



# Adopting Again

A Qualitative Study of Lesbian and Gay Adoptive Parents Who Transition to Adoptive Parenthood for a Second Time

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NCFR 2017

# LG Parents and Adoption

- ▶ Adoption is a common way of building a family for same-sex couples
- ▶ 13% of same-sex couples with children have adopted
  - ▶ Only 3% of different-sex couples with children have adopted
- ▶ Same-sex couples are more than 4x as likely to adopt as different-sex couples
- ▶ Accounting for an estimated 16,000 same-sex couples and 22,000 adopted children in the US.

# Parenting Transitions

- ▶ Transition to Parenthood (Partners → Parents)
  - ▶ a time of significant change for couples
  - ▶ adjust their roles within their relationships
  - ▶ adapt to new life stressors (Cowan & Cowan, 2000)
- ▶ Transition to Second Parenthood (1 child → 2 children)
  - ▶ a period of adjustment for the whole family
  - ▶ Changes in co-parenting (Kuo, Volling & Gonzales, 2017)
  - ▶ can result in intimate relationship challenges (Volling et al., 2015)



# Transitions in Adoptive Parenting

- ▶ Process:
  - ▶ Be Trained
  - ▶ Be Evaluated and Approved
  - ▶ Be Chosen (by worker or birth parent)
  - ▶ Choose
  - ▶ Placement
  - ▶ Finalization
  - ▶ Birth family contact



# Transitions in Adoptive Parenting

## Less independence

- Home-study
- Birthparents
- Social Workers

## Less Certainty

- Will we get picked?
- How long will it take?
- What if BM changes her mind?
- Placement changes?

## More decisions

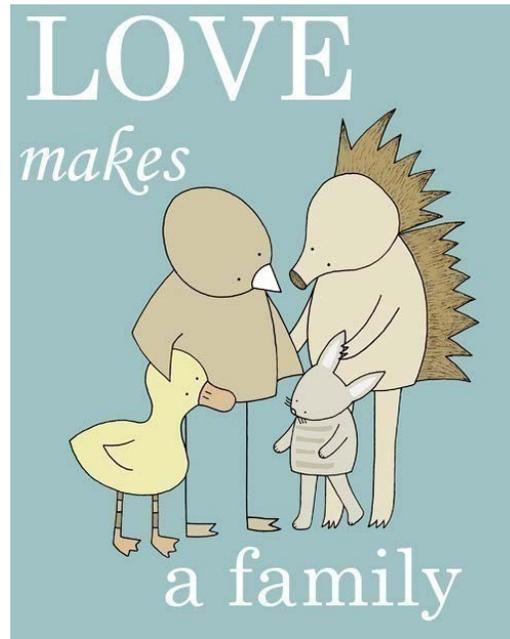
- Gender
- Age
- Race
- Special Needs

# Second Adoption

- ▶ 1<sup>st</sup> transition to parenthood can be complicated in an adoptive context
- ▶ 2<sup>nd</sup> transition to parenthood has unique challenges
- ▶ Adoptive families often adopt more than one child (Berge, Green, Grotevant & McRoy, 2006)
- ▶ 2<sup>nd</sup> transition to adoptive parenthood--unstudied

# Current study

- ▶ Experiences of adoptive parents in the process of adopting a second child (in process, or after placement)
  - ▶ Decisions to adopt a second time
  - ▶ Navigating the adoption process as a family



# Method—Participants

- ▶ Subset of participants from larger longitudinal study of the transition to adoptive parenthood
- ▶ 44 individuals in 22 couples
  - ▶ Lesbian= 22 (11 pairs)
  - ▶ Gay= 22 (11 pairs)
- ▶ Interviews
  - ▶ Taken from two possible time points
    - ▶ 2 years after first adoption (19 couples)
    - ▶ 5 years after first adoption (3 couples)
  - ▶ At time of interview, 14 families had 2<sup>nd</sup> child, 8 in process of adopting again

# Method—Data Analysis

- ▶ Interviews from both partners were analyzed separately
  - ▶ Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006)
- ▶ Life Course Theory (Elder, 1994, 1998)
- ▶ Family Systems Theory (Cox & Paley, 2003 )

# Results

- Within parents' narratives about adopting a second child, distinct stages in the process emerged.
- These stages are:
  - Deciding to adopt again
  - Waiting
  - Transition to family of four



# Results—Deciding to Adopt Again

- ▶ Should we adopt?

- ▶ Valuing sibling relationships

- ▶ Beliefs about siblings

- ▶ Rob (gay father)--“it makes me feel good that Katie will grow up with another sibling. I didn't want her to be an only child.”

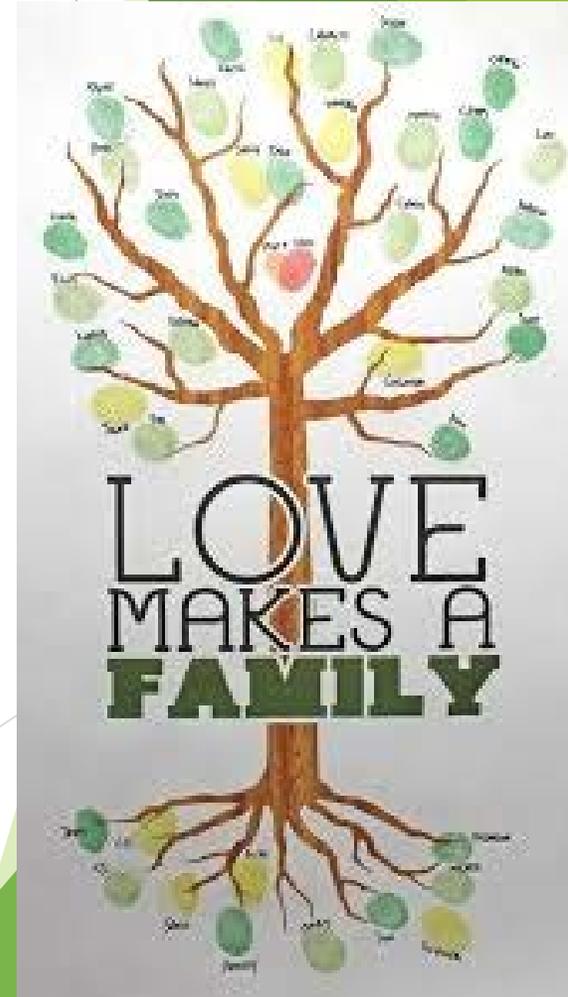
- ▶ Personal experience with siblings

- ▶ Jan (lesbian mother)-- “Well both Sue and I have siblings and couldn't imagine our lives without them cause we get along with them so well. Same for Alex. And you know we've always planned on having two kids, so.”



# Results—Deciding to Adopt Again

- ▶ Should we adopt?
  - ▶ Valuing biological family connections
    - ▶ Families offered a biological sibling of their first child
      - ▶ Suzanne (lesbian mother)-- “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,” and [partner] was like “Yeah let’s take him”. We didn’t think - you know of course we’ll be there just tell us when and where.”
      - ▶ Jeff (gay father)—“I don’t want to say we didn’t have a choice but it was just a “duh” situation for us.”



# Results—Deciding to Adopt Again

- ▶ WHO should we adopt?

- ▶ Race

- ▶ Trish (lesbian mother)— “...we think they’ll have shared experiences of being African American or biracial being raised by white parents. So that would be good.”



# Results—Deciding to Adopt Again

- ▶ Who should we adopt?

- ▶ Birth family contact

- ▶ Matt (gay father)--“...we struggled with having a child that will have no contact with birth parents. Kind of being raised in a house where [child] will have contact with some—he definitely has contact with his birth grandmother—she’s here all the time...So there was a little hesitation just with, you know, how will that impact [second child]? Will he feel like he missed out?”



# Results—Waiting for Placement

- ▶ Trust the process
- ▶ Parent-identity established
  - ▶ Tom (gay father)--“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.”



# Results—Transition to family of four

- ▶ Influences on relationships

- ▶ Influences on couple/coparents

- ▶ Beth(lesbian mother)--“Previously with just one child that meant that there were two of us focused on the same thing you know, we were doing the same stuff because there was two of us. OK, well now it’s like one of us is on one kid and one of us is on the other. So it’s very, very hard to be the same - like to be in a unit.”



# Conclusions

- ▶ Parent's family beliefs influence family building decisions
  - ▶ Siblings
  - ▶ Biological family
- ▶ Pre-adoption tasks can be different, and experienced differently
  - ▶ Choices based on what is best for first child
  - ▶ Less stressed by the process
- ▶ Amount of work and differing needs split parent's attention



# Future Directions

- ▶ LG Coparenting in Second Parenthood
- ▶ Transition to Adoptive Siblinghood
- ▶ Sibling Group Adoption

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