

Running head: ADOPTEES' PERCEPTIONS OF CONTACT WITH BIRTHFATHERS

Female Adoptees' Perceptions of Contact with their Birthfathers: Satisfactions and Dissatisfactions With the Process

Nola L. Passmore, PhD, University of Southern Queensland

Heather M. Chipuer, PhD, Griffith University

Author Notes

Nola L. Passmore, PhD, Psychology Department, University of Southern Queensland, Toowoomba, Queensland, Australia. Heather M. Chipuer, PhD, Department of Psychology, Griffith University, Nathan Campus, Mt Gravatt, Queensland, Australia.

We would like to thank Tania Boal for her assistance in the early stages of this project and the participants for sharing their experiences with us. We would also like to thank the editor and three anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments on previous drafts of this paper.

Preliminary findings from the interview phase of this study were presented at the 8th Australian Conference on Adoption, Adelaide, Australia, April 19-21, 2004.

For reprints and correspondence: Nola L. Passmore, Psychology Department, University of Southern Queensland, Toowoomba, QLD 4350, Australia. E-mail: nolapass@usq.edu.au

(Published in American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, 2009, Vol. 79, Issue 1, pp. 93-102)

Abstract

Qualitative data were analyzed to identify factors associated with adoptees' satisfactions or dissatisfactions in their contact experiences with their birthfathers. Participants were 17 women who had been adopted prior to two years of age and had subsequently met their birthfathers. All women completed a questionnaire and seven also took part in a semi-structured interview. Four main themes were identified that affected satisfaction with contact: birthfathers' attributes and behavior, adoptees' attributes (e.g., expectations), behavior of others (e.g., birthmother, birthfather's family, and adoptive parents), and circumstances of the conception and relinquishment. The implications of these findings for members of the adoption triangle and those providing post-adoption services are discussed.

(Keywords: adoptees, adoption, birthfathers, birthparents, reunion)

Female Adoptees' Perceptions of Contact with their Birthfathers: Satisfactions and Dissatisfactions with the Process

While a growing body of research has examined contact between adoptees and their birthmothers (e.g., Affleck & Steed, 2001), few studies have considered contact between adoptees and their birthfathers. There are some practical reasons for this. Birthfathers are often more difficult to locate than birthmothers, as their names are usually missing from the adoptee's birth certificate or other adoption records (Coles, 2004). Consequently, it may be difficult to locate adequate numbers of participants for research on adoptee-birthfather contact. However, stereotypical views of the birthfather may also affect whether or not adoptees seek contact with him and indeed whether researchers and practitioners believe the experiences of birthfathers are worth exploring in the first place.

We will begin by looking at some of the prevailing attitudes towards birthfathers and research findings that bring such stereotypes into question. We will then review previous research on searches and contact between adoptees and their birthfathers. As few studies have been conducted in this area, we will also draw on relevant research regarding reunions between adopted people and their birthmothers. The current study will extend previous research by focusing more specifically on the factors associated with adoptees' satisfactions or dissatisfactions with their experiences of contact with birthfathers.

Attitudes to Birthfathers

Attitudes to birthfathers are often negative and can leave birthfathers feeling marginalized (e.g., Freeark et al., 2005). For example, Sachdev (1991) investigated the attitudes of adopted people, adoptive parents, and birthmothers to the release of identifying information about the adoptee to birthparents. All three groups were less favorable towards the release of information to birthfathers than birthmothers. When asked about their current feelings towards their birthparents, adoptees were more likely to have positive feelings towards their birthmothers (66.3%) than their birthfathers (55.1%). While 16.2% reported negative feelings towards their birthfather, others felt indifferent (16.9%) or uncertain (11.8%). Indeed, Sachdev concluded that birthfathers are often viewed in stereotypical ways. Either they are seen as modern day "Don Juans" who have sexually exploited an innocent, young girl or they are seen as "phantom fathers" who did not fulfil their responsibilities to care for the mother and child.

The amount of prior information about birthfathers, or contact with birthfathers, can also affect people's attitudes towards them. For example, Baumann (1999) found that adoptive fathers tended to have more positive attitudes towards birthfathers when they had prepared well for the adoption (e.g., by reading adoption-related books or attending classes) and when the information came directly from the birthfather. Indeed, adoptive fathers' attitudes towards the birthfather improved if they had any level of contact with him. Social workers also influenced the development of favorable attitudes towards birthfathers. Conversely, the media tended to adversely affect attitudes towards birthfathers, and adoptive fathers tended to have a less favorable view of birthfathers if their only source of information about them came from birthmothers.

As part of a larger study on parenting, Miall and March (2003, 2005) also questioned respondents regarding their attitudes to birthfathers. The majority of those who took part in

qualitative interviews were favorable towards a birthfather raising his child if the birthmother was unable to do so and he wanted to take on that responsibility. When asked why a birthfather might decide to give up his parental rights and transfer that responsibility to the adoptive parents, however, female participants tended to think that he was acting out of self-interest. Conversely, the majority of people who took part in a later telephone survey thought that birthfathers who made adoption plans were being responsible, caring, and unselfish.

From the preceding discussion, it can be seen that attitudes to birthfathers are often negative or mixed. Such attitudes may depend on the amount of information a person has about birthfathers, amount of contact with birthfathers, the source of the information, and gender. Indeed, Miall and March (2005) note that “unwed birth fathers may be subject to stigmatization, particularly by women”, and that these fathers may then negatively evaluate themselves (p. 543). While negative stereotypes may fit some birthfathers, many do continue to care about the birthmother and their relinquished child (Clapton, 2007). In one archival study, comparisons were made of adoption records obtained before and after the introduction of legislation in Victoria, Australia designed to give birthfathers more involvement in the decision-making about their child. Nankervis (1991) found that only 35% of birthfathers fit the traditional stereotyped view of the “rejecting, uncaring and irresponsible” fellow who was generally not involved with the adoption service (p. 91), while 26% were very distressed about the adoption (e.g., expressing grief, anger, and powerlessness). A further 24% had a positive response overall and either took joint responsibility with the birthmother or were supportive and involved in the decision-making regarding their child’s future. Another 15% were supportive, yet “believed the mother had greater rights in deciding the child’s future, or declined any formal, legal involvement under the new legislation” (p. 92).

Searches and Contact Experiences

Research on search behavior also refutes the idea that birthfathers are not interested in their relinquished children. In a survey of 125 American birthfathers, 96% had considered searching for their relinquished child, while 67% had actually searched (Deykin, Patti, & Ryan, 1988). Although these percentages may be inflated because the sample was drawn from adoption support and advocacy groups, similar results have been found in other studies. For example, Cicchini (1993) found that 77% of the 30 Australian birthfathers in his study had taken active steps to seek information about, or make contact with, their child; while Clapton (2003) found that 86.7% of the 30 Scottish and English birthfathers in his study desired some contact with their child.

While some researchers have investigated reunions between adoptees and birthparents in general (e.g., Campbell, Silverman, & Patti, 1991), few have looked specifically at adoptees’ perspectives of their contact experiences with their birthfathers. One exception is a study of American adolescent adoptees’ reports of contact with birth relatives (Mendenhall, Berge, Wrobel, Grotevant, & McRoy, 2004). Among other measures, participants were asked to indicate how satisfied they were with the degree of contact they had with each of their birthparents, regardless of whether or not contact had occurred. Thus, it was possible for participants to be satisfied with a lack of contact. Although only 15% had contact with their birthfathers, contact tended to be positive when it occurred. Those who maintained some contact with their birthfathers were more satisfied with the level of contact than those who had not had contact. Moreover, satisfaction with contact increased as the adolescents grew older. Unfortunately, Mendenhall et al.’s study did not include further information regarding why contact was satisfying or dissatisfying.

Studies examining birthfathers' perspectives of their reunions have generally found positive outcomes. Although only a few of the birthfathers in Cicchini's (1993) study had had contact with their relinquished child (number unspecified), reunited birthfathers generally spoke of the contact as a positive experience that enhanced their emotional well-being and helped them deal with the unfinished business of the past. Ten of the 30 birthfathers (33.3%) in Clapton's (2003) study had had contact with their relinquished child, and all reported that the initial meeting had gone very well. Nine went on to establish positive relations with their child, though not all were stress-free. Similarly, 24 of the 60 birthfathers (40%) in Witney's (2004) study had contact with their relinquished child. Most of these contacts were positive, though "not all contacts were an unqualified success" (p. 59). Witney provides some case examples, but does not go further in developing themes relevant for successful or unsuccessful contact.

Although there is little research on adoptee-birthfather contact, research regarding reunions between adopted people and their birthmothers, or other birth relatives, may shed some light on factors that could also affect adoptees' experiences of contact with their birthfathers. One of the difficulties with contact between adoptees and birthparents is that there is no agreed set of guidelines to describe how such relationships should develop (Modell, 1997; Müller, Gibbs, & Ariely, 2003). In interviews with adoptees and birthparents, Modell (1997) found that some had initially explored a parent-child relationship, but this presented difficulties due to the life stages of the parent and child, the smaller generational gap that was often evident between parent and child, and a past devoid of each other. In other cases, adoptees and birthparents developed a more general extended family kinship (e.g., like that of an aunt and niece). Other models included friendship; courtship, which involved strong feelings of love for the other; and patronage, which involved a sense of duty or concern for the well-being of the other. In contrast, Affleck and Steed (2001) found that 9 of the 10 birthmothers and 5 of the 10 adoptees in their Australian study "were actively seeking a mother-child relationship" (p. 42). However, the concept of motherhood was still problematic, as the biological mother was not the same mother who had raised the child. Some adoptees used the term "mother" when referring to their birthmother and "mum" when referring to their adoptive mother, but this was not suitable for everyone. Adoptees also differed in the extent to which they wanted to be nurtured by their birthmothers.

Given the difficulties in negotiating a model of relationship, it is perhaps not surprising that adoptees' expectations can also affect relationship outcomes. Some studies have shown that those who have no expectations or general expectations are more likely to experience satisfying reunions (Affleck & Steed, 2001; Gladstone & Westhues, 1998). However, Müller et al. (2003) found no relationship between prior expectations and various aspects of adoptees' contact experiences with birthmothers (e.g., closeness and satisfaction with the relationship). In relating these findings back to adoptee-birthfather relationships, however, it is possible that negative stereotypes of birthfathers may affect adoptees' experiences of contact with them.

Finally, a number of studies have identified factors that affect reunion outcomes. Gladstone and Westhues (1998) surveyed 67 Canadian adoptees regarding the birth relative with whom they had first had contact. In 38.8% of cases, this person was the birthmother; in 49.3% of cases it was a birth sibling. They identified four groups of factors that affected post-reunion relationships. Structural factors included geographical distance and time. Interactive factors included boundary issues, the degree of support from the adoptive family, and a perceived lack of responsiveness on the part of the birth relative. Motivating factors included reasons for maintaining contact with birth

relatives. Values and lifestyle differences also affected adoptees' satisfaction with the reunion experience. For example, if they perceived that their birth relatives were different to them in terms of values or lifestyle, or if they thought their birth relatives wanted a more intense relationship, then the adoptees were more inclined to feel dissatisfaction with the outcome. Affleck and Steed (2001) identified some similar themes (e.g., geographical distance and support of the adoptive family). However, they also noted the importance of support groups, pace of the initial reunion, empathy, and whether the participants viewed the reunion as an internal or external process. For example, those who viewed the reunion as an internal process may have experienced personal growth as a result of their reunion experiences; while those who viewed it as an external process may have seen the reunion as a more passive process where something was acquired (e.g., the addition of a relative). Finally, Müller et al. (2003) found that having a good relationship with one's birthmother (62%) and having similarities (13%) were the two most important reasons given by adopted people who were very satisfied with their post-reunion relationships. Those who were not completely satisfied in their relationship with their birthmother cited a perceived lack of interest by their birthmothers (43%), lifestyle or value differences (24%), and secrecy (21%) as their main reasons.

While many of these factors would seem relevant for adoptees' experiences of contact with their birthfathers (e.g., similar values, responsiveness of birthfather, and support of adoptive parents), it is possible that factors unique to adoptee-birthfather contact may emerge. For example, in their study of community attitudes, Miall and March (2005) found that people generally believed in the "primacy of the biological mother-child bond", whereas the biological bond between the birthfather and his child received little attention (p. 540).

In summary, previous research provides some insights regarding adoptee-birthfather contact; however, little is known about the factors that affect an adoptee's satisfaction with such contact. While there may be some similarities with adoptee-birthmother reunions, there may also be some factors that are unique to adoptee-birthfather contact. Such information would not only benefit adoptees and birthfathers, but would also help birthmothers and adoptive parents better understand such experiences and provide valuable data for practitioners who offer services for all members of the adoption triangle.

Aim of the Current Study

The aim of the current study was to investigate adoptees' perceptions of their contact experiences with their birthfathers. In particular, we were interested in identifying factors that were associated with adoptees' satisfaction or dissatisfaction with those contact experiences.

Method

Participants

This study focuses on 17 adopted females from a larger study who had met their birthfathers¹. The participants had all completed an initial questionnaire about their adoption, search, and contact experiences. We were also able to interview seven of these participants approximately 18 months after the initial questionnaire phase. As the interview data contained the

¹ One male participant was omitted from the final sample as he indicated that his birthfather had died only four weeks after they had met and he did not provide any other comments that pertained to the research question.

most current information for participants and also provided much richer descriptions of their contact experiences, only the interview data were used for those seven participants rather than also including their questionnaire data. As the other 10 participants were not able to take part in face-to-face interviews, for reasons described shortly, their responses to the relevant open-ended questions in the initial questionnaire were analysed. For the remainder of this paper, we will use the terms interview participants and questionnaire participants to distinguish between these two groups.

The seven interview participants ranged in age from 30 to 47 years, with a mean age of 35.7 years. All had been adopted within two years of being born. Six described themselves as Anglo-Australians born in Australia; one was born in New Zealand and described herself an Anglo-Maori. All had met birth siblings, six had met their birthmothers, and one was currently searching for her birthmother. Only one had met her birthfather prior to meeting any other birth relatives. Length of time since their first meeting with their birthfather ranged from a few weeks to 19 years, though the participant who had only met her birthfather a few weeks previously had been in touch with him via phone and letters for about two years. Four were still in contact with their birthfathers at the time of the interview.

The 10 questionnaire participants ranged in age from 23 to 63 years, with a mean age of 37 years. All had been adopted within 10 months of being born, with 9 being born in Australia and one in England. Eight described themselves as Anglo-Australians, one as British, and one as British-Scandinavian. All had met birth siblings and had been in contact with their birthmothers, though two participants had only exchanged letters or phone calls with her. Length of time since their first meeting with their birthfather ranged from a few months to 14 years. At the time of the questionnaire phase, six were still in contact with their birthfathers and another two had maintained contact until their birthfathers' deaths.

Measures

The initial questionnaire. The 32-page questionnaire included demographic questions; items about the participants' adoption, search, and reunion experiences; and a series of standardized questionnaires. Of relevance to the current study were nine open-ended questions where participants could write more detail about their search and reunion experiences.

The interview schedule. A semi-structured interview schedule was used to explore participants' search and reunion experiences. Questions were developed primarily from the adoption literature and from the researchers' experience in conducting previous studies of adoption and interpersonal relationships. The majority of questions were open-ended. For participants who had met more than one birth relative, questions were asked separately with regard to birthmothers, birthfathers, and birth siblings. Prompts were used during the interview to clarify comments made by the participant. Interviewees were also given the opportunity to add any further information they felt important. Each interview was transcribed verbatim and checked for accuracy prior to coding. All identifying information (e.g., names and places) was changed on the transcripts prior to coding.

Procedure

As part of the larger study, participants were sent a questionnaire package. Approximately 18 months later, letters were sent to 10 of the participants inviting them to take part in a follow-up interview. The selection criteria were that they (a) had experienced at least one face-to-face meeting with their birthfather, (b) had indicated on the questionnaire that they would be interested

in a follow-up interview, and (c) lived within an approximately three-hour driving distance from the researchers. One of the researchers phoned each of the potential participants within one week of them receiving the letter and asked if they were willing to participate. One participant had since moved interstate and two could not be contacted by phone. The remaining seven participants took part in a tape-recorded interview. The total interview session took approximately 70-120 minutes, with each interview lasting approximately 50-90 minutes. Participation in both the questionnaire and interview phases was completely voluntary, with written informed consent being obtained at each phase. The relevant ethical clearance was obtained for both phases of the study.

Coding

Thematic analysis was used to evaluate the contact experiences that adopted women had had with their birthfathers (Joffe & Yardley, 2004). As the interview data contained richer descriptions of contact experiences, themes that emerged in the seven interviews were coded first. We then coded the responses to the open-ended questionnaire items from the 10 participants who could not be interviewed. All transcripts were read in their entirety to get an overall impression of each person's contact experiences. Transcripts were then re-read several times to identify themes that related to the research question. Similar themes were grouped together where possible and any disconfirming evidence was noted. Coding involved a cyclical rather than step-by-step process, as themes were clarified, grouped, and refined (Fossey, Harvey, McDermott, & Davidson, 2002). We did this inductively, letting the data speak for themselves as far as possible rather than imposing pre-determined categories on the data. It is recognized that this can be a difficult process, as researchers are not devoid of previous knowledge and preconceptions regarding the research topic (Joffe & Yardley, 2004). Indeed, Davies and Dodd (2002) argue that "knowledge can never be impartial, disinterested, or value free" (p. 284). Through self-reflection and open discussion, whereby we continually explored and clarified themes (cf. Davies & Dodd, 2002), we took every care to remain as objective as possible. Discussion continued until the two researchers reached consensus on the main themes.

Triangulation was used in order to ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, particularly triangulation of data and researchers (see Van de Mheen, Coumans, Barendregt, & Van der Poel, 2006). Triangulation of data was evident in that the same themes emerged from both interview and questionnaire data obtained from different groups of participants. Triangulation of researchers was evident in that the two researchers were able to reach consensus though they had different backgrounds in methodology and adoption experiences. For example, the first author was an adoptee who had conducted previous research on adoption issues. The second author had no previous personal or professional involvement with adoption issues, but had more experience in qualitative data analysis. Our different backgrounds and orientations allowed us to provide checks and balances for each other. In the description of the themes that follows, we also use verbatim quotes as far as possible so that the participants' own voices add authenticity to the findings (Fossey et al., 2002).

Results

Before presenting the results, it should be noted that many participants identified both satisfying and dissatisfying aspects of their contact experiences. Therefore, the following analysis

does not involve a comparison of those who were satisfied or dissatisfied overall, but rather an analysis of the factors that adoptees found to be satisfying or dissatisfying in their contact experiences with their birthfathers. These factors could be distinguished according to four main themes: birthfather's attributes and behavior, the adoptees' attributes, the behavior of others, and circumstances of the conception and relinquishment. In the following section, each of these themes is defined and examples given to illustrate their main characteristics.

Birthfather's Attributes and Behavior

This first theme refers to adoptees' perceptions of their birthfathers' personal qualities or behavior, including perceived similarities or differences between the adoptee and the birthfather. Perhaps not surprisingly, adoptees tended to be more satisfied with their contact experiences if they had a positive view of their birthfathers' attributes or behaviors or if they thought they were similar to their birthfathers in important ways. To illustrate this theme, examples will be given in the areas of personality characteristics, similarities and differences, behavior regarding contact with the adoptee, and communication.

Personality characteristics. One of the interview participants had previously had some challenges in her relationship with her birthmother and was relieved that her relationship with her birthfather was less taxing: "He has a different mind-set. He doesn't need to be needed. He's got a partner ... He thinks quite differently [than birthmother]. He's more independent like I am."

Conversely, two interview participants and two questionnaire participants noted negative personality characteristics of their birthfathers that adversely affected their contact experiences. One said her birthfather was quite negative, complained a lot, and seemed to have some prejudiced attitudes; another described her birthfather as "a bit of a dodgy character" who was not a very honest person. One questionnaire participant thought her birthfather was an awful person because he volunteered to work on Christmas Day rather than spending it with his family, while another said her birthfather kept himself more distant than the birthmother and drank heavily.

Similarities or differences between adoptee and birthfather. Four of the interview participants and one of the questionnaire participants were pleased to discover they were similar to their birthfathers in personality and/or physical attributes and this was linked to positive contact experiences. As one woman explained, "genes just blow you away ... some of the things he [birthfather] does was just 'oh boy' and I'd be like him or I'd be like my brother. So that was really great." However, some disconfirming evidence was also found in that two of the interview participants had some physical similarities to their birthfathers, yet were dissatisfied with their contact experiences with them. Other factors appeared to be more influential for those participants, such as their perceptions that their birthfathers had unfavorable personality characteristics.

Differences between adoptees and birthfathers in terms of personality, interests, or ideals tended to adversely affect contact outcomes. When asked why she had lost touch with her birthfather, one woman said, "I just don't find that I have a lot in common with him and a lot of his ideas and ideals I don't support." Another woman who had not been in contact with her birthfather for some years felt she had more in common with her birthmother's family who were "good fun people, whereas he's more serious."

Birthfathers' behavior regarding contact with adoptees. Five interview participants and three questionnaire participants indicated that their birthfathers behaved in ways that were welcoming or accepting of them. For example, one birthfather had been searching for his daughter at the same time that she was searching and he was very eager to meet her. The first time they talked on the phone, the birthfather cried. Words such as glad, happy, delighted, excited, or enthusiastic were used to describe birthfathers' reactions to meeting their adult child. As one participant noted:

When you're adopted ... you look at the world and you think, holy hell, I can stand on the top of the highest mountain in the world and have everyone in the world be down the bottom and I could not pick out one of those people that were my relations, you know. And when I spoke to him, it was like he had put me on top of that mountain and I was the only person in this world that mattered to him and I was enjoying that limelight of being there.

Another interview participant was also pleased that her birthfather took the initiative to contact her about once a month.

Conversely, two of the interview participants and one questionnaire participant noted behaviors or reactions of the birthfather that were not welcoming or accepting, and this adversely affected the course of the contact. For example, one birthfather initially denied that he was the adoptee's father and had not been keen to meet her. Another woman noted that her "birthfather wasn't interested in meeting [her] and made it very clear he just wanted the meeting to be over and done with." Another adopted person received mixed messages from her birthfather. He told her he had been searching for her and that she could always phone if she needed him, but she was told never to tell anyone he was her father as he had already been married with five children before he met her birthmother. If any of his family answered the phone when she rang, she was to pretend she was a business client. He also made it clear that if she was expecting any money when he died, he did not have any. Not surprisingly, this conversation did not leave the adoptee with a very favorable impression of her birthfather and set up a negative expectation for subsequent contact with him. Two interview participants and two questionnaire participants were also disappointed with the lack of effort their birthfathers put into contacting them. However, lack of contact was not always seen as negative. For example, one questionnaire participant indicated that her current relationship with her birthfather was satisfying because he gave her space.

Communication. Three interview participants and two questionnaire participants noted that their birthfathers were open and honest in their communication, that they provided them with the information they sought, and/or that they had not kept the adoption secret. As one of the questionnaire participants explained, "we can talk very honestly about the past. We also discuss thoughts, emotions and feelings freely. Our philosophies, religious beliefs and views of the world are thoroughly gone into ... He has been willing from the outset to help me with many of the psychological aspects of adoption and discussed any reading I have done on the subject with me."

Conversely, two interview participants and two questionnaire participants perceived that their birthfathers were secretive, unwilling to provide information they requested, or said things that were not true. In three of these cases, the adoptee's existence had been kept a secret from her half-siblings. One questionnaire participant was also disappointed that her birthfather only provided limited information about his family, while an interview participant noted that her birthfather had told her adoptive father things that she believed were untrue. As she explained:

He told Dad that I was a very beautiful baby and that he saw me when [birthmother] brought me home from the hospital and he came round to visit and all that sort of stuff. And I never left the hospital ... [birthmother] saw me through the window when she wasn't supposed to, and that was the extent she had to even be near me. So there's no way she took me home from hospital. But whether he believed that to make himself feel better or, I don't know. But that's what he was telling Dad anyway.

Not surprisingly, perceptions that birthfathers were secretive, unwilling to disclose, or told lies were often linked to dissatisfying contact experiences. However, some disconfirming evidence should also be noted. One interview participant believed that her birthfather had not been totally truthful in his recollections of how she came to be adopted, as she had other information to the contrary. However, they had a wonderful relationship. Other factors, such as his search for her and his enthusiasm in getting to know her, seem to have been more important for her overall satisfaction with the reunion than his contradictory communication.

Adoptee's Attributes

This theme refers to adoptees' own personal qualities; such as their initial attitudes, impressions, or expectations regarding their birthfather and /or contact with him; or their own personality characteristics or behavior.

Initial attitudes, impressions, or expectations. Four of the interview participants who had had good contact experiences, and two participants who were philosophical about their less satisfying experiences, seemed to have fairly neutral initial attitudes towards their birthfathers and/or low expectations about the contact. If they then got on well with their birthfathers, it was a bonus; if the contact did not turn out so well, it helped alleviate what would have been a negative outcome. For example, one woman travelled with a girlfriend to meet her birthfather and his family. When the friend asked her what she was hoping for, she said "Nothing. I don't care whether they like me or not anymore, it doesn't matter to me. And I just ... yeah, I didn't have an anxiety level, it just was they could take me or leave me. If they don't like me, I'll go to a motel ... I think I've learnt not to create expectations because it usually only creates disappointment." As it turned out, the contact was extremely satisfying.

Sometimes adoptees formed negative impressions of their birthfathers after hearing about the circumstances of the adoption. For example, one questionnaire participant had a negative impression of her birthparents after finding out that they "were aged 24 and 25 when I was born - old enough to know better!" It should be noted, however, that this participant had a negative attitude towards her birthparents from the outset. As she explained, "I never had any inclination to search mostly because I felt bitter they gave me up for adoption." Such negative attitudes would most likely be a barrier to the development of a positive ongoing relationship between adoptees and their birthfathers.

Expectations regarding contact with birthfathers may also be related to the types of relationships that are formed between adoptees and their birthfathers following the initial meeting. The seven interview participants were all asked to describe the type of relationship they had with their birthfathers. None of them described it as a father-daughter relationship. Indeed, five of them specifically mentioned that their birthfather (or birthparents) could never take the place of their adoptive father (or adoptive parents). As one woman noted, "... even though someone conceived

me and gave birth to me, those people can never be a parent and I've told them that. They physically can't be a parent because there's no history there."

Relationships with birthfathers varied greatly. One adoptee noted that it was currently non-existent, as she had only had one meeting with her birthfather and his family. However, that had been a positive meeting and she felt she could contact him again if she were in the vicinity. Another had not established a relationship with her birthfather beyond the first meeting, as she did not really like him. He had since died and she was somewhat relieved that she did not need to deal with him anymore. Two of the participants described their relationship with their birthfathers as a friendship. Another said that it was more than a friendship, but she could not define it other than to say that it was a good relationship. The other two participants could not describe it as a friendship. One said that she thought of her birthfather like a long lost cousin, and the other had difficulty describing the relationship, other than that he was the "half creator of me". Unfortunately, we did not collect data from the questionnaire participants regarding the types of relationships they had developed with their birthfathers. Future research is needed to further clarify the types of relationships that do develop between adoptees and birthfathers following their first meeting.

Personal attributes or behavior. One interview participant and one questionnaire participant mentioned that their own maturity helped with the reunion. For example, one woman had previously had a dissatisfying reunion with her birth sister. By the time she met her birthfather, she felt that the time and maturity had helped. "I was roughly nine years older. A lot more thought went into it, less expectations. I was a more secure person in myself ... the reasons why I was meeting him were different. So, I think it all sums up to maturity ... a different outlook on it."

Conversely, four interview participants and two questionnaire participants noted some of their own attributes or reactions that may have hindered their contact experiences. For example, one said that she was too immature at age 18 to deal with the difficult situation she found when she located her birthparents. Two other participants were initially "stand-offish" or "guarded" because of hurt they had experienced in previous reunions, while one acknowledged that she likes "to keep everything at a certain distance". However, all three developed good relationships with their birthfathers. Two admitted they were not very good at keeping in touch, with one describing herself as "just bone lazy".

Behavior of Others

The third theme involves the behavior of people other than the adoptee and the birthfather, who either directly or indirectly affected the adoptee's perceptions of the contact experience as a whole (i.e., the birthmother, the birthfather's family, and the adoptive parents).

Birthmother. Of the seven people who were interviewed, one had been unable to locate her birthmother and one had met her birthfather before her birthmother. The other five participants all found their birthfathers directly through their birthmothers. Sometimes the adoptee had specifically asked for the information and other times the birthmother offered it or it just came up in conversation. In any case, the birthmother was willing to provide the information and in some cases made the first contact with the birthfather on behalf of the adoptee, even though that was not always easy for her.

Conversely, one of the questionnaire participants noted how her birthmother had disrupted her first meeting with her birthfather. The birthmother had ceased contact with the adoptee five

years previously, but led the birthfather to believe that she and the adoptee had a wonderful relationship. She invited herself to the meeting, and the birthfather and his wife drove her to the venue. As the adoptee recalled:

She made them late, she dragged me aside to tell me how all the teachers wished they had parents like her, how the kids hugged her etc. Then didn't speak to me again ... She clearly (to others, including his wife, but it took longer for me to realize) came to meet up again with the birthfather, and was physically dropping herself over him.

Fortunately, the ongoing contact with her birthfather was satisfying in spite of the disrupted first meeting.

Birthfather's family. Three interview participants and one questionnaire participant specifically mentioned how their birthfather's wife or partner had accepted them or welcomed them into the family. Others also mentioned being readily accepted by siblings. While acceptance from the birthfather's family was usually helpful, too much enthusiasm sometimes had a negative effect. For example, one questionnaire participant said that she "was put off by my father's wife who wanted to make me a part of this family full on and be at any get together. She never gave me the chance to ever see my father on his own. We did speak on the phone but had little to discuss as our relationship never really developed."

Not surprisingly, a lack of acceptance from the birthfather's family can cause difficulties or challenges for the adoptee. Three participants mentioned that they had not been welcomed or accepted by the birthfather's wife or partner. Some participants also noted mixed reactions in that some family members were accepting, while others were not.

Adoptive family. Five interview participants and two questionnaire participants mentioned the support they had received from their adoptive families, particularly their adoptive parents, regarding their searches and/or contact experiences. As one questionnaire participant noted, "a feeling of complete security with my relationships with my adoptive Mum, Dad and brother were essential and continue to be the primary source of my decisions about contact with or searching for birth relatives ... [They have] always been extremely supportive."

Conversely, two of the interview participants and seven of the questionnaire participants noted the detrimental effects of not having support from their adoptive families. One woman's adoptive parents and adoptive brother had reacted so badly to her reunion with her birthmother some years previously, that she did not tell them she had recently met her birthfather. The contact with her birthfather had gone very well, but it was dissatisfying that she now had to keep it a secret. One of the questionnaire participants noted that her adoptive parents at first accepted her need to "meet and get to know my birth-sister but 'blew up' suddenly when they realized that I was to meet my whole family. They used such words as 'charade' and 'forty-years' baby-sitting' and I spent a lot of time working back from that position to one of acceptance." Another participant was even cut out of her adoptive mother's will as a direct result of her contact with her birth family.

Circumstances of Conception and Relinquishment

The final theme refers to adoptees' perceptions of the circumstances surrounding their conception and relinquishment, particularly with regard to the birthfather's treatment of the

birthmother and his reactions to the pregnancy and relinquishment. It should be noted that some of these perceptions came from information the adoptee had obtained from the birthmother, though some information came directly from the birthfathers.

Treatment of birthmother. Two of the interview participants and one questionnaire participant were pleased that their birthfather spoke well of their birthmother, or at least did not speak negatively about her. As one adoptee noted, “it was really good to know that I was made out of something nice ... Yeah, I was excited and, you know, I remember saying to friends the next day, ‘they were going out together, he says that [birthmother] was a wonderful lady’.”

Conversely, adoptees tended to feel less favorable towards their birthfathers if they had treated the birthmother poorly. For example, one birthfather had already been married with children when he had an affair with the birthmother, while another birthfather married someone else. Another participant rated her initial contact with her birthfather as only slightly satisfying because “he blamed it all on her [birthmother]”.

Reactions to pregnancy and relinquishment. Three interview participants who had successful contact were satisfied with their birthfather’s reactions to the pregnancy or relinquishment. In one case, the birthfather did not learn of the pregnancy until 20 years later when the birthmother contacted him to say she had met their daughter. Another birthfather had been told that his daughter had died, so he was shocked when she contacted him years later. In the third case, the birthfather had regretted the decision he and the birthmother had made to relinquish their daughter. When he and the birthmother divorced some time later, he vowed to go on searching for their daughter and was thrilled when they found each other.

Conversely, two interview participants were unhappy about the way their birthfathers communicated with them about the circumstances of their conception or relinquishment. For example, one adoptee did not like the way in which her birthfather tried to explain the circumstances during their first phone conversation. As she recalled, “he rang up one night ... and then told me that it was all his fault because he should have used protection. I was conceived in love, but he should have used protection. And I said, ‘Well glad you didn’t ‘cause then I wouldn’t be here’.” Although the birthfather may have thought he was doing the right thing by trying to apologize, the adoptee perceived it as being an apology that she was born.

Discussion

The current study has contributed to the adoption literature by identifying a number of factors that are associated with adoptees’ feelings of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with their contact experiences with their birthfathers. Four main themes were identified: (a) birthfathers’ attributes and behavior (e.g., personality characteristics, similarities or differences between the adoptee and her birthfather, behaviour regarding the contact, and communication); (b) adoptee’s attributes (e.g., initial attitudes or expectations, and personal attributes or behavior); (c) behavior of others (e.g., birthmother, birthfather’s family, adoptive family); and (d) circumstances of the conception and relinquishment (e.g., the birthfather’s treatment of the birthmother and reactions to the pregnancy and relinquishment). It should also be remembered that while each theme has been considered separately, they do not occur in isolation. For example, an adopted person’s personality

characteristics and social support from others may interact to influence her expectations of the contact experience, which may in turn affect behaviour towards her birthfather and his subsequent reaction.

Although there is a dearth of research on factors that affect adoptees' satisfaction with their contact experiences with birthfathers, some of the current findings are consistent with previous research regarding reunions between adoptees and other birth relatives such as birthmothers or siblings. Regarding the first theme, a lack of responsiveness or interest by the birth relative has been associated with less satisfying reunion experiences, while good relationships with birthmothers have been associated with more satisfying reunions (Gladstone & Westhues, 1998; Müller et al., 2003). Consistent with the current study, these authors also found that similarities between adoptees and their birth relatives in terms of values or lifestyle factors were associated with satisfying contact experiences, while dissimilarities were associated with dissatisfying experiences. Müller et al. (2003) also found that secrecy was associated with less satisfying reunions with birthmothers, which concurs with reports by some of the current participants who believed that their birthfathers had been secretive or dishonest.

The second theme regarding adoptee's attributes has also emerged in previous research, particularly with regard to expectations of contact. For example, Affleck and Steed (2001) and Gladstone and Westhues (1998) found that those with more general expectations or no expectations were more likely to experience satisfying reunions. It is possible that having neutral expectations may be even more important for contact experiences with birthfathers, given the negative stereotypes that people sometimes have of them (see Sachdev, 1991). Expectations may also have affected the type of relationship that adoptees developed with their birthfathers following the first meeting. The seven interview participants indicated that their relationships with their birthfathers ranged from no relationship, to distant relative, to close friendship. Interestingly, none of the adoptees regarded it as a father-daughter relationship. While these results should be regarded cautiously in view of the small sample size, they are somewhat similar to those obtained from the birthfather's perspective in Clapton's (2003) study. The majority of those birthfathers were clear that "they might be 'the father' but the child's adoptive father was 'her dad'" (p. 175). This does not necessarily imply a rejection of the father role. Indeed, Clapton noted that in some cases, "there were indications that the two roles of biological and social father were converging during contact and the subsequent relationship with the adopted child" (p. 176). The current findings may also reflect the difficulties in forming relationships where there are no models of how such relationships should develop (cf. Clapton, 2003; Modell, 1997; Müller et al., 2003). More data are needed to further clarify the types of relationships that do develop between adoptees and their birthfathers.

The third theme is consistent with previous findings that the support of adoptive parents is important in the reunion process (e.g., Affleck & Steed, 2001). Unlike the current study, however, little attention has previously been directed at the importance of support from others. Support from the birthmother is particularly important, as she is often the gatekeeper to information about the birthfather. The reactions of the birthfather's family (e.g., his wife and other children) are also critical, as their feelings about the reunion may affect future interaction between the adoptee and her birthfather (e.g., frequency of contact and whether contact remains open or secret).

The final theme regarding the circumstances of the conception and relinquishment is unique to the current study. This is not to imply that such circumstances are unrelated to adoptees' contact or reunion experiences with other birth relatives such as their birthmothers. However, in view of

the negative stereotypes often directed at birthfathers, and the fact that most adoptees meet their birthmothers prior to their birthfathers, adopted people may be particularly sensitive to their birthfathers' reactions. For example, participants in the current study tended to feel more favorably towards their birthfathers if they spoke well of the birthmother, or at least did not speak negatively about her. Adoptees were also more favorable if they felt satisfied with their birthfather's reactions to the pregnancy and relinquishment (e.g., if he either did not know about the pregnancy or regretted the decision to relinquish).

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

Although the small sample size limits the generalizability of the results, it should be remembered that, "qualitative research makes no claim of the generalizability of findings to a specified larger population in a probabilistic sense" (Fossey et al., 2002, p. 730). Rather, the applicability of findings to particular groups and settings is important, with the onus being on the researcher to provide adequate detail for the reader to determine whether those results could be applied in another setting (Fossey et al.). There was some evidence of triangulation in the current study in that the same overall themes emerged from both the questionnaire and interview data. As noted earlier, the findings were also broadly consistent with previous research on reunions between adoptees and birthmothers, though some differences emerged. Due to the small sample size, however, it was not possible to code themes to saturation. In particular, some of the examples given within each of the overall themes require further corroboration. It is also possible that further themes may emerge with a larger sample. The current findings should therefore be regarded with caution. As all participants had been adopted before the age of two years and were of Anglo background, apart from one participant who was mixed race, it is also not clear whether these results would generalize to other groups of adopted people, such as special needs, overseas, or transracial adoptees.

Although the sample was relatively small, the participants were quite diverse in terms of their demographic characteristics and their search and contact experiences. While it can be helpful to have a broad range of characteristics and experiences represented, this diversity could also be problematic in that it may have affected the themes that emerged. For example, the participants ranged in age from 23 to 63 years, and generational differences may have affected the results. In particular, societal attitudes regarding children born out of wedlock and the father's role in parenting have changed markedly over the last few decades. Thus, it is possible that younger and older adoptees may differ in their attitudes towards their birthfathers and may subsequently approach search and reunions differently. Due to the small sample size, it was not possible to establish trends for different age groups. While both positive and negative reunion experiences occurred among both younger and older participants in the current study, it is possible that generational differences could emerge with a larger sample. This could be explored in future research. There were also wide variations in the length of time since the participants' first meeting with their birthfathers, with a range from a few weeks to 19 years. While many participants were still in contact with their birthfathers and would have had recent experiences to draw upon, the problems inherent in retrospective recollections may have also influenced the themes that developed. For example, the nature of the current relationship with the birthfather (whether close, distant, or non-existent) may flavor participants' recollections of earlier contact. Ideally, this problem could be overcome in future studies by tracking adopted people and their birthfathers from

their first contact, though it may be difficult to obtain an adequate sample size for such research. It may also be helpful to compare those who have ongoing contact with those who have ceased contact, in order to gain a better understanding of factors that influence the duration of the contact experience.

The fact that questionnaire data were used for some participants, while interview data were used for others, is also problematic. While similar questions were asked of each group, some questions differed. The interviews generally provided much richer data than the questionnaires, with opportunities for the interviewer to ask for clarification of the participants' comments throughout. In spite of these limitations, however, the same main themes were evident in both the questionnaire and interview data, thus providing a source of triangulation. In future, it would be preferable to obtain interview data from the whole sample.

This study only considered the adoptees' perspectives of their reunions with their birthfathers, and as such, some inferences are made regarding birthfathers' feelings or motives. Future research should investigate reunions from the birthfathers' perspectives. The inclusion of adoptees and their birthfathers in the same study would also provide valuable information about the ongoing dynamic relationships that emerge as a result of reunion. As only female adoptees took part in the current study, it is also not clear whether the results would generalize to male adoptees. While similarities would be expected, there may also be differences due to the unique features of the birthfather-son relationship. This could be explored in future research.

Implications for Members of the Adoption Triangle

When considering whether or not to search for their birthfather and/or have contact with him, it would be helpful for adopted people to remember that a number of factors can affect their satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the experience. While their birthfather's attributes and behavior would affect the way in which contact progresses, adoptees also need to be aware of how their own attitudes and behaviors could affect the experience for both parties. Expectations may be particularly relevant. The current research has shown that adoptees who have fairly neutral expectations or no particular expectations may be more satisfied with the contact that does arise. Birthfathers are sometimes seen in stereotypically negative ways (Sachdev, 1991), and some of our participants had experiences that confirmed these stereotypes (e.g., some participants reported how their birthfathers had initially denied paternity, did not wish to have contact, and/or had treated the birthmother poorly). However, we also found many examples of birthfathers who challenged these negative views (e.g., birthfathers who had regretted the decision to relinquish and/or expressed delight at being reunited with their daughters). Therefore, it is important for those adoptees seeking contact to keep an open mind about the birthfather and refrain from stereotyped attitudes about him. In some cases, an adoptee may already have a negative view about her birthfather because of information she has acquired prior to contact (e.g., the way in which he treated her birthmother). However, it should also be remembered that many years have passed since the relinquishment, and the birthfather may have a different outlook now. Indeed, Cicchini (1993) noted that as birthfathers mature, they can feel a growing responsibility for their relinquished child, prompting some to search in an effort to find out if the child is alright. Thus, the stereotypical teenage boy who did not support his pregnant girlfriend may be very different now to the middle-aged man with other family responsibilities.

Birthfathers could also benefit from an awareness of factors that affect the adoptees' contact

experiences. Indeed, birthfathers' behavior or reactions regarding the contact and the way in which they discuss the circumstances of the conception and relinquishment, including attitudes and behavior towards the birthmother, may affect how adoptees subsequently feel about them.

The current study also found that support or lack of support from other people could affect the adoptee's contact experience. Offering such support may not always be easy. For example, some birthmothers may hold negative views of the birthfather and may be reluctant for their adult child to contact him, members of the birthfather's family may have only just learned of the adoptee's existence and/or have mixed feelings about meeting him or her, and some adoptive parents may be grappling with their own issues of loss or uncertainty over their role. While it is helpful for the adoptee to receive support from these people, it is important for all members of the adoption triangle to be sensitive to each others' needs. Thus, the adoptee must also realise the ways in which contact with his or her birthfather may impact on others.

Implications for Practitioners

In view of the sample size and the other limitations noted earlier, caution is needed in drawing implications for practice from our data. Therefore, we will focus primarily on findings that are also consistent with previous research. It is particularly important for adoption practitioners to refrain from stereotyped views of the birthfather, as their attitudes can influence other members of the adoption triangle. For example, Baumann (1999) found that social workers could help influence the development of favorable attitudes that adoptive fathers hold towards birthfathers. Indeed, adoption policy and practice has already changed in many countries to reflect greater inclusion of birthfathers (e.g., Nankervis, 1991). It may not always be easy to maintain such positive attitudes, especially if adoption practitioners have had negative experiences with birthfathers. However, while Nankervis (1991, p. 91) found that 35% of birthfathers did fit the negative stereotype of the "rejecting, uncaring and irresponsible" fellow, the majority of birthfathers in her study did not fit that mould. Indeed, many birthfathers do continue to care about the birthmother and child, and many seek contact with their relinquished child (Cicchini, 1993; Clapton, 2003, 2007).

While post-adoption practitioners can be instrumental in reflecting positive attitudes towards birthfathers, they can also help adoptees to develop realistic expectations. As shown earlier, some contact experiences did not go well, and negative attitudes or behaviors on the part of the birthfather sometimes contributed to this. In our study, adoptees who had fairly neutral expectations seemed to have better contact experiences. Practitioners should especially be attuned to adoptees who have high expectations, by helping them to prepare for various possible reunion outcomes. Practitioners could also help birthfathers to develop realistic expectations regarding the type of relationship they would develop with their adult child. Some birthfathers may envisage establishing a father-child relationship; however, the adoptees we interviewed did not see their relationships with their birthfathers in those terms. This does not mean that such a relationship would never develop, but it may be different to the type of relationship expected. Due to the small number of participants interviewed in this study, more research is needed to clarify the types of relationships that might develop between adoptees and their birthfathers.

Earlier we noted that adoptees needed to be aware of possible impacts that their contact with their birthfathers may have on others (e.g., birthmothers, adoptive parents, and birthfather's family). Practitioners also need to remember that those individuals may be grappling with their own issues surrounding the contact. Although we did not directly assess the attitudes and experiences of others

apart from the adoptee, previous research corroborates the need to take into account the feelings and experiences of other members of the adoption triangle. For example, some of the adoptive parents in Petta and Steed's (2005) study had approached counseling services prior to their child's reunion, yet found that the advice they were given was all geared towards how they could support their child rather than helping the adoptive parents with their issues. Depending on the circumstances of the pregnancy and relinquishment, the birthmother may also have unresolved issues regarding the birthfather and it may be difficult for her to offer support for her child's desire to contact him. When she does offer support, it may still be difficult for her. The birthfather's current partner and subsequent children may also experience a range of emotions on hearing that the birthfather is about to meet with his child. In some cases, the birthfather may not have told his other family members of the child's existence prior to contact, thus giving them little time to prepare for the reunion. Practitioners could offer valuable assistance to all members of the adoption triangle and their families.

Conclusion

This paper has provided a valuable first step in elucidating variables that are associated with adoptees' satisfaction or dissatisfaction with their contact experiences with their birthfathers. While more research with larger samples is needed to further confirm and clarify the proposed themes, the themes were generally consistent with those related to adoptees' contact experiences with birthmothers. This area of study would be enhanced by exploring birthfathers' perspectives of their contact experiences and the nature of contact experiences that develop between birthfathers and male adoptees. Through such research, post-adoption service providers and all members of the adoption triangle will be better equipped to handle the joys and challenges of contact between birthfathers and adoptees.

References

- Affleck, M. K., & Steed, L. G. (2001). Expectations and experiences of participants in ongoing adoption reunion relationships: A qualitative study. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, *71*, 38-48.
- Baumann, C. (1999). Adoptive fathers and birthfathers: A study of attitudes. *Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal*, *16*, 373-391.
- Campbell, L. H., Silverman, P. R., & Patti, P. B. (1991). Reunions between adoptees and birth parents: The adoptees' experience. *Social Work*, *36*, 329-335.
- Cicchini, M. (1993). *Development of responsibility: The experience of birth fathers in adoption*. Mt Lawley, Western Australia: Adoption Research and Counselling Service.
- Clapton, G. (2003). *Birth fathers and their adoption experiences*. London: Jessica Kingsley.
- Clapton, G. (2007). The experiences and needs of birth fathers in adoption: What we know now and some practice implications. *Practice*, *19*, 61-71.
- Coles, G. (2004). *Ever after: Fathers and the impact of adoption*. Christies Beach, South Australia: Clova.
- Davies, D., & Dodd, J. (2002). Qualitative research and the question of rigor. *Qualitative Health Research*, *12*, 279-289.
- Deykin, E. Y., Patti, P., & Ryan, J. (1988). Fathers of adopted children: A study of the impact of child surrender on birthfathers. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, *58*, 240-248.
- Freeark, K., Rosenberg, E. B., Bornstein, J., Jozefowicz-Simbeni, D., Linkevich, M., & Lohnes, K. (2005). Gender differences and dynamics shaping the adoption life cycle: Review of the literature and recommendations. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, *75*, 86-101.
- Fossey, E., Harvey, C., McDermott, F., & Davidson, L. (2002). Understanding and evaluating qualitative research. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry*, *36*, 717-732.
- Gladstone, J., & Westhues, A. (1998). Adoption reunions: A new side to intergenerational family relationships. *Family Relations*, *47*, 177-184.
- Joffe, H., & Yardley, L. (2004). Content and thematic analysis. In D. F. Marks & L. Yardley (Eds.), *Research methods for clinical and health psychology* (pp. 56-68). London: Sage.
- Mendenhall, T. J., Berge, J. M., Wrobel, G. M., Grotevant, H. D., & McRoy, R. G. (2004). Adolescents' satisfaction with contact in adoption. *Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal*, *21*, 175-190.
- Miall, C. E., & March, K. (2003). A comparison of biological and adoptive mothers and fathers: The relevance of biological kinship and gendered constructs of parenthood. *Adoption Quarterly*, *6*, 7-39.
- Miall, C. E., & March, K. (2005). Community attitudes toward birth fathers' motives for adoption placement and single parenting. *Family Relations*, *54*, 535-546.
- Modell, J. (1997). "Where do we go next?" Long-term reunion relationships between adoptees and birth parents. *Marriage and Family Review*, *25*, 43-66.
- Müller, U., Gibbs, P., & Ariely, S. G. (2003). Adults who were adopted contacting their birthmothers: What are the outcomes, and what factors influence these outcomes? *Adoption Quarterly*, *7*, 7-25.
- Nankervis, J. M. (1991). *Redrawing the triangle: The role of natural fathers in infant adoption post 1984 (Vic) Adoption Act*. Unpublished master's thesis, La Trobe University, Victoria, Australia.

- Petta, G. A., & Steed, L. G. (2005). The experience of adoptive parents in adoption reunion relationships: A qualitative study. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 75, 230-241.
- Sachdev, P. (1991). The birth father: A neglected element in the adoption equation. *Families in Society*, 72 (3), 131-138.
- Van de Mheen, H., Coumans, M., Barendregt, C., & Van der Poel, A. (2006). A drug monitoring system: Keeping a finger on the pulse by triangulation of qualitative and quantitative methods. *Addiction Research and Theory*, 14, 461-473.
- Witney, C. (2004). Original fathers: An exploration into the experiences of birth fathers involved in adoption in the mid-20th century. *Adoption and Fostering*, 28, 52-61.