

# Third Party Reproduction Vs. Adoption- there's a big difference.

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Them Before Us is categorically against third-party reproduction. We are also whole-hearted supporters of adoption. Both adoption and donor-conception involve loss for children. In both situations a child is living with at least one non-biological parent. Donor conceived children as well as adopted children are more likely to struggle with diminished outcomes compared to their peers raised by their biological parents. Yet these two situations are different.

## **Adoption- mends a wound. Third-party reproduction- inflicts a wound.**

Adoption is born of brokenness. Whether placed with their adoptive parents at the hospital or after living in an institution for years, an adoptive child must lose their first family before finding their "forever family" inflicting a primal wound. Adoption should take place only when every option of keeping the child with her birth family- the best case scenario except in circumstances of abuse, neglect or abandonment- has been exhausted. And even then, there has been a recent shift toward open adoption because social workers recognize that kids benefit from connecting with their first family whenever possible. Anyone who has undergone the mandated adoption training will tell you that their adopted child will likely go through a process of grieving, adjustment, and may experience feelings of rejection and abandonment. Adoptive parents are *not responsible* for the child's wound, but are seeking to remedy the wound. *Adoption says, "Let me help."*

Donor-conception on the other hand, creates a wound. The adults intentionally produce children with the express intent of raising them without one (or both) biological parent. While adoption has moved away from anonymity, there has been an explosion of anonymous gamete donation in the fertility industry. Children created through sperm and egg donation also mourn the loss of their missing parent. But the difference is that the adults who are raising them are *responsible* for their loss. *Third-party reproduction says "Let me have."*

### **Adoption- the child is the client. Third-party reproduction- the adult is the client.**

The guiding premise in adoption is that children deserve parents. Therefore the state or placement agency is primarily concerned with finding parents for every child, rather than finding a child for every adult. While there are cases of adoptive parents or agencies overlooking the "best interest" of the child for the sake of the *wants* of adults and/or financial gain, state, federal and international regulations have been developed over decades to curtail those scenarios. When adoption is done right, not every adult has a child placed with them, but every child is placed with loving parents. Because granting guardianship of a child to a biological stranger is risky, adoptive parents rightly undergo screenings, background checks, physical/mental evaluations, and training prior to placement. They also receive post- adoption supervision. *In adoption, the adults sacrifice for the child.*

With third-party reproduction, the adults are the clients. The fertility industry operates under the mistaken notion that adults have a right to a child, even if the adults are single or in a non-procreative relationship, have a criminal record or are physically/mentally unfit to be parents. The fertility industry, which operates virtually regulation-free, exists to deliver a child-product to *any* adult. The cost to the child is the loss of half/all of her biological identity, a relationship with one or both natural parents, sometimes a dual-gender parental influence that kids crave, and perhaps a safe home. *In third-party reproduction, the child sacrifices for the adult.*

### **Adoption- adult supports child. Third-party reproduction- child supports adult.**

In both adoption and third-party reproduction children need to be supported through their loss. In an adoptive home, the child is more free to grieve the loss of their biological parents because they know that *their adoptive parents are not responsible for their missing parents.*

Here are some responses from adoptive parents when their child says "I miss my birth mom:"

"One of mine has said he wishes he could have stayed in China. Any time this comes up, we validate and tell him, "I know! I'm really sorry you didn't get to grow up with your birth family. Of course you miss them! At the same time, I'm SO glad you're our son. We can't wait to go back to visit China together and hopefully visit your foster mom."

"My oldest (11) has said periodically that she misses her birth mom for as long as she could speak it... Our response has always been in line with... of course you do...because you were designed to be with them. Both of them... So your ache is real and legitimate. ♡ We'll do this together and we'll never leave you. But we know your ache is real baby...but..you don't have to "live there" because we have a great God that put us in your life as the Divine Plan B."

"I think what [my adoptive son] thinks about and what affects him most deeply is the knowledge that his birth father left his birth mother once she became pregnant, causing her to have to make an adoption plan. He expresses a lot of anger about that, which we've always validated as appropriate.....I mean, who wants to be abandoned?"

These adopted children receive support through their grief because the adults raising them didn't choose for them to lose their birth parents. They are simply trying to mend the wound.

In contrast, donor-conceived children are living with the adult *responsible for the loss* of one/both parents. As a result, they may feel pressured to support their parents feelings, even if it means suppressing their own.

Because of this parent/child dynamic, simply voicing their loss may be interpreted as blame and that makes it difficult for the child to be honest:

- The psychological risk to DC people is an unrecognised element because our existence is tied up with someone else's pain (the recipient). We risk rejection from our 'parent(s)' if we disagree with their decision. We grow up walking on eggshells, lest we hurt them. We grow up emotionally numb because

everyone tells us that we shouldn't feel something for our biological parent(s), grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, siblings, language, culture. In so many ways, we parent our parents.... We exist for someone else's happiness. That's a very heavy burden to bear. –Anonymous

- Growing up without a father sucks. I can't really have this conversation with my mom without hurting her. If my mom and I ever have a disagreement I have no one else to talk to. I feel so alone. I feel like I have missed out on all of the little things, like having your dad give you piggybacks or teaching me how to ride a bike or getting over protective when I show an interest in boys. I don't miss my donor personally, i mourn the loss of a childhood without a dad. <https://anonymousus.org/or-is-it-me-being-selfish/>
- No matter how kick-ass my mom is, I will think about the siblings with my same donor's blood rushing through their veins. No matter how kick-ass my mom is, I will still not have the courage to tell her that I found my biological father, like many other donor-conceived offspring, through nothing more than a few google searches. She can never know that I felt unhappy enough to the point where she (the one that paid thousands of dollars to bring me into this world) is not enough to satisfy me. <https://anonymousus.org/parent-thinks-donor-conceived-child-simplest-care/>
- "Why don't you just talk to your mom about it?" they ask. I shake with fear. How do you talk to your mom about how hurt you are when her effort, drive, and passion to have you brought into this world is the reason you can even speak? How do you sit someone down and essentially tell them that they are not enough of a "family" for you?... This is the moment I feel my entire body tense up as they utter the all too familiar and famous words: "You should be grateful that she wanted you here so badly that she went through this whole process and literally payed to ensure she could love a child." <https://anonymousus.org/why-i-stay-quiet/>

Adults are supposed to be understanding, accommodating and supportive. This is possible in adoption because the parent isn't responsible for their child's trauma, but is seeking to remedy it. In third-party reproduction, it's the child who must often be understanding, accommodating and supportive. Even though both situations involve child loss, one situation allows a child to grieve, process, and heal.

The impact of this dynamic- being raised by the adult responsible for the child's loss- is reflected in the massive study [My Daddy's Name is Donor](#) which compares outcomes between donor-conceived children, adopted children, and those raised by their biological parents.

- Nearly half of donor offspring (48 percent) compared to about one fifth of adopted adults (19 percent) agree, "When I see friends with their biological fathers and mothers, it makes me feel sad." Similarly, more than half of donor offspring (53 percent, compared to 29 percent of the adopted adults) agree, "It hurts when I hear other people talk about their genealogical background."
- Forty-three percent of donor offspring, compared to 15 percent of adopted persons and six percent of those raised by their biological parents, agree, "I feel confused about who is a member of my family and who is not."
- Almost half of donor offspring (47 percent) agree, "I worry that my mother might have lied to me about important matters when I was growing up." This compares with 27 percent of those who were adopted and 18 percent raised by their biological parents. Not only are the donor conceived more than two and a half times as likely as those raised by their biological parents to agree with this statement, they are about four times as likely to agree strongly. Similarly, 43 percent of donor offspring, compared to 22 percent and 15 percent, respectively, of those raised by adoptive or biological parents, agree that "I worry that my father might have lied to me about important matters when I was growing up." Compared to those raised by biological parents, the donor offspring are more than four times as likely to agree strongly.
- ...many donor offspring agree that "I don't feel that anyone really understands me." Twenty-five percent agree strongly, compared to 13 percent of adopted and nine percent of those raised by biological parents.

**Adoption is sometimes necessary. Third-party reproduction never is.**

In a perfect world, no child would need to be adopted. Ideally, every man and woman who participate in a baby-making activity (sex) would be ready and willing to commit their lives to one another and any child created through their union. That is and always will be the best-case scenario, because it's the only scenario where the child won't suffer loss due to their parent's choices.

But the evidence of this imperfect world is all around us, so we know that there are times when adoption is not only optional, but critical.

As an adoptive mom myself, I can honestly say that it would have been better if my son's birthparents had kept him; sparing him the trauma of separation from his mother at birth, months of institutionalization, and the identity questions that he will face as he grows in our home. But they didn't. So he gets the the next-best thing: a mom and dad who underwent background checks, training, supervision and who commit to raising him as if he had been born to them. We love our adopted son with everything that is in us. Our son is a gift to our family. He is brilliant, handsome, intuitive... and he never should have needed us.

A just society cares for orphans. It doesn't create them.

Both adoption and third-party reproduction involve life-long loss for children. However, *Them Before Us* supports adoption because it seeks to remedy brokenness by fulfilling a child's right to a mother and father. We oppose third-party reproduction because it inflicts brokenness by denying a child's right to their mother and father.

One requires that children sacrifice for adults while the other requires adults to sacrifice for children.

One supports children's rights, and one violates them.