify the following as some of the factors:

> The difficulty of getting pregnant was enough to redefine parenthood and engage in the adoption process. For others, adoption arose from the failure of medically assisted reproduction… four subcategories were defined within the category of biological issues, namely, infertility, biological unviability, running out of options and health risk. (Soares et al.5)

Adoption is associated with many benefits and challenges in the lives of both the adopter and the adoptee. On the positive side, David M. Brodzinsky argues that it offers the adoptee "the prospect of stability, loving care, security, and lifetime family connections for boys and girls whose biological parents are unable to raise them" (200). He adds that adoption generally benefits children especially those who come from neglectful or abusive homes, or those who have been in long-term foster care, orphanages, or those who live with parents who are unwilling or unprepared to care for them (200). The adopter also benefits from adoption because it offers him/her "the opportunity to reap the joys of being a parent to children in need; to nurture and guide children's development; and in many cases, to achieve the satisfaction of ameliorating the effects of children's early adverse experiences" (Brodzinsky 200). However, Brodzinsky contends as follows:

> Although most people view adoption positively, it is still seen as a "second-best" route to parenthood, as well as a less enviable way of becoming a member of a family. As children mature, both cognitively and socially, they become increasingly aware that their peers do not envy them for being adopted. This recognition can undermine self-esteem and identity. ("Adoptive" 20)

He submits that "while adoption offers clear benefits, research and clinical experience also suggest that it is associated with many challenges and complications in the lives of adopted children and the adults who parent them" (200). This is the subject matter of this study. It dwells on the challenges associated with the adoptive family life.

Significant research literature has not been devoted to Buchi Emecheta's *The New Tribe* unlike her earlier published novels such as *Second Class Citizen* and *The Joys*

of Motherhood. Nevertheless, Ndéye Sanou LÔ explores Chester Arlington's quest for meaning in Emecheta's *The New Tribe*. The paper demonstrates the different phases in the hero's search for his biological roots and submits that "Chester Arlington's romantic quest for roots and past authenticity is that of a classical quester who is doomed to undergo a redemptive journey before attaining wisdom and illumination" (53). Onyebuchi James Ile and Solomon Osekere adopt Paul Gilroy's convivial and melancholia theory to investigate the diasporic conditions of Chester, the protagonist of the novel, and argue that Chester is trapped in a hybrid situation. The paper concludes that "if Chester… could not find "home" in Nigeria, he should be able to find it in England. Here, "home" and "belonging" are no longer necessarily where one comes from but where the one feels really secured and fulfilled even if the one has to constantly negotiate "belonging" (64). Arun Singh's paper is a critical analysis of the intricacies of finding a 'home' in a diasporic context in *The New Tribe*. Singh finds a disconnection between Chester's imagined home and the reality that confronts him in his search for his root in Nigeria. The paper concludes that Chester's "material experience insinuates that the Africa of his imagination no longer exists. On routing back to Liverpool, he finds that it is his home, which exists in the community of black people" (55).

This study adds to the body of research on Emecheta's *The New Tribe* by exploring adoptive parenting and its challenges**.** Not much has been done in this area of scholarship. The aim is to create awareness among prospective adoptive parents that adoption holds unique challenges and how to handle these challenges when they occur.

Adoption does not go without lifelong challenges in the lives of the adoptees. Roszia and Maxon identify seven core issues that confront the adopted children. They are: "Loss, rejection, shame and guilt, grief, identity, intimacy and mastery and control" (Child Welfare Information Gateway 2019, 1). Though these seven core issues are experienced by all the members within the adoption and permanency constellation namely the first/birth parents, the adoptive parents and the adoptees, this study will dwell on the effect of the core issues on the adoptees. The seven core issues are explained as follows:

Loss: the adoptees grapple with separation from their birth parents and the loss of their family tree: siblings and other family members. They may also struggle with

the loss of cultural, racial and ethnic connections and in some cases language of origin

Rejection: the adoptees struggle with the feeling of being of a little value to their birth parents. The fear of future rejection may also affect their relationship with the adoptive families.

Shame and guilt: the adopted individuals experience both shame and guilt as their understanding of what happened to them unfolds over time. Shame and guilt impact on their self-esteem and self-worth. Their feeling of **shame** of who they are may also result in the feeling of unworthiness. This feeling can also arise from societal stigmatisation. They may also experience guilt on behalf of their birth families for indulging in the act**.**

Grief: adoptees grief as their understanding of what happened to them unfolds in the course time. They grief over their fragmented or unknown family histories.

Identity: the adopted individuals usually grapple with questions relating to their origins and sense of belonging**.**

Intimacy: building and maintaining a healthy relationship with the adoptive parents can be quite challenging to the adoptees because of some of the core issues outlined above.

Mastering and Control: the adoptees' ability to manage the impact of the losses and attachment disruptions in their lives could be challenging**.**

This paper will adopt this framework with a little modification in the analysis of adoptive parenting and its challenges in Emecheta's *The New Tribe*.

Adoption in Emecheta's *The New Tribe*

Biological unviability is the motivating factor for adoption in the novel under study. Ginny and her husband, Reverend Arthur Arlington, went through medical examinations to investigate their childlessness. The result shows that "their blood group in both cases was RH negative, and they were advised not to have children.

This was a heavy blow for Ginny" (3). She could not come to terms with the fact that she would not be a mother. She cries for months praying to God to perform a miracle. Arthur prophetically tells his wife while consoling her that "without children, they would be in a better position to help others" (3). Shortly after this statement, an abandoned baby was brought to them by Julian, a newspaper vendor. He tells the story: "I was cycling past the phone boots in town and I heard it crying. I looked, inside and there was something in a Tesco bag. I looked; it was a baby. I didn't know what to do, so I brought it to you, Vicar" (4). Ginny overwhelmed, "took the baby without a word, wrapping it inside her dressing gown and backed away towards the kitchen. She unwraps the baby and announces to her husband, "It's a girl" (4- 5). She quickly warms milk and begins to feed the baby passionately. "Arthur was moved. He had known Ginny wanted a child, but he had never seen her as a mother. She was so natural with the baby, for the first time he understood what it meant to her" (5). Arthur and Ginny name the baby Julia, "after Julian, the paper boy who found her" (5). The Arlingtons officially became the adoptive parents of Julia upon completion of the procedures for adoption: "Ginny was overjoyed, and talked of nothing else to her friends and parishioners…At last she had been granted what she most desired...Julia brought joy into their lives which Arthur especially had never imagined…and almost forgotten she wasn't their natural child" (6).

In the course of time, the Arlingtons were invited to the Social Welfare Office and a letter was handed over to them. It is a request from a mother who wants them to adopt her 18 months "toddler, Chester, because she had just found out she was expecting twins, and the father was not ready to accept another man's child…" (7). As Ginny reads it, "tears welled in her eyes" (7). She says: "I don't mind…I always wanted a house full of children" (7). The social workers intimate to them that the child "is a black child" (7) and that his mother's name is Catherine Mba, a Nigerian living in England (7). "So once again, the Arlingtons found themselves unexpectedly parents" (7). Although adoption could generate excitement as evident from the foregoing, it is also associated with many challenges as discussed below.

Adoption-Related Loss, Grief and Abandonment

Nancy Verrier, a modern adoption theorist, argues that there is a profound connection between the child and the mother "during the nine months in utero …that the severing of that connection between the child and biological mother causes a primal or narcissistic wound which often manifests in a sense of loss (depression), basic mistrust (anxiety), emotional and/or behavioral problems and difficulties in relationships with significant others" (3). She adds:

> The bonding with the biological mother, which begins in utero, is part of a continuum which, if interrupted, has a profound effect on the child. It seems that the loss experienced by the infant is not only the loss of the mother, but a loss of part of the Self… the Self is not yet separate from that of the mother but is contained within her psychologically. (7)

Toeing this line of argument, David Drustrup posits that "… a postnatal separation from the biological mother imprints the infant with a sense of abandonment and loss" (2). He argues further that the loss of the "nine-month bond with the biological mother, her smell, feel, taste, and sound… can be indelibly imprinted on the child's unconscious mind as traumatic injury" (2). This confirms the concern of the social workers about Chester. They intimate to Arthur and Ginny that "he's very traumatized by being abandoned, and we feel he needs a home as fast as possible" (7). This 'primal wound' trails Chester from infancy to early adulthood: "Chester could not remember the exact moment when he knew he was adopted…It began as a glimmer and gradually became a solid awareness, established, but somehow imprisoned inside him. However, even at the age of four or five, he felt a sense of unbelonging" (9-10). Chester was chosen to act as the leader of the three wise Kings in a school Christmas drama. He performed so beautifully that his father, in his excitement, hailed him "Chester, King of the Orient!" (12). The following conversation took place on their way home from school that very day:

Chester: "What's the Orient, Mummy?"

Ginny: "It means the East, where the wise men came from."

Chester: "What's the East?"

Ginny: "Africa's in the East. Where your people came from" (12).

In bed that night, Chester thought about his mother's words, 'your people.' He ponders: "He thought the Arlingtons were his people. The sense of unbelonging

strengthened" (12). Evidently, Ginny's careless statement about Chester's descent betrays the feelings and values she attaches to his birthplace and history. Lô argues that Ginny's allusion to his descent makes "Chester feel disoriented. As a black boy brought up by a white couple, it is an exceedingly difficult adjustment for him to make, when his mother alludes to his status as an outsider" (36). Chester broods over this for a long time and asked his father on a fateful day: "who is my real mother?"(13). The Arlingtons were taken aback. After a pause, Arthur asked Chester: "why are you asking?" (13). He answered: "I just want to know who my parents are…at school they say I can't be your child because I'm black" (13). This resonates with Drustrup's submission as follows:

> The adopted infant's brain synapses began connecting according to a perception of the environment as unsafe, scary, and in need of vigilance… He grieves as his understanding of what happens to him unfolds even at that young age…While adoption is often the best solution available to a challenging problem, these words fail to address the emotional difficulties adoptees may experience, including conscious and unconscious feelings of loss, shame, and abandonment… (1)

Arthur says to Chester: "we were going to tell you soon, but since you brought it up, we might as well do it now" (13). However, in breaking the news, Arthur makes a tactless statement. He says: "some children are born to parents who don't want them" (14). Ginny cuts in: "or…some parents want their children, but can't afford to keep them" (14). Chester interjects: "but why can't they keep them?" (14). Telling the adoptee his adoption history is expedient especially where the adoption is an open one like that of Chester but the manner of approach is important. It is advisable to do it with tact. Adoptive parents should break the news in such a way as to "help the teenager frame a full picture of his or her birth parents. Hearing one side of the story (for example, the birth mother was not able to parent) provides an incomplete picture…" (Child Welfare Information Gateway 2020 10) and this informs Chester's question: "but why can't they keep them?" (14). Arthur finally intimates to Julia and Chester how they eventually became their adoptive children. "Chester was lost for words…he had been frightened of being told he was adopted…" (15). Obviously, Arthur and Ginny fail to handle the revelation of the adoption history to their children in a healthy way. They

approach this task as a one-time event. Meanwhile, Brodzinsky cautions as follows:

> Some adoptive parents approach this task as if it were a one-time event, pouring out too much information and then attempting to avoid further discussions unless pressed by their children. Parents need to recognize that providing information should be an ongoing process that unfolds over time, one that is geared toward their children's readiness— cognitively and emotionally… (204)

The consequences of their tactless approach are overwhelming. Chester's attitude towards his parents changes instantly. He declines a hug from Ginny**.** The effect is not less on Julia. She "had become more introverted. She had developed a trick of staring into empty space as if looking for something. And then she would come to herself, gradually focusing on the floor as she lowered her eyes…It was impossible to guess her thoughts" (16-17). Chester and Julia's change of attitude resonates with Brodzinsky's argument that "parents need to remember that when they share information about adoption, it can result in unanticipated thoughts and feelings in their children, some of which can be unsettling" (205). Their attitude also validates Verrier's assertion that "it is important to recognize that all adoptees by definition have suffered a traumatic loss at the beginning of their lives and that that experience has or will impact all their subsequent relationships. The pain is great, but healing is possible" (12). However, Arthur and Ginny fail to take practical steps towards healing the psychic wound of their children. They are not attuned to the traumatised estate of their children. Their indifference informs Chester's prayer much later in the novel: "God, please make me man enough to stand my any child I father" (68).

Adoption and Identity Formation

Identity crisis occurs when an adoptive child feels disoriented in the adoptive family because of his/her race or colour. This is the case with Chester. He says to Julia: "…you're white, like them. You're their child, but I'm different" (13). His classmates also taunt him saying that the Arlingtons are not his biological parents because of his colour. Not only that, Chester is the only black boy in St. Simon and he is being "made aware of the difference by subtle gestures…He had to try that much harder to be accepted…" (20). Evidently, Chester is having issues with his

identity because of his colour. This confirms Brodzinsky's contention that "adoption across racial lines adds another layer of complexity for adoptive identity development" (202). One of the ways to deal with this according to Gibbs is for parents to make practical efforts to help the adoptee appreciate his cultural and ethnic heritage so that he/she will be more positive in his/her cultural and ethnic identity (46). Ginny makes some efforts in this regard but on a faulty ground. She makes "a storybook based on an African folktale she had read" (8) and reads "this book to Chester every night until he came to know all the words and pictures by heart" (18). Consequently, Chester starts having a recurring dream about a compound in an African village which fits into Ginny's description of the setting in the storybook: "Chester started identifying this compound as his very own. He didn't doubt its existence, but felt sure it was somewhere waiting for him to claim it" (17). Ile and Osokere assert that Ginny's continual reading of this book to Chester engenders his quest for identity. It is also possible that deep in her unconscious feeling, Chester is still the 'other' (60).

The offshoot from this is that Chester begins to see his status as an adoptee as a profound loss that changed the trajectory of his life. He feels alienated from the family: "It came to him forcibly that he had to leave home. He needed to know who he really was, to find a frame he could fit himself into…He had no ancestors there through whom he could claim a bond with the place. He was only passing through" (39). This calls to mind Rampage et al.'s argument that "in adolescence and early adulthood … adoptees' greater cognitive and psychological capacity for identity development begets a need to ask, "Who am I and why was I adopted?" (qtd in Drustrup 2). It also resonates with Lô's position that "Chester's attempt to emancipate himself from that encapsulated white community – which he views through the eyes of both an insider and an outsider – not only throws light on his psychic wounds, but it also lays emphasis on the hero's pathetic quest for his own land" (34).

In one of his dreams, Chester saw himself as the only son of a king whose wives "had only given him daughters" (41). He becomes obsessed with the image of a king's son in consequence. He ruminates: "… was he not the son of a king? A son that was wanted, who would go back and claim his kingdom?" (55). Chester is resolved to go in search of his roots: "I'm going to find the city. It has to be

somewhere in Africa. I need to find this woman Catherine and her twins" (53). He begins to wonder where his biological father could be: "where was he? Somewhere in Lagos with three wives and ten children" (54). This corroborates Drustrup's submission that "some adoptees find it difficult to reconcile the fact that they are relinquished by their biological parents, two people who were supposed to love them …" (2). Chester eventually travelled to Nigeria moving from one palace to the other in search of the Oba, his imaginary father. The journey of course was futile because it was a product of pure fantasy. He rather took ill and was hospitalised in Lagos. He was flown back to England through the help of Esther, his senior colleague, in his place of work in Liverpool.

Julia also suffers from an identity crisis. She says to Chester: "at least you have a dream. I haven't even got that. I can't go and ask a Tesco bag or a phone booth who left a baby there, eighteen years ago" (54). Julia's statement gives credence to Verrier's assertion that "whether conscious or unconscious, that the original separation was the result of relinquishment affects the adoptee's sense of Self, self-esteem and self-worth" (3).

Adoption and Secure Attachment

Adoptive parents can cope with the challenges of adoptive family life if they develop secure attachment patterns with their adopted children. One way of achieving this is to spend quality time with them**.** Gibbs hints as follows:

> Once parents had met and, or, adopted their children the key thing that assisted good parent-child relations was time: lots of it, whether in play, or cuddling, or communication. Most of the parents took time off work, especially the women, or even gave up their jobs. The dads also spent their non-work time with the children wherever possible. Parents could not over emphasise the time needed to develop bonds with their children: as one dad put it 'hugs, kisses and holding hands … lots and lots of times but you can't do it too many times with these kids … they were craving it. (45)

Contrarily, Arthur and Ginny spend little or no time with their children to develop bonds with them. According to Julia, all Ginny "knows is church and arranging flowers and bring and buy sales and looking after dad" (64). As for Arthur, he is "forever making notes for his sermons ...Arthur continued to scribble as if his

whole life depended on it" (18). There is no display of affection in the Arlingtons' family. The home environment is too constraining to share intimacy or secrets. Chester intimates to us that "in the absence of his school friends, he had been smoking to fill the gabs in the day" (54). He had the urge to confess this bad habit to his parents initially but could not because their religion has "put a wedge between him and them. There were many things he couldn't discuss with them" (54). Undoubtedly, Arthur and Ginny fail to provide an open and supportive environment that will enhance secure attachment with their adoptees. Tin Leung Hei posits that "one of the potential problematic areas for adoptive children is their trust and attachment… Children who are securely-attached seek contact with their significant others when they are upset" (7). This void in the Arlingtons parenting style makes it difficult for Chester to confide in them. Rather, he sees in John Clinton, the owner of the chalets where he did summer job, "more of a father to him than his own dad" (66) because the atmosphere at the Chalets is more relaxed than that of his home. The old man often engages him in conversations.

This lack of trusting relationship in the Arlingtons' family also makes Julia feel disoriented. She intimates to Chester: "I'm not staying here" (54). Chester interjects: "that's a shame if you stay" (54). Chester and Julia begin to question their permanence in the family because their parents fail to reaffirm their place in the family; to reassure them that they are always there for them as their parents. This lack of attunement interferes with the development of secure attachment between them and their children. One of the offshoots from this is Julia's pregnancy. In her distress and confusion, Julia got involved in an illicit sex with Ray, a neighbour's son, which results into pregnancy. This calls to remind Drustrup's advice to parents:

> Talk openly about intimacy and sexuality with your teenager. Communicate your values on dating, sex, and relationships. Talk about what it takes to develop and maintain healthy relationships … Educate youth about abstinence, safe sex, and birth control. (5)

Ginny also fails in this regard. The only thing she could do upon hearing that her daughter is pregnant was to sponsor her escape from the vicarage without informing her husband. Julia intimates to Chester much later in the novel:

> …after I told her of my pregnancy, she gave me two thousand pounds and asked me not to tell dad. She contacted Uncle Robert in Manchester and asked him to refer me to a doctor. The abortion was performed a couple of days after my arrival at Uncle Robert's. (151-152)

It is a shame that Ginny, a Vicar's wife, could condescend to this level of indecency. One wonders what moral she has passed on to her daughter. Ginny's conduct gives credence to Hei's argument that "… the characteristics of the parents themselves are of primary importance because they do not only directly influence parenting, but also shape other factors that affect parenting" (57).

Chester also becomes addicted to smoking as an expression of his inner turmoil. "He and Ray had been smoking cigarettes secretly for the past two years…he knew he smelled of cigarettes…" (54). Yet Arthur and Ginny did not know what was happening right under their nose because their parenting style lacks guidance, supervision, and support. Again, they fail to clearly state their values regarding alcohol, drugs, and other risky behaviors, and emphasize healthy lifestyle choices (Child Welfare Information Gateway 2020 3).

Arthur and Ginny's lack of parental enthusiasm strengthens Chester's decision to escape from home:

> He crept out of the house. He didn't look back, and nobody challenged him. He knew then that the time for him to leave had really arrived. It made him feel like a visitor who had overstayed his welcome. The pain of this realization turned his feet to lead. He wanted to be stopped and asked where he was going. He wanted someone to care enough to beg him to come back…he looked back once at his own window. Hot tears rolled down his face and into his mouth. Tasting the saltiness, he said aloud to himself, 'God, please make me man enough to stand my any child I father. He looked back once more and promised himself never to return, not even to thank Ginny and Arthur. (68)

Chester's prayer portrays lack of commitment on Arthur's parenting style. Chester feels that his father is not man enough to stand by him and Julia in their difficult time. In a later development, Ginny advances some reasons for Arthur's

non-committal attitude towards parenting the children especially Chester in the following conversation:

Ginny: "I knew you were not really keen on my pressing for the adoption of the children."

Arthur: "At the beginning, yes, but I grew to love them. And I'll be hurt if Chester doesn't permit us to be part of his life. I think of him as a son."

Ginny: "But you never showed it, Arthur. You didn't allow him to know you cared."

Arthur: "Oh, Ginny, you were so full of him. You never gave me a chance. You remember when you used to spend hours reading to him from that African folk-tale you wrote and coloured for him especially? It was impossible to get between you. You shut me out completely" (76).

Arthur lacks the audacity to bridge this gab. Nevertheless, Ginny did not refute Arthur's allegation. She proudly says: "Chester loved that book. He ended up knowing the words by heart, even before he could read" (76). She is ignorant of the fact that this storybook is one of the things that threatens his permanence in the family. Ginny did not give Chester the true picture of his cultural background. A folktale is an unproven source of information to give to a child about his cultural heritage. It is this storybook he knows by heart that translates into his dreams which motivate his escape from St Simon in search of his biological roots. Ginny's approach does not align with Brodzinsky's suggestion:

> To feel worthy as human beings, children need to believe they came from worthwhile beginnings. This principle suggests that when their children are young and the adoption story is just beginning to be told, parents should avoid negative descriptions or derogatory comments about birth families; otherwise, there is a risk of undermining the children's self-esteem and identity. (205)

Singh affirms that "the desire for his roots is roused by his foster-mother, Ginny. Chester conjures up an imaginative vision of his African homeland, which has been transferred to his memory as Ginny's confabulation of Africa" (56**).**

Chester ruminates as he escapes from the Arlingtons' home: "at last he was facing the future. Something told him that as far as this part of England was concerned,

it now belonged to an irrevocable past. It was less real than the kingdom in his dream" (68). He finds his way to Mr Ugwu's house in Liverpool; a black family he met at John Clinton's Chalets in St. Simon. He got such a warm reception that he "fought away tears…Chester was unaccustomed to such a lively display of affection. The warmth of it made him feel shy…" (77). Mr. Ugwu's deep involvement in his children's home work also baffles Chester. He ruminates: "there had been no pressure on him to work hard at school either. He had done his tests simply because he was at school. That extra parental enthusiasm Mr Ugwu showed towards his children during summer holidays had been lacking in his upbringing." (80). Again, this does not speak well of Arthur and Ginny's parenting style.

Embittered by the failure of his parents to look for him after he escaped from the vicarage, Chester vows never to go back to them. His conviction is that "either they didn't care enough to trouble themselves to look for me, or they were just glad not to have the embarrassment of my presence any longer" (105). However, Chester's allegation is wrong because his parents did look for him. Julia informs Esther that they have "been looking for him for years…My father was so distressed when he became ill and couldn't find him. He got the impression that Chester was running away from him…" (142). Julia also informs Chester when they eventually met that their dad made great efforts in looking for him. Chester could not believe his ears. He queries, "Dad?" (150). She answers:

> Yes. He felt really bad about you leaving like that. He used to say you needed a father and he was all you had. When he got sick, it got even worse. He so much wanted to see you before he died. Mum held back the memorial service so you could be there. She wants you to read or give a eulogy, whichever you prefer. (150)

This is too much for Chester to take in. He says: "I'm still in shock about dad… I feel bad that I never made it up with dad. He probably died thinking I had rejected him" (150). Julia also informs Chester that Arthur forgave him before he passed on and that "he left greater part of his estate to you… you're inheriting 50 thousand pounds" (150). Chester's doubt about his dad's love and care for him should not have arisen if Arthur had built a trusting relationship with his son.

Conclusion

Parenting comes with a lot of responsibility and accountability. Beyond caring for the child's physical needs, there is also the need to help him/her develop into a matured person emotionally and intellectually in his/her journey towards adulthood. This does not however go without challenges especially with adoptive parenting. Verrier asserts that "all adopted children begin their lives having already felt the pain and, perhaps, terror of separation from the first mother. They experience the environment as hostile and their bond to the mother as transitory" (1). This means that adoptive parents cannot wish away the need to deal with adoption-related issues such as the adoptee's feelings of loss, grief and abandonment, ambivalence over identity and insecure attachments as this paper has demonstrated. The paper also highlights some strategies adoptive parents can employ to address these challenges. A willingness on the part of the adoptive parents to learn these issues and respond to them with the right approach when they occur will make parents and their adoptees have a happy family life. Gibbs' submission is to the point:

> Good adoptive parents should be able to: understand and respond to a child's needs; show respect and love; touch and hold appropriately; be consistent in providing structure and boundaries for a child; spend quality time with a child in communication and play; ask for help when help is needed; and make good use of supports. (47)

The Arlingtons' parenting style falls short of these credentials. Arthur and Ginny are not well informed about the functioning of the adoptive family probably because they did not undergo pre-adoption training before their transition into adoptive parenthood. The consequences of this missing link are enormous as this study has demonstrated. The paper therefore recommends that prospective adoptive parents should undergo pre-adoption training so that they would know what to expect in this journey and employ strategies that will foster a healthy development of the adoptee.

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