



## Adopting Again: A Qualitative Study of the Second Transition to Parenthood in Adoptive Families

Reihonna L. Frost & Abbie E. Goldberg

To cite this article: Reihonna L. Frost & Abbie E. Goldberg (2020) Adopting Again: A Qualitative Study of the Second Transition to Parenthood in Adoptive Families, *Adoption Quarterly*, 23:2, 85-109, DOI: [10.1080/10926755.2019.1627450](https://doi.org/10.1080/10926755.2019.1627450)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/10926755.2019.1627450>



Published online: 20 Jun 2019.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 138



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)



## Adopting Again: A Qualitative Study of the Second Transition to Parenthood in Adoptive Families

Reihonna L. Frost and Abbie E. Goldberg

Department of Psychology, Clark University, 950 Main Street, Worcester, MA, USA

### ABSTRACT

The transition to second-time parenthood—i.e., becoming a parent to a second child—is a time of adjustment and change for the whole family. While research has demonstrated that family transitions can be uniquely challenging in the adoptive context, no known research has studied the transition to second parenthood in adoptive families. The current qualitative study explores the transition to second parenthood for heterosexual, lesbian, and gay adoptive parents. Participants were 60 individuals in 30 couples (i.e., 9 heterosexual couples, 10 lesbian couples, and 11 gay male couples) who had adopted their first child two to five years earlier and were in various stages of adopting a second child. Findings centered on parents' process of considering, preparing for, and then adopting a second child—with parents emphasizing the ways that the second adoption process was different from the first. Specifically, parents described more restrictions on the characteristics of child they would adopt, greater comfort with “holding out” for a child who fit their family, and feeling less stressed by the adoption process. Parents also explained how the unpredictable nature of adoption presented challenges to introducing a second child to the family. Implications for adoptive families and adoption professionals are discussed.

### ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 10 June 2018  
Revised 30 March 2019  
Accepted 31 May 2019

### KEYWORDS

Adoption; transition to parenthood; second parenthood; siblings

Although 4% of families in the United States are built through adoption, limited research has focused on the experience of adoptive parents (Kreider & Lofquist, 2010). Existing work focuses on a few main areas: the transition to adoptive parenthood for first-time parents (Goldberg, 2010; McKay, Ross, & Goldberg, 2010), adoptive parents' experiences with birth families (Grotevant, McRoy, Wrobel, & Ayers-Lopez, 2013), and adoptive parents' experiences with regard to racial socialization (Pinderhughes, Zhang, & Agerbak, 2015). What is missing from this body of work is an understanding of adoptive parents' experiences when welcoming additional children into their homes. This study focuses on one aspect of adopting again—the

transition to second-time adoptive parenthood. Specifically, this study explores how parents manage this transition and the unique challenges and opportunities that accompany it.

## **Parenting transitions**

### ***The transition to parenthood***

The transition to parenthood is a normative life transition that marks a period of major change for couples. Research with biological families shows that the transition to parenthood is a stressful life event that prompts changes in roles and responsibilities (Cowan & Cowan, 2000; Roy, Schumm, & Britt, 2014). Specifically, this transition increases household labor demands, presents new life stressors, requires individuals to adjust to their new roles as parents, and requires couples to change their roles within their relationships (Cowan & Cowan, 2000; Feeney, Hohaus, Noller, & Alexander, 2001). Studies with biological parents have generally found that the transition to parenthood leads to a decline in relationship satisfaction for partners (Belsky & Rovine, 1990; Lawrence, Rothman, Cobb, Rothman, & Bradbury 2008). The degree to which couple's expectations for parenthood match their actual experiences of parenthood (e.g., in terms of child temperament and the division of labor) has implications for personal and relational functioning, such that when expectations are violated, parents exhibit greater personal and relationship distress (Harwood, McLean, & Durkin, 2007; Kalmuss, Davidson, & Cushman, 1992).

### ***The transition to second parenthood***

Most parents eventually have more than one child. In fact, families in the United States have an average of 1.90 children in their household under the age of 18 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017). Thus, transitioning from being a family of three (two parents and one child) to a family of four (two parents with two children) is a normative experience—and yet surprisingly little research has focused on the transition to second parenthood in biological families (Volling, 2012). The little existing work has exclusively examined heterosexual parent families with biologically related children, with a focus on coparenting practices across the transition (Kuo, Volling, & Gonzalez, 2017; Szabó, Dubas, & Van Aken, 2012), the impact of a second child on marital satisfaction (Volling, Oh, Gonzalez, Kuo, & Yu, 2015), and how parents manage their firstborn child's response to having a sibling (Volling, 2012). No known work considers this transition for

same-sex parents or adoptive parents—a gap that is especially notable in that same-sex couples in the United States are at least four times more likely than heterosexual couples to adopt (Gates, 2013).

### ***Transition to adoptive parenthood***

While considerable research has explored the ways that biological parents navigate the transition to parenthood, little research has explored the experiences of couples transitioning to adoptive parenthood (Goldberg, 2010). Existing work indicates that becoming an adoptive parent can be additionally challenging due to a variety of factors, including that parents often adopt due to challenges conceiving; parent–child bonding may be complicated by children’s complex histories; and adoption timing can be unpredictable (Goldberg, 2010; Weir, 2003).

Becoming an adoptive parent also requires many decisions that are not required as part of the transition to biological parenthood (Goldberg, 2010). These decisions include deciding to adopt, choosing an adoption route, and choosing which adoption professionals to work with (Goldberg, Downing, & Moyer, 2012; Jennings, Mellish, Tasker, Lamb, & Golombok, 2014; Vandivere, Malm, & Radel, 2009). Parents must also decide on the types of children they will consider (e.g., in terms of children’s mental, physical, and psychological functioning, age, and race/ethnicity). Such decisions can be difficult—especially if parents feel pressured to consider children whose characteristics are outside of their preferences or to expand their preferences because they fear not being chosen (Tasker & Woods, 2016) or because they are regarded as less desirable prospective parents (e.g., because of their sexual orientation) by agencies and birth parents (Goldberg, 2009, 2012).

In addition to making these decisions, adoptive parents must also complete a set of tasks in order to be eligible to be placed with an adopted child (Goldberg, 2010). For example, prospective parents must open their homes for inspection, pass background checks, complete trainings, develop a profile to “advertise” themselves to birth parents, and evaluate potential matches with available children (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2015). Often, the children who are offered for adoption do not perfectly match parents’ identified preferences, requiring parents to decide whether to compromise their preferences or turn down a placement (Moyer & Goldberg, 2015). In a study of prospective adoptive parents, Tasker and Wood (2016) described how families struggled with a sometimes “desperate” desire to finish the adoption process and become parents. They found that waiting couples felt uncertain that the process would be

successful and were often willing to make compromises about the characteristics of the child they adopted, to end the waiting and bring about a child placement more quickly.

Like in biological families, most adoptive families eventually adopt more than one child (Berge, Green, Grotevant, & McRoy, 2006). Given the unpredictability of the adoption process and often sudden nature of child placements (Weir, 2003), decision making about, and adjustment to, the second transition to adoptive parenthood is likely complex; for example, parents must prepare themselves and their child for a child who could come at any time. Unknown is how parents' decision making regarding a second adopted child, and their process of anticipating and adjusting to a second child, is transformed by the fact that they have already adopted and thus are managing this transition in the context of an established family system. Understanding the experiences of second-time adoptive parenthood can help adoption professionals better tailor supports and services to meet the needs of families at different stages of the family-building process.

### ***Theoretical perspective***

The current study was guided by family systems theory (Cox & Paley, 2003), which focuses on the family as a system, such that the choices, decisions, and experiences of family members are inevitably impacted by other family members. This framework, then, suggests that the presence of a child in the home ultimately impacts the parents' decision-making process (e.g., regarding the characteristics of a second child) and the addition of a new family member will impact the roles of each member of the system. This study was also informed by ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1977; Darling, 2007), which recognizes that individuals are shaped by, and also shape, contexts at multiple intersecting levels. These levels include the microsystem (immediate systems including home, school), mesosystem (interactions between microsystem contexts), exosystem (social structures shaping environments including adoption and child welfare systems), and macrosystem (culture-shaping contexts at all levels including values about family and racial inequality). These frameworks informed our attention to how adoptive parents made decisions about whether and who to adopt a second time and how those decisions were shaped by and also shaped their immediate environment (e.g., birth family, school) and more distal environments (e.g., the specific adoption agency) and the larger social-cultural environment (e.g., current adoption policy, racial inequality).

## Research questions

The current study draws from interviews with adoptive parents, which were conducted around the time of their second adoption, to examine the following questions:

1. Why do parents decide to adopt again? In what ways are their motivations similar to and different from other types of family-building decisions?
2. How do parents decide who to adopt? In what way is their decision-making process influenced by parents' initial adoption experiences and characteristics of the first-adopted child?
3. How do adoptive parents adjust to their second child placement? What are the challenges and joys of the second transition to adoptive parenthood?

## Method

### Description of the sample

Data from 60 individuals in 30 couples (i.e., 10 lesbian couples, 9 heterosexual couples, and 11 gay male couples) were analyzed. This sample was taken from a larger longitudinal study that focused on the transition to adoptive parenthood (for details, see Goldberg, Downing, & Sauck, 2007). The following inclusion criteria were used to select the current sample from the larger study sample: (a) families had adopted or were actively working on adopting a second child at the time of the interview; (b) they eventually completed a second adoption during the course of the larger study; (c) they originally adopted a single child (not a sibling set); and (d) their second adoption, or planned adoption, was also of a single child. These criteria ensured that families were all in the same stage of transitioning from being a family of three (two parents and one child) to a family of four (two parents and two children). Lesbian, gay, and heterosexual couples varied in terms of the type of adoption that they pursued, biological relationships between the adopted children, and the age of the target child when the second adoption occurred (see Table 1 for adoption timing and demographic information about first and second child placement).

The sample of parents was largely Caucasian (93%,  $n = 56$ ); two participants identified as multiracial (3.3%), one as African American (1.7%), and one as Latino (1.7%). Parents reported an average annual family income of \$130,288 ( $Mdn = \$117,500$ ,  $SD = \$58,097$ ). In terms of education, 3 (5%) had a high school diploma; 1 (1.7%) had some college; 4 (6.7%) had an

**Table 1.** Demographic data and second adoption characteristics by family type.

	Lesbian couples ( <i>M</i> , <i>SD</i> , or % of <i>n</i> = 6)	Gay couples ( <i>M</i> , <i>SD</i> , or % of <i>n</i> = 7)	Heterosexual couples ( <i>M</i> , <i>SD</i> , or % of <i>n</i> = 4)	Total sample ( <i>M</i> , <i>SD</i> , or % of <i>N</i> = 17)
First child age at second adoption (in months)	30.83 (13.24)	43.71 (49.16)	52.50 (15.37)	41.23 (32.87)
Second child age at adoption (in months)	1.67 (2.40)	17.00 (35.09)	40.50 (47.20)	16.94 (33.37)
Two children biologically related (i.e., same birth parent(s))	33.33% (2)	28.57% (2)	25.00% (1)	29.41% (5)
Adoption type				
Both foster-to-adopt	2	2	2	35.3% (6)
Both private domestic	4	5	0	53.0% (9)
Both international	0	0	2	11.8% (2)
Different adoption types	0	0	0	0% (0)
Child race				
Both White children	1	2	0	17.6% (3)
Both children of color, same race	2	2	2	35.3% (6)
Both children of color, different race	1	0	1	11.8% (2)
First child White, second child of color	1	2	1	23.5% (4)
First child of color, second child White	1	1	0	11.8% (2)

*Note.* Within the larger longitudinal study, this study utilized the available interview that occurred closest to a participant's second adoption. Therefore, not all participants had been placed with a second child at the time of the interview. This denotes the number of couples who had been placed with a second child at the time of the interview used in this study.

associate's degree; 25 (41.7%) had a bachelor's degree; 19 (31.7%) had a master's degree; and 8 (13.3%) had a PhD/JD/MD.

A total of 43.3% of couples ( $n = 13$ ) were actively pursuing a second adoption or were waiting for a child placement,<sup>1</sup> and 56.7% of couples ( $n = 17$ ) had already been placed with their second child at the time of the interview. These placements had typically occurred in the last year ( $Mdn = 7$  months,  $SD = 10.01$  months); four couples had adopted their second child more than a year prior to the interview. Among those who were placed with a second child, at the time of the second child's adoption, the average age of their first child was 41.24 months ( $Mdn = 28.0$ ,  $SD = 32.87$ ), and the average age of their second child was 16.94 months ( $Mdn = 1.0$ ,  $SD = 33.37$ ). In all but one case, participants adopted a second child who was younger than their first child.

### **Recruitment and procedure**

Participants from the larger study were determined to be eligible for inclusion in the current study based on having adopted a second child over the course of the larger longitudinal study of the transition to adoptive parenthood (see Goldberg et al., 2007). Relevant interview data were extracted and analyzed from the time point closest to their second adoption. For most parents ( $n = 50$ ), this interview occurred two years after they adopted their first child. For a small number of parents ( $n = 10$ ), this interview

<sup>1</sup>All of these waiting couples eventually completed a second adoption.

occurred five years after their first adoption, because they had not yet started to adopted again at the two-year post-adoption interview.

### **Open-ended interview questions**

Each partner was interviewed separately by phone using a semi-structured interview format that lasted one to two hours. Interviews were transcribed and de-identified, and pseudonyms were assigned. Interviews were analyzed in their entirety in order to understand their second adoption within the larger family context and related topics (e.g., work–family balance, mental health). Within the longer interview, we paid particular attention to the questions regarding adopting a second child, including the following: (1) Have you adopted another child? What made you decide to adopt again? (2) How satisfied are you with the openness of your second child’s adoption? (3) Tell me about your decision to adopt a child of the same/different race? (4) How has a second child changed your family? (5) How has your first child responded to having a sibling? Analyzing full interview transcripts facilitated our consideration of the diverse and dynamic ways that second adoption is influenced by and influences the larger family system. Attending equally to the different interview components also aided us in avoiding following investigator biases and *a priori* assumptions about the impacts of second adoption (Levitt, Motulsky, Wertz, Morrow, & Ponterotto, 2017).

### **Data analysis**

Interviews were analyzed using a thematic analysis of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006), which involved looking for patterns in the data with regard to parents’ descriptions of their decision-making processes regarding whether they should adopt again and who to choose, with a focus on the ways that family-level and environmental factors influenced such decisions. The two authors, who are diverse in terms of their sexual orientations, parenting statuses, and connections to adoption, discussed our social positioning and the possible influences of our biases throughout the coding and development of this article in order to improve fidelity (Levitt, Motulsky, Wertz, Morrow & Ponterotto, 2017). The first author coded all transcripts; the second author read six interview transcripts in their entirety and all coded content at multiple stages during the coding process. The second author also provided input that helped to refine and clarify coding throughout the coding process. The iterative process of coding and dialog facilitated ongoing “checks” on each author’s perspectives and possible biases.



Codes were initially developed through a close reading of 12 transcripts (i.e., transcripts of both partners in two couples from each couple type), paying particular attention to concepts present in relevant literatures (i.e., the transition to second parenthood, the transition to adoptive parenthood). Initial themes were broad and general, delineating various stages of the process of the transition to parenthood (e.g., deciding to adopt again, waiting for placement). As we examined more interviews, these initial themes were refined, expanded, and collapsed until the coding scheme was clear and defined (Charmaz, 2006). For example, we first identified a broad theme of parents discussing experiences of *waiting for placements* and then, through close readings of those *waiting* narratives, we identified patterns of similarities that allowed us to group responses together. From there, sub-themes were developed to describe these groupings of experiences in ways that encompassed the meanings (e.g., trusting the process, stressful to start over). Throughout coding, we attended to and drew on concepts from family systems (Cox & Paley, 2003) and ecological systems (Bronfenbrenner, 1977) frameworks. This led us to focus on the family as a system and to consider the impact of multiple interrelated systems (e.g., the mesosystem, the exosystem) that influence families, especially in relation to the second adoption experience.

Using the developed coding scheme, all ( $n = 60$ ) transcripts were reread three times and the data were organized into this framework. Each rereading served a specific purpose: first to ensure the completeness of the coding and to check that all instances were properly represented, second to ensure that each narrative's broader context was represented with enough information to allow for thick, rich description (Braun & Clarke, 2006), while the third reading checked that the salient narratives of each interview were fully represented by the coding. Once coding was finalized, we wrote memos summarizing the characteristics of each family and highlighting the ways that each family's experiences mapped onto the scheme, specifically attending to how such experiences varied in relation to participants' identities and their first child's characteristics. This memo-writing process allowed us to identify how patterns of responses varied meaningfully by particular family situations (e.g., types of adoption, adoption timing, family composition) as we grouped and read memos according to these characteristics and read them for similarities and differences.

## Results

Distinct stages in the process of adopting a second child emerged from parents' narratives. These stages represented different parts of the decision-making and preparation process. Some of these aligned with experiences of

parents transitioning to first adoptive parenthood (Goldberg, 2010), some with the experiences of biological parents transitioning to second parenthood (Kuo et al., 2017; Szabó, Dubas, & Van Aken, 2012), and some were distinct to this particular group: namely, parents transitioning to second-time adoptive parenthood. These stages are *motivation to adopt again*, *navigating decision making in second adoption*, *waiting for placement*, and *experiences of second child placement*. (See Table 2 for the numbers of individuals and couples endorsing each theme, by family type.)

### Motivation to adopt again

Parents' stories about adopting a second child often began with how they made the decision to adopt a second time. Some parents decided to initiate a second adoption based on their beliefs about family structure and the value of family relationships. Others arrived at second adoption because of opportunities that arose which matched with their family goals or values, such as when their child's biological sibling became available for adoption and they, in turn, prioritized these connections. In this way, parents revealed how they considered the needs of individual family members (e.g., the first child would learn from a sibling) and the goals of their family system (e.g., providing support for their children over time) when deciding to adopt again.

**Motivations related to family structure and relationships.** Parents' descriptions of their motivations for adopting a second time centered on beliefs about family structures and sibling relationships, which seemed to reflect dominant cultural notions about the normative size of a family, the roles of siblings in families, and the importance of different roles within the family system. In this way, family decision making around the needs of the family was influenced by cultural norms (Bubolz & Sontag, 1993). Some parents (five individuals) explained that they were pursuing a second adoption because they or their partners *wanted a larger family* ("... you know, we've always planned on having two kids"). Christopher, a heterosexual father, explained, "I think [my wife] really wants to have another little one, she wants to have another little baby. I think she feels that the family is just not quite complete." Such themes echo the second transition to parenthood literature, wherein biological parents who have a second child often report that they planned on two from the start (Knox & Wilson, 1978).

Similarly, families often described their reasons for adopting again in relation to what they thought was best for their first child. Specifically, 12 parents (10 individuals, 1 couple) described *wanting their first child to have a sibling*. Some referenced their beliefs about the importance of siblings for

**Table 2.** Counts of participants' responses by family type.

	Lesbians Individuals (couples)	Gay men Individuals (couples)	Heterosexuals Individuals (couples)	Totals Individuals (couples)	Totals Participants
Motivation to adopt again					
Motivations related to family structure and relationships					
Wanted larger family	2	1	1M <sup>1</sup> , 1F	5	5
Want child to have a sibling	3 (1)	4	3M	10 (1)	12
Valuing biological and familial connections	1	1 (1)	1M	3 (1)	5
Navigating decision making					
Choosing adoption path and agency	3	1 (1)	1M	5 (1)	7
Choosing second child characteristics					
Race	2 (1)	2	2M	6 (1)	8
Birth family contact	4	1 (1)	1M, 2F	8 (1)	10
Age	2	0	1F	3	3
Gender	2	0	1F	3	3
Process of waiting for a placement					
Trusting the process	0	2	0 (1)	2 (1)	4
Parental identity established	0	1 (1)	1M	2 (1)	4
Overwhelmed to start again	3 (0)	0	1F	4 (0)	4
Experiences of second placement					
Common to biological second parenthood					
Two children are more work	1 (1)	1 (2)	3M	5 (3)	11
Easier the second time	1	2	1M, 1F	5	5
Adoption-specific					
Birth family contact	3 (2)	0 (1)	0	3 (3)	9
Racial differences	1 (2)	2	0	3 (2)	7

<sup>1</sup>M = mother, F = father.

children's development generally, or in relation to their specific child's temperament. Laura, a heterosexual mother, explained why she thought her first daughter would benefit from a sibling by saying: "As a single kid, she is a very persistent child so sometimes it goes over the line of getting her way ... I think having a sibling is going to teach her ... that she's not the center of the universe."

Some of these parents focused on their general beliefs about the benefits of growing up with a sibling, including having a playmate and confidant, less parental pressure on one child, and having siblings after one's parents were no longer living. Joseph, a gay father, explained, "I would like to have another child, but almost more importantly, I would like Aiden to have a sibling—so that when we're old and gone, he'll have someone as part of his family."

Some of these parents drew on their own experiences with or without siblings in deciding to adopt again. Both women in one lesbian couple explained that they both valued their own siblings very much and "couldn't imagine our lives without them 'cause we get along with them so well"; in turn, they wanted the same experiences for their own children. Similarly, two women (one lesbian, one heterosexual) asserted that their own negative experiences of being only children motivated them to adopt more than one child. Kim, a lesbian mother, explained, "I was an only child and I hated it,

so I've always felt like if I was going to have a kid, I wanted to have more than one." This finding echoes research with biological families showing that parents cite wanting their first child to have a sibling as a major motivation for having a second child (Townes, Beach, Campbell, & Wood, 1980) and also suggests that parents may base these beliefs about siblings on their own family experiences.

### ***Valuing of biological and familial connections***

Sometimes, the impetus to adopt a second child came from outside the family system, rather from within. Five parents (three individuals, one couple) who adopted via public or private domestic adoption reported being contacted about the possibility of adopting a biological sibling of their first adopted child. Because of the unexpected and unpredictable nature of these situations, parents were sometimes uncertain of what to do. While most of these parents had planned to expand their families at some point, they noted that the timing was not always ideal (e.g., because of financial difficulties; because they were not yet "ready"). Still, parents took these opportunities seriously amid a belief in the importance of biological ties and considered changing their plans to accommodate such placements. In this way, parents' decision making was influenced by the broader environment (e.g., adoption agencies' emphasis on placing siblings together) as well as, even more significantly, their own subjective beliefs and values (e.g., belief in the importance of biological ties). Jackie, a lesbian mother who adopted from foster care, explained:

... they didn't even know that we were interested in having another, it was just such a happenstance situation. They just called us randomly and said, "We think you might have this woman's other child, we're wondering if you would do foster care?" ... We didn't think—you know, "Of course we'll be there; just tell us when and where."

Erika, a heterosexual mother who adopted a son named Rob from foster care, explained how she felt a responsibility to keep biological family members together:

... and that's really a lot of what the driving force was, was that ten years from now, I can't look at Rob in the eyes and say, "yeah, we had a chance to adopt your sister but we didn't." So any excuse we could possibly come up with was gonna sound really shallow.

Families considering this type of sibling placement consistently invoked beliefs that (a) biological relatedness made the children "family" and (b) keeping biological family members together was the "right thing to do" (e.g., for their child, for society, morally).

### *Navigating decision making in second adoption*

In preparing to adopt a second time, parents reported managing many of the same pre-adoption tasks that Goldberg (2010) described in relation to the first transition to adoptive parenthood (e.g., choosing an adoption path, deciding on openness to various child characteristics), but parents articulated ways in which these adoption tasks were different in their second adoptions. Namely, their decision making was informed by (a) prior experience and knowledge of the adoption process and (b) considerations regarding their first child, in relation to the types of child characteristics they preferred or were open to considering.

#### *Choosing adoption paths and agencies*

**“The path of least resistance is doing what we did before.”** All of the parents who were placed with children at the time that they were interviewed had ultimately pursued the same type of adoption and used the same agency for their second child that they used with their first child. Seven participants (five individuals, one couple) explained these decisions in terms of previous positive experiences or a desire to avoid deciding again. Heather, a lesbian mother, explained: “At this point it kind of has the least the resistance if we do it the way before because [laughs], because [this adoption agency and adoption type] worked well before and we’re happy with it and it would be kind of complicated to try to do something else.” In this way, parents preparing for a second adoption used what they learned the first time around to avoid some of the stressful, time-consuming pre-adoption tasks.

Two families who had not yet been placed with a child chose to switch adoption methods or agencies for their second adoption, which they related to poor experiences or practical considerations (e.g., finances, wait times). Samantha, a lesbian mother who adopted privately, asserted that she and her wife decided to switch private agencies due to several factors:

We just didn’t want to go with our same agency that we went with before because they have such a large pool. And we didn’t want to give them a big fat deposit [and] you had to be a first timer for them to show your profile first. So it’s like well, why would I give you like five thousand dollars if you’re not even going to show my profile ...

Samantha mentions several common considerations weighed by first-time adopters (e.g., cost, wait time, likelihood of being chosen by a birth mother; Downing, Richardson, Kinkler, & Goldberg, 2009; Goldberg, et al., 2007). But, she also highlights a concern specific to second-time adopters: the fact that she would be “deprioritized” as a second-timer by her former agency.

*Choosing second child characteristics in relation to first child*

**“I think it would be good for [our] child to have another similar child in our family.”** When parents are faced with deciding what characteristics they will accept for a second placement, they considered their first-adopted child’s characteristics (age, race, gender, birth family contact) and how the characteristics of a second child would influence their first child and family system.

*Child race*

When evaluating what adoptive placements to consider, parents often considered the race of their first child as well as the question of whether it was important for their children to be the same race. Eight participants (six individuals, one couple) explicitly stated that this was important to them. In particular, parents who adopted transracially (i.e., their first child was a different race than both parents) valued adopting a child that shared their child’s race. They described wanting to provide their children with family members who looked like them or had shared experiences—and some were hesitant to adopt a second child who was markedly more or less similar in appearance to them (i.e., the adoptive parents) because, “we didn’t want to have another child that everybody thinks one’s adopted and the other one’s not.” Alex, a White lesbian mother, explained why it was important to her and her wife, Michelle, that their second daughter, Jessica, was African American like their first daughter, Leslie:

Jessica is African American. Just to be really clear, since Leslie is African American we wanted to adopt another African American. ... That was our—actually that was our only requirement for the second child. We felt that it would have been, you know, something that’s going to be really valuable for them. To be able to see each other. ... For them to share that, that heritage.

Likewise, her wife Michelle explained:

We were offered a situation where the birth mom didn’t know whether the—she was White, but she didn’t know whether the birth father was white or black, and we said no, because it’s important for us to have Leslie have a sibling, true sibling.

Both Alex and Michelle, then, highlight their belief in the importance of family members having shared physical characteristics—and thus experiences—as a way of supporting identity development. Of importance, some families recognized that being the same race did not guarantee that the children would look alike, but emphasized the value of having two children who have shared experience based on being racial or ethnic minorities. Heather, a lesbian mother, said:

We don't know that they'll look alike—Grace is very light skinned. So you know, we might have a darker skinned child. But we think they'll have shared experiences of being African American or biracial being raised by [W]hite parents. So that would be good.

At the same time, some families chose not to limit their second adoption to children of a specific race. Amy, a White lesbian mother, explained that she and her wife were open to adopting an African American child for their first placement because African American children were less likely to be adopted. They were eventually placed with a White child. In turn, they debated whether it was appropriate to continue to be open to any race of child for a second adoption:

We said all along that's what we were hoping to do—the agency we use is mostly African American, but then we got Sophie ... then it's like, having two that don't look like us but at least they'll look the same would have been preferable, right? So once we had Sophie we were like, wow if we get an African American kid it's going to be harder.

### ***Level of birth family contact***

As with first adoptions, parents seeking to adopt a second time must decide what level and type of birth family contact they are open to or prefer. When adopting a second time, however, parents also consider how a particular contact arrangement will fit with the arrangement they have for their first child. Parents reflected on the ways that they had learned to “do” adoption as a family and were cautious about introducing a different birth family dynamic than the one they had. A total of 10 participants (8 individuals, 1 couple) reported specifically considering the possible implications of (un)equal birth family contact when considering a second adoption. Parents described debating this issue both when they were identifying preferences and when they were offered a potential child placement and had to decide what type of contact arrangement they would accept or seek to negotiate. In some cases, parents described hesitation surrounding a potential placement because the level of birth family contact would be different than what they had for their first child—yet they eventually pursued these placements amidst some reservations. Paul, a gay father, shared how he hesitated when considering a placement that would have less birth family contact than their first child:

So we struggled with having a child that will have no contact with birth parents ... how will that impact Ben? Will he feel like he missed out? ... He has to reconcile that, you know, he doesn't know his birth parents and Mike does and will he resent them for that?

Considering unequal birth family contact was particularly complicated for families who were adopting a biological sibling of their first child and asked to accept a different contact arrangement. For example, two families who adopted from foster care were asked to consider an open adoption with the



second child when that was not an option with the first child (e.g., because the non-shared birth parent of half-siblings was interested in contact; because birth family members were only requesting contact with one of the children). Becca, a lesbian mother, reflected on this new arrangement:

So that will change kind of the face of our family as an adoptive family, I guess. It will change a lot of things and I'm not sure—I've still been thinking a lot about how we're supposed to have an open adoption with her but not with Brayden. How we're supposed to figure that all out. But I guess we'll deal with it when we get there.

### Age

Because children can be adopted at a variety of ages, parents can consider the age of their first-adopted child when considering how a second child's age might impact their child and family. Of interest, only two parents mentioned this as a factor that they considered when deciding to adopt a second time. Michelle, a lesbian mother, identified a preference for her children to be close in age: "a better chance that they'll be friends." Kim, another lesbian mother, specified that she would like to adopt an infant the second time because she had adopted a non-infant child the first time and wanted the experience of raising a baby.

That age was not identified as a more salient factor in parents' decision making is interesting, because all but one of the families placed with a second child at the time of this study had adopted a second child who was younger than their first-adopted child. It is possible that parents had a preference for a younger second child—but this was simply unstated.

### Gender

Some parents also considered child gender in their decision making (e.g., they "thought about" their preferences for or against a particular gender); however, none of them indicated that this characteristic was particularly salient or central. Three parents explicitly stated that they would not limit their adoption options by gender. David, a heterosexual father, noted that their adoption agency did not allow for gender preferences: "The way [agency] does it is that we need to be open to either boy or girl, which we are ..." Heather explained that she and her wife did not indicate a gender preference for their second child because they could not decide what they wanted:

In terms of gender, I think we're just going to leave it up to chance again. I think basically the same reason as we did before, which is that I'd kind of like another girl and she wants a boy [laughs], so we'll just see what happens.

That no parents in this study described gender as a particularly salient characteristic is important in light of prior work showing that around half



of first-time adoptive parents had a child gender preference (Goldberg, 2009). Also, research on biological parents indicates that many exhibit a preference for “one of each” (i.e., a boy and a girl)—although this tendency may be declining (Hank, 2007). It seems that in second adoptions, as with first adoptions (Goldberg, 2009), gender is considered less important than other child characteristics like race and birth family contact.

### ***The process of waiting for a placement***

Waiting for a (first) adoptive placement has been found to be stressful and filled with uncertainty (Tasker & Wood, 2016). Yet in the current study, those families who were waiting for a second adoptive placement described distinct differences in their experience. First, many reported *greater trust in the adoption process* (i.e., because they were successful the first time). Second, during their second “time in the adoption pool,” they were *more relaxed because they already had a child*. As such, their ability to be parents was not threatened by the outcome of the adoption process. In these ways, the period of waiting for a placement represented a time of lesser stress for many adoptive families—although this was not always the case for parents adopting via foster care; indeed, four parents adopting via public adoption for the second time reported feeling *overwhelmed to be starting again* and reported that the process was stressful.

### ***Trusting the process***

Four parents awaiting a second adoptive placement described ways in which this experience was different from their first waiting period. James, a gay father, stated: “We’ve learned so much from before that we’re in a different place now as compared to back then”—a common sentiment among participants. In this way, familiarity with the process modified the waiting experience for them and allowed them to have more confidence in the process, in contrast to “first timers”’ experience of feeling that the adoption process took away their control of their own parenting process (Tasker & Wood, 2016). Christina, a heterosexual mother, explained this difference in the waiting experience by saying,

When it happens—I know it’s going to happen—I totally know now that it is going to happen and it probably won’t take too long, but when it does it’s going to be our kid and we’ve got plenty keeping us busy in the meantime.

### ***Parental identity established***

Four parents (two individuals, one couple) explained that they were waiting for a second child but that the outcome did not feel crucial, because their

parenthood identity was already established. James, a gay father, said, “It’s been wonderful, and that’s why we’re trying again. And if that works, it’s fine, and if not, there’s not the pressure we had the first time around with the second.” Stephanie, a heterosexual mother, articulated:

It does feel different because I feel more calm about the whole thing. And also because we already have a child and it’s not like this idea of “Am I ever gonna be a parent?” So, it doesn’t feel as fraught as it did the first time. It just feels more like “Yeah this would be a really great thing for us to do for our family.” ... I feel like it will work out one way or the other and I don’t feel as anxious about it at all.

This difference in urgency that prospective second-time parents described illustrates how, for first-time adopters, the anxiety associated with adoption combined with the desire to be a parent to create unique form of stress—and one that is not as acutely felt for second-timers.

### ***Experiences of second-child placement***

#### ***Overall workload***

As would be expected from literature on the transition to second biological parenthood (Kuo et al., 2017; Szabo et al., 2012), parents in this study described challenges related to coparenting and overall adjustment upon adopting a second child. Eleven parents (five individuals, three couples) described that having a second child was more work than having one child and required them to make significant adjustments to how they worked together, including establishing new ways of balancing tasks. Stephanie, a heterosexual mother, explained, “We’re gonna have to re-figure how we do everything. It’s a lot easier with two parents and one child. You can really trade off and get rest.”

Of interest, five participants reported that they found their transition to second adoptive parenthood to be much smoother than expected. As second-time parents they had expected more difficulty and were surprised when their expectations were positively violated. Bill, a gay father who adopted older children via foster care, attributed the ease of the second adoption to him and his partner being more experienced at managing attachment difficulties and behavioral challenges:

Eric’s adjustment was just the easiest thing, I mean we were shocked ... I think part of it was that we had some experience so that when things started to come up, we knew how to handle them. We didn’t have to work ourselves out of a hole the way we did with Tim.

Of note, parents endorsing an easier-than-expected transition were mostly parents who adopted non-infants in their second adoption, which is often associated with more adjustment difficulties (Howard, Smith, & Ryan, 2004; Julian, 2013; Sharma, McGue, & Benson, 1996). It may be that

parents' negative expectations around second parenthood and non-infant adoption combined to make them have lower expectations than were warranted.

### *Adoption-specific challenges when adopting a second time*

Families also discussed managing challenges in their transition to second parenthood that were unique to an adoptive context—most notably, integrating children with very different experiences into their family system, as when children had *unequal birth family contact* or *different racialized experiences*.

Nine parents (three individuals, three couples) reported that their two children had very different levels of birth family contact and discussed their current strategies for managing this imbalance and their concerns about the differences might affect their children in the future. Of these parents, some endorsed a strategy of modifying their children's birth family contact in order to minimize difficulties, while other parents focused on helping their children to understand the differences in contact without changing their arrangements.

Specifically, three parents described how they modified or decreased their efforts to initiate birth family contact because of concerns about the impact on the child who did not have contact. Bill, a gay father, waited to initiate contact with the birth siblings of his second-adopted son, Tim, because Eric, their first son, had lost contact with his birth siblings:

The thing is that Eric, we feel, sees Tim as his brother and Eric is protective. We do not know how Eric would react if Tim established a relationship with his birth brother when, in fact, Eric's birth siblings now have moved and he can't have a close one with them. So those are kind of some questions that we've gotta look into and ... everything is going great, we hate to throw something into the works here.

In contrast, three other families did not plan to modify their children's contact with available birth families, but contemplated the possible impact that unequal contact would have on their children and family system. Paul, a gay father, explained his concerns for his second son, Mike, who did not have contact with his birth family, amid the reality that his first son, Ben, did have regular birth family contact:

We struggled with having a child that will have no contact with birth parents, being raised in a house where Ben will have contact with his birth grandmother. ... How will that impact Mike? Will he feel like he missed out? He has to reconcile that.

Seven parents (three individuals, two couples) reported addressing their children's racial differences as part of supporting their children through their transition to siblinghood. They described how they explained racial differences to their children and addressed children's questions.

Samantha, a lesbian mother, sought to prepare her first-adopted daughter, who was White, for her African American adoptive brother to join the family by buying a “brown skinned baby doll for her.” Other parents described reading books about racial diversity with both of their different-race children and discussing this in relation to their family. John, a gay father, described: “So we’ll talk about ‘Your hair is getting really dark and Daddy’s hair is blonde and differences in the color of Xavier’s skin.’ So we’ll talk about differences and how we’re all in the same family.” In this way, parents managed to combine a second-parenthood task—preparing first children for siblinghood—with an adoption-specific task of racial socialization.

Parents also described how their children were treated differently because of differences in race or appearance and how they adapted to these new experiences as a family. Because nearly all of these parents were White, they reported that their children of color were more readily “outed” as adopted. Daniel, a gay father, explained: “We’ve had several more people than [we had] in Mike’s case come up and say how lucky Ben is, because I guess—apparently we rescued Ben from some terrible thing.” Parents also recognized the ways that racism would continue to influence their children differently and reflected on how they will likely parent each child differently. Explained Lisa, a lesbian mother of a biracial child (Austin) and an African American child (Eli), “We’ll probably teach Eli about race and culture more than Austin ... I don’t feel Austin thinks he is as different and as outside as Eli is going to feel.”

## Discussion

This study represents the first investigation of adoptive parents’ transition to second adoptive parenthood. As most adoptive families eventually adopt a second time (Berge et al., 2006; U.S. Census Bureau, 2017), understanding the experiences of these families can help professionals (e.g., adoption social workers, pediatricians) to better support their needs. Although these second-time adoptive parents reported experiences that in certain ways echoed those of second-time biological parents and first-time adoptive parents, they also described unique experiences at the intersection of adoptive parenthood and second-time parenthood.

Our first research question concerned parents’ motivations to adopt a second time and how those motivations might differ from their first adoption. We found that, like many biological parents (Stewart, 1990), adoptive parents reported adopting again to achieve a particular family size that they had “always imagined” or to provide a sibling for their first child. These desires reflect both their own personal preferences as well as

the influence of larger cultural norms about what constitutes a “real” family and what a “good” family should provide. Some parents were prompted to consider adopting again when a biological sibling of their first-adopted child became available—and parents’ own values and needs intersected with these external forces to shape their decision making. Parents often endorsed the belief that biological family ties were important, demonstrating that this value persists even in families that are built through adoption. Parents’ emphasis on their beliefs around family demonstrate the ways that the macrosystem (e.g., cultural beliefs around family) impact family building decisions at the microsystemic level. This finding suggests that adoption professionals should consider discussing long-term family building plans with prospective adopters. Families who “plan on two” children may be more open to considering a sibling group placement in their first adoptions—a priority in public adoptions that can often be hard to accomplish (Waid, 2014).

Our second research question considered how second-time adopters navigated the adoption process and how their first adoption influenced their choices and decision making. Similar to parents preparing for a first adoption (Goldberg, 2010), second-time adopters reported navigating many decisions about the adoption process and who to ultimately adopt. They described several ways that these decisions were easier the second time, including that they were able to use prior experiences and research to make informed decisions; they felt confident about the process and less pressured to consider less desirable choices; and they were comfortable making choices based on what was best for their child and family. These differences are notable inasmuch as the first transition to adoptive parenthood is recognized as a highly stressful period (Tasker & Wood, 2016). However, this decreased level of stress was not endorsed by any parents who were adopting from foster care or by any lesbian parents. In fact, four parents who were adopting publicly reported feeling overwhelmed to be starting again, of whom three were lesbian mothers. This is not surprising in that adoption from foster care involves a more complicated set of legal processes and a longer period of uncertainty and waiting than other types of adoption (Goldberg, Downing et al., 2012). In addition, lesbian parents are likely to have fewer economic resources than other couple types and have been found to be more likely to adopt through foster care or adopt children with special needs (Gates, Badgett, Macomber, & Chambers, 2007; Goldberg, Moyer, Kinkler, & Richardson, 2012). Taken together, it seems that parents feel more prepared for their second adoptions but that this impact is influenced by the mesosystem (e.g., parents’ interactions with systems) and the exosystem (e.g., the operations of the child welfare and legal system).

Parents also explained ways their adoption decisions were complicated by the need to consider how each decision and its possible outcome would impact their first-adopted child. In these ways, parents demonstrated an understanding of how their family operated as a system, with attention to how changes would impact both the individual members of their family and how they interacted as a unit (Cox & Paley, 2003). Strikingly, little research has considered how the characteristics of a second-adopted child impact a first-adopted child (Berge et al., 2006), requiring parents to make decisions about sibling racial differences, variable openness arrangements, and other adoption characteristics without guidance. Berge and colleagues (2006) found that families raising children with different openness arrangements tend to navigate this difference successfully by having both children visit with the “open” birth family. Knowledge of this successful strategy might have allowed parents to navigate the decision-making process surrounding potentially different contact arrangements more easily.

Our final research question asked how adoptive parents experienced the adjustment to parenting two children and what was unique in the adoptive context. As is common in the transition to second biological parenthood (Kuo et al., 2017), adoptive parents often reported that caring for two children significantly increased their workload and that they had to adjust their parenting practices to accommodate the new demands. Still, some parents reported finding the transition to second parenthood easier than expected. These parents were often those who had adopted non-infant children—often more challenging adoptions (Howard et al., 2004; Julian, 2013; Sharma et al., 1996)—and they attributed their success to having more experience addressing the specific needs of their adopted children.

Parents also described the challenges of navigating adoption-specific parenting tasks (e.g., racial socialization, managing birth family contact) when their two children did not share the same characteristics. As adoption introduces many more opportunities for difference between siblings, there is a clear need for post-adoption support services that address the challenges of families integrating the needs of children with different background, experiences, or opportunities. Further, while therapy programs exist for siblings managing developmental or behavioral differences (e.g., Gnaulati, 2002) and there are a few programs for supporting sibling relationships in foster care (e.g., McBeath et al., 2014), there are no known programs to support adopted siblings in the many ways that they may differ. There were some notable differences in reports of navigating adoption-specific challenges by adoptive context and family type. No heterosexual parents described navigating these challenges post-placement and all but one of these families had adopted through private domestic adoption. It is important to note that fewer heterosexual parents had been placed with

their second children at the time of the interview compared to other couple types, and this smaller number may account for the difference. In addition, half of those couples had adopted internationally (and from the same country each time), which functionally limits the possibility of having ongoing birth family contact with either child and minimizes the likelihood of racial differences between siblings. Future research is needed on how families navigate differences and how to properly support adopted siblings, including possible ways to adapt these types of sibling-focused interventions to meet the needs of siblings who diverge in terms of race, contact agreements, and so on.

## Limitations

There are several limitations to this study. First, the timing of interviews was not centered around the second adoption, leading to variability in the time between second placements and interviews. Second, due to the cross-sectional nature of this study, unknown is how parents' decision-making processes shift or change throughout the adoption process or how those decisions impact parents' experiences post-placement. Third, because all participants in this study eventually completed a second adoption, the experiences of parents who discontinue their efforts to adopt a second time are not represented. Future work can expand on this study by following parents across this transition to second adoptive parenthood (e.g., before and after placements), attending to factors that contribute to completion or abandonment of a second adoption and focusing on specific changes in parenting practices across the transition, how adoption decisions impact outcomes, and how children adapt to and understand the differences between siblings. Finally, the sample lacks racial and ethnic diversity among parents, which limits our ability to understand how parents of color consider the racial and ethnic identity of potential adoptees.

## Conclusions

Despite these limitations, this study contributes to our understanding of the transition to second parenthood in an adoptive context. Making adoption decisions within the context of a family clearly changes the way that parents experience the adoption process. Parents often reported that they were motivated to adopt a second child because they believed that it would benefit their first-adopted child and, as such, their choices regarding child characteristics were informed by their beliefs about what would benefit this child. Further, parents explained that navigating the adoption process was less stressful the second time, underscoring the unique anxieties and



concerns facing first-time adopters. Of importance, parents of children with dissimilar characteristics were aware of the need to negotiate these differences as a family. To better support second-time adoptive parents, future work should address how raising children with different adoption arrangements, racial and ethnic backgrounds, and birth family contact impacts children and families and should aim to identify ways to navigate these differences.

## References

- Belsky, J., & Rovine, M. (1990). Patterns of marital change across the transition to parenthood: Pregnancy to three years postpartum. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 52(1), 5–19. doi:[10.2307/352833](https://doi.org/10.2307/352833)
- Berge, J. M., Green, K. M., Grotevant, H. D., & McRoy, R. G. (2006). Adolescent sibling narratives regarding contact in adoption. *Adoption Quarterly*, 9(2–3), 81–103. doi:[10.1300/J145v09n02\\_05](https://doi.org/10.1300/J145v09n02_05)
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101. doi:[10.1191/1478088706qp0630a](https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp0630a)
- Bronfenbrenner, U. (1977). Toward an experimental ecology of human development. *American Psychologist*, 32(7), 513–531. doi:[10.1037/0003-066X.32.7.513](https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.32.7.513)
- Bubolz, M. M., & Sontag, M. S. (1993). Human ecology theory. In P. O. Boss, W. J. Doherty, R. LaRossa, W. R. Schumm, & S. K. Steinmetz (Eds.), *Sourcebook of family theories and methods: A contextual approach* (pp. 419–448). New York: Plenum Press.
- Charmaz, K. (2006). *Constructing grounded theory: A practical guide through qualitative analysis*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Child Welfare Information Gateway. (2015). *Adoption options: Where do I start?* Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Children's Bureau.
- Cowan, C., & Cowan, P. A. (2000). *When partners become parents: The big life change for couples*. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum Publishers.
- Cox, M. J., & Paley, B. (2003). Understanding families as systems. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 12(5), 193–196. doi:[10.1111/1467-8721.01259](https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8721.01259)
- Darling, N. (2007). Ecological systems theory: The person in the center of the circles. *Research in Human Development*, 4(3–4), 203–217. doi:[10.1080/15427600701663023](https://doi.org/10.1080/15427600701663023)
- Downing, J. B., Richardson, H. B., Kinkler, L. A., & Goldberg, A. E. (2009). Making the decision: Factors influencing gay men's choice of an adoption path. *Adoption Quarterly*, 12(3–4), 247–271. doi:[10.1080/10926750903313310](https://doi.org/10.1080/10926750903313310)
- Feeney, J., Hohaus, L., Noller, P., & Alexander, R. P. (2001). *Becoming parents: Exploring the bonds between mothers, fathers, and their infants*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Gates, G., Badgett, L. M. V., Macomber, J. E., & Chambers, K. (2007). *Adoption and foster care by gay and lesbian parents in the United States*. Washington, DC: The Urban Institute.
- Gates, G. J. (2013). LGBT parenting in the United States. *The Williams Institute*. Retrieved from <http://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/LGBT-Parenting.pdf>
- Gnaulati, E. (2002). Extending the uses of sibling therapy with children and adolescents. *Psychotherapy: Theory, Research, Practice, Training*, 39(1), 76–87. doi:[10.1037/0033-3204.39.1.76](https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-3204.39.1.76)



- Goldberg, A. E. (2009). Heterosexual, lesbian, and gay preadoptive couples' preferences about child gender. *Sex Roles*, 61(1–2), 55–71. doi:[10.1007/s11199-009-9598-4](https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-009-9598-4)
- Goldberg, A. E. (2010). The transition to adoptive parenthood. In *Handbook of stressful transitions across the lifespan* (pp. 165–184). New York: Springer.
- Goldberg, A. E. (2012). *Gay dads: Transitions to adoptive fatherhood*. New York: New York University Press.
- Goldberg, A. E., Downing, J. B., & Moyer, A. M. (2012). Why parenthood, and why now? Gay men's motivations for pursuing parenthood. *Family Relations*, 61(1), 157–174.
- Goldberg, A. E., Downing, J. B., & Sauck, C. C. (2007). Choices, challenges, and tensions: Perspectives of prospective lesbian adoptive parents. *Adoption Quarterly*, 10(2), 33–63. doi:[10.1300/J145v10n02\\_02](https://doi.org/10.1300/J145v10n02_02)
- Goldberg, A. E., Moyer, A. M., Kinkler, L. A., & Richardson, H. B. (2012). “When you're sitting on the fence, hope's the hardest part”: Challenges and experiences of heterosexual and same-sex couples adopting through the child welfare system. *Adoption Quarterly*, 15(4), 288–315. doi:[10.1080/10926755.2012.731032](https://doi.org/10.1080/10926755.2012.731032)
- Grotevant, H. D., McRoy, R. G., Wrobel, G. M., & Ayers-Lopez, S. (2013). Contact between adoptive and birth families: Perspectives from the Minnesota Texas Adoption Research Project. *Child Development Perspectives*, 7(3), 193–198. doi:[10.1111/cdep.12039](https://doi.org/10.1111/cdep.12039)
- Hank, K. (2007). Parental gender preferences and reproductive behaviour: A review of the recent literature. *Journal of Biosocial Science*, 39(5), 759–767. doi:[10.1017/S0021932006001787](https://doi.org/10.1017/S0021932006001787)
- Harwood, K., McLean, N., & Durkin, K. (2007). First-time mothers' expectations of parenthood: What happens when optimistic expectations are not matched by later experiences? *Developmental Psychology*, 43(1), 1–12.
- Howard, J., Smith, S. L., & Ryan, S. (2004). A comparative study of child welfare adoptions with other types of adopted children and birth children. *Adoption Quarterly*, 7(3), 1–30. doi:[10.1300/J145v07n03\\_01](https://doi.org/10.1300/J145v07n03_01)
- Jennings, S., Mellish, L., Tasker, F., Lamb, M., & Golombok, S. (2014). Why adoption? Gay, lesbian, and heterosexual adoptive parents' reproductive experiences and reasons for adoption. *Adoption Quarterly*, 17(3), 205–226. doi:[10.1080/10926755.2014.891549](https://doi.org/10.1080/10926755.2014.891549)
- Julian, M. M. (2013). Age at adoption from institutional care as a window into the lasting effects of early experiences. *Clinical Child and Family Psychology Review*, 16(2), 101–145. doi:[10.1007/s10567-013-0130-6](https://doi.org/10.1007/s10567-013-0130-6)
- Kalmuss, D., Davidson, A., & Cushman, L. (1992). Parenting expectations, experiences, and adjustment to parenthood: A test of the violated expectations framework. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 54(3), 516–526.
- Knox, D., & Wilson, K. (1978). The differences between having one and two children. *Family Coordinator*, 27(1), 23–25. doi:[10.2307/582722](https://doi.org/10.2307/582722)
- Kreider, R. M., & Lofquist, D. A. (2010). *Adopted children and stepchildren: 2010, Current population reports*, P20– 572. U.S. Census Bureau. Washington, DC. 2014.
- Kuo, P. X., Volling, B. L., & Gonzalez, R. (2017). His, hers, or theirs? Coparenting after the birth of a second child. *Journal of Family Psychology : Jfp : Journal of the Division of Family Psychology of the American Psychological Association (Division 43)*, 31(6), 710–720. doi:[10.1037/fam0000321](https://doi.org/10.1037/fam0000321)
- Lawrence, E., Rothman, A. D., Cobb, R. J., Rothman, M. T., & Bradbury, T. N. (2008). Marital satisfaction across the transition to parenthood. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 22(1), 41–50. doi:[10.1037/0893-3200.22.1.41](https://doi.org/10.1037/0893-3200.22.1.41)
- Levitt, H. M., Motulsky, S. L., Wertz, F. J., Morrow, S. L., & Ponterotto, J. G. (2017). Recommendations for designing and reviewing qualitative research in Psychology:

- Promoting methodological integrity. *Qualitative Psychology*, 4(1), 2–22. doi:[10.1037/qup0000082](https://doi.org/10.1037/qup0000082)
- McBeath, B., Kothari, B. H., Blakeslee, J., Lamson-Siu, E., Bank, L., Linares, L. O., ... Shlonsky, A. (2014). Intervening to improve outcomes for siblings in foster care: Conceptual, substantive, and methodological dimensions of a prevention science framework. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 39, 1–10. doi:[10.1016/j.childyouth.2013.12.004](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2013.12.004)
- McKay, K., Ross, L. E., & Goldberg, A. E. (2010). Adaptation to parenthood during the post-adoption period: A review of the literature. *Adoption Quarterly*, 13(2), 125–144. doi:[10.1080/10926755.2010.481040](https://doi.org/10.1080/10926755.2010.481040)
- Moyer, A. M., Goldberg, A. E. (2015). ‘We were not planning on this, but ...’: Adoptive parents’ reactions and adaptations to unmet expectations. *Child & Family Social Work*, 22, 12–21. doi:[10.1111/cfs.12219](https://doi.org/10.1111/cfs.12219)
- Pinderhughes, E. E., Zhang, X., & Agerbak, S. (2015). “American” or “multiethnic”? Family ethnic identity among transracial adoptive families, ethnic-racial socialization, and children’s self-perception. *New Directions for Child and Adolescent Development*, 2015(150), 5–18. doi:[10.1002/cad.20118](https://doi.org/10.1002/cad.20118)
- Roy, R. N., Schumm, W. R., & Britt, S. L. (2014). *Transition to parenthood*. New York: Springer.
- Sharma, A. R., McGue, M. K., & Benson, P. L. (1996). The emotional and behavioral adjustment of United States adopted adolescents: Part II. Age at adoption. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 18(1–2), 101–114. doi:[10.1016/0190-7409\(95\)00056-9](https://doi.org/10.1016/0190-7409(95)00056-9)
- Stewart, R. B. (1990). *The second child: Family transition and adjustment*. Newbury Park, CA: SAGE.
- Szabó, N., Dubas, J. S., & Van Aken, M. A. G. (2012). And baby makes four: The stability of coparenting and the effects of child temperament after the arrival of a second child. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 26(4), 554–564. doi:[10.1037/a0028805](https://doi.org/10.1037/a0028805)
- Tasker, F., & Wood, S. (2016). The transition into adoptive parenthood: Adoption as a process of continued unsafe uncertainty when family scripts collide. *Clinical Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 21(4), 520–535. doi:[10.1177/1359104516638911](https://doi.org/10.1177/1359104516638911)
- Townes, B. D., Beach, L. R., Campbell, F. L., & Wood, R. L. (1980). Family building: A social psychological study of fertility decisions. *Population and Environment*, 3(3–4), 210–220. doi:[10.1007/BF01255339](https://doi.org/10.1007/BF01255339)
- U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey. (2017). Annual Social and Economic Supplement.
- Vandivere, S., Malm, K., & Radel, L. (2009). *Adoption USA: A chartbook based on the 2007 national survey of adoptive parents*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation.
- Volling, B. L. (2012). Family transitions following the birth of a sibling: An empirical review of changes in the firstborn’s adjustment. *Psychological Bulletin*, 138(3), 497–528. doi:[10.1037/a0026921](https://doi.org/10.1037/a0026921)
- Volling, B. L., Oh, W., Gonzalez, R., Kuo, P. X., & Yu, T. (2015). Patterns of marital relationship change across the transition from one child to two. *Couple and Family Psychology: Research and Practice*, 4(3), 177–197. doi:[10.1037/cfp0000046](https://doi.org/10.1037/cfp0000046)
- Waid, J. (2014). Sibling foster care, placement stability, and well-being: A theoretical and conceptual framework. *Journal of Family Social Work*, 17(3), 283–297. doi:[10.1080/10522158.2014.885474](https://doi.org/10.1080/10522158.2014.885474)
- Weir, K. N. (2003). Adoptive family “leap-frogging” patterns. *Adoption Quarterly*, 7(1), 27–41. doi:[10.1300/J145v07n01\\_03](https://doi.org/10.1300/J145v07n01_03)