



### Introduction

- Infertile, heterosexual couples comprise the largest portion of adoptive parents
- Research into experience of adoption after infertility treatment has focused on 'couple', or female partner's perspective
- Adoptive Father's understanding of adoption unexplored

### Methods

Demographic Information	
Number of Participants	16 men
Age	27 to 64 years
Cultural Background	Caucasian
Adoption Status	3 awaiting matches 1 awaiting placement 12 completed (<1 - 20+ years)
Adoption Type	8 Domestic, 5 International, 3 Both 6 Same-race, 5 Transracial, 2 Both
Social Location	All Mid-High SES Rural and Urban Communities 3 Canadian Provinces

- In depth, individual, semi-structured interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed
- Narrative analysis was conducted

### Sample Questions

- How did you decide to pursue adoption?
- How did others react?
- What do you think will be (or is) the best part of fatherhood?

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### Findings

#### The Same (Counter-Narrative)

- Fatherhood Quest Resolved (e.g., Travis)
- Identifying with child's background (e.g., Luke)
- Adoption Story Parallels Biological:
  - Instant bond with adopted child (e.g., William)
  - Adoption disruption like the death of a child (e.g. – Jeff)
- Belonging to the adoption community (e.g., Evan)

#### Not the Same (Cultural Narrative)

- Infertility Journey Unresolved (e.g., Eric)
- Child's background different (e.g., Paul)
- Adoption Story Different from Biological:
  - No knowledge of adoption narrative pre-education seminar (e.g., Reid)
  - Openness in Adoption (e.g., William)
- Isolation from biological parenthood community (e.g., Jarrod)



Fatherhood Story

Men both believed and countered the societal narrative that family is constructed via blood relationship. They then wove these seemingly incompatible discourses together to form their narratives of fatherhood.

### Implications

- Men are able to reconcile dominant nature/nurture tension. While men received initial support through the education seminar, ongoing or follow-up support likely to be beneficial in continuing the narrative process
- Adoption professionals need to be prepared to help clients narrate unfamiliar storylines (e.g., open adoption, adoption outcomes) and difficult outcomes that have parallels to the biological story (e.g., adoption disruption)
- Public dissemination of the adoption narrative likely to help with numerous aspects of adoption journey (i.e., Universal Intervention)
  - Easier time selecting adoption after infertility
  - Reduced perceived threat from family/friends/acquaintances whom they need to 'educate'
  - Increased ability to help their adopted children narrate their adopted status

## The Same (Counter-Narrative)

- Fatherhood quest resolved
  - ((My infertility)) was from an outside source so [Int.: Mhmm] can I be angry at them? I can't anymore. At the time I could. Now I should actually thank them. Now that I think about it. I wouldn't have my family if- it would be a total different family. – Travis, Adoptive Father of one child
- Identifying with the child's background
  - Because we live in French, we wanted my daughter to go to French school, took French umm French swimming lessons, so I went to a French pool and we were there and its all Franco-Manitobans, and Franco-Manitobans are all white and whatever. And so ...she was the only black kid in the pool. And all of a sudden a Congolese father and his son come. I thought to myself "Oh finally another black family." And I stopped and I went, "I have just identified myself as a black family." – Luke, Adoptive father of one child
- Adoption story parallels the biological story
  - Instant bond with the adopted child
    - I mean we go in.... Then the door opened. This little girl walked in, they had her in a dress and bows in her hair and that kind of stuff and she comes over and she can't speak English she says mama. Papa. And she sits on your lap... I I I don't know- I can't say what it's like to be present when your child is born umm I I was there I think she was three when she came out- instead of coming from the mother she came through a door in a little blue dress. – William, Adoptive Father of one child
  - Adoption disruption like the death of a child
    - There's nothing worse than- than people that can't get pregnant to actually have a baby in your arms, you're taking care of this baby feeding the baby - umm you know all those kinds of things - and then you get a phone call and they say, "Sorry we have to come and pick up the baby." Right. Umm it was the worst thing in the world. – Jeff, Adoptive Father of one child
- Belonging to the adoption community
  - When we were in the process of adopting Desta we went to one of their barbecues [Int.: Okay] to meet the other adopted parents ... And what we learned from that experience is that our experiences were very similar. - Evan, Adoptive Father of three children

## Not the Same (Cultural Narrative)

- Infertility journey unresolved
  - ((participant crying)) I think it's [infertility] one of those things that you go through as a couple that will always be tough and it will never get better. – Eric, Adoptive Father of one child
- Child's background different
  - Uh, you wonder ok, so if we now adopt a white child (.) when, when he's a little older or even now, he's 3 right, you know, he's, he can communicate, he's observant and he has a good vocabulary already and so it's like "Oh, ok so I don't look like either of you and I don't look like new baby. Am I, am I really a viable part of this family?" – Paul, Adoptive Father of one child
- Adoption story different from the biological
  - No knowledge of adoption narrative pre-adoption seminar
    - You know...did you reject because they weren't your biological parents you know? Do you feel like you were truly a family? Do you feel any differences between if you were to have children? What if you couldn't would you adopt? Is it something that is viable to you? You want to make sure the children felt that way as well. – Reid, Prospective Adoptive Father
  - Openness in adoption
    - We don't want her to learn from someone else that age 10, "Hey you're adopted your parents tell you that?" So now at 8: "You're adopted." "Yup, I'm from the Ukraine. [Int.: Right] that that was my old mom and-" she doesn't have the terminology down, but she- you know we're her parents and we're- probably that she ever knew. – William, Adoptive Father of one child
- Isolation from the biological community
  - I think that others look at me like it's different. I had a coworker ask me the other day, I was on the phone, he overheard me making an appointment for Anne, for uh, parent teacher. And he said, <"I couldn't help but overhear> but is Anne's name, her last name the same as yours?" What do you mean, are you kidding me? Ya Anne and Alexander, they are both Robertsons. "Oh, ok I didn't know how that worked." So I know others view it as maybe, uh second best. But I mean I don't.. – Jarrod, Adoptive Father of two children