



ADOPTION: THE ROLE OF FAMILY
INTEGRATION WITHIN ADOPTIVE
FAMILIES

Adoption: The Role of Family Integration within Adoptive Families

Sarah Edmunds

Division of Multi-disciplinary Design, University of Utah

DES 3520-001, Design Product Studio 2, Elpitha
Tsoutsounakis

Fall 2022

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1

RESEARCH

2

OPPORTUNITIES
AND
PARAMETERS

3

DESIGN
PROCESS

4

THE PRODUCT

5

PLATFORM
FLOW

6

SUPPLEMENTAL
RESEARCH
DRAWING

7

IMPACT

8

BIBLIOGRAPHY

9

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS
AND COLOPHON

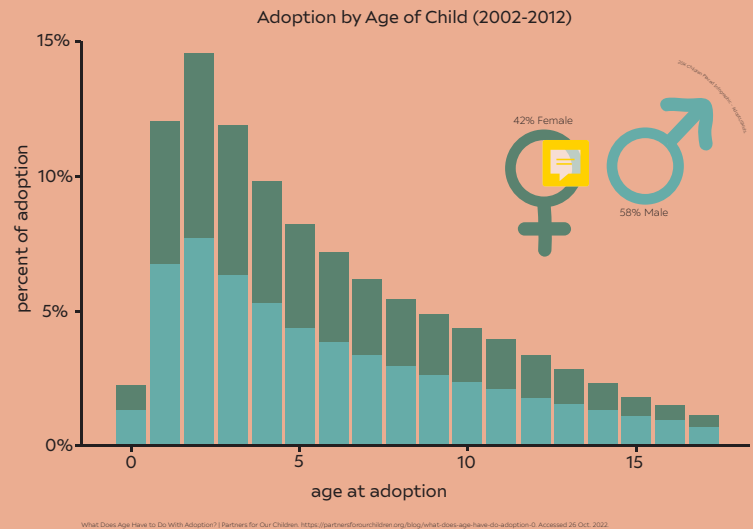


Through research I learned that there are a lot of positives and negatives about the adoption system. I initially researched general adoption statistics such as: males are adopted more often, the most common age to get adopted is around 2 years old, and 1 in 35 children are adopted in the United States (US Adoption Statistics | Adoption Rates In The US) (20K Children Placed Infographic - AdoptUSKids). Out of adopted children, 55% are adopted out of foster care, 22% are adopted right after birth, and 23% are adopted by extended family ("Children Adopted from Foster Care").

There can be long term effects that occur within children that are adopted because of the guilt, loss, shame, identity crisis, and rejection within the foster care system and adoption system. These emotions can carry on into behavioral issues such as PTSD, anxiety, ADD/ADHD, bipolar, social anxiety, etc., but this isn't the case with all adopted children. Generally, a child will develop these symptoms, called Adopted Child Syndrome, if they had a traumatic life before or during foster care, if their adoptive parents didn't teach them about being adopted or care for them in the correct way, or if they have a disturbed family life ("Seven Core Issues in Adoption and Permanency").

When it comes to parenting a child that is adopted, transparency, communication, and care are very important. A parent should be telling a child that they are adopted as soon as they can and to explain it in a way that makes sense at every age group. When a child starts getting older, it's likely that they will be asking a lot more questions about their adoption, and it's best for parents to tell their children everything they know even if it's hard to talk about. Children might also be interested in taking genetics tests or meeting their birth families. This is often the hardest aspect for parents to go through because they feel that their kid is "leaving them". Parents need to be very open and communicative within this step to make sure no resentment or tension is created within the family ("When to Tell a Child They Are Adopted").

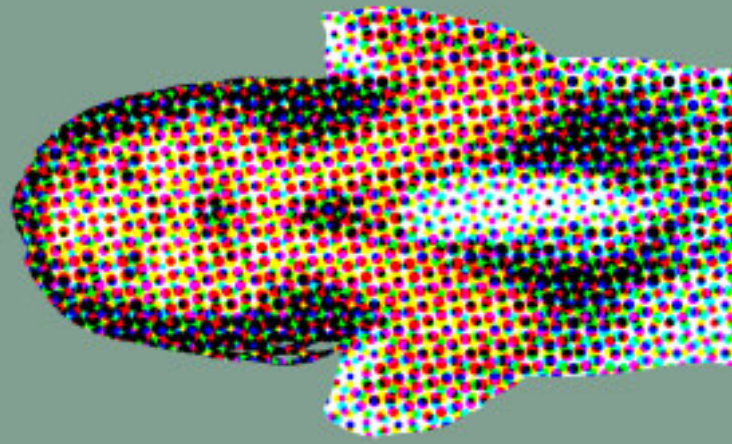
It was also important for me to interview those in my life that are adopted to get another perspective into the adoption system. I interviewed 4 people in total and asked a variety of questions to learn about their lives.



1. How old are you?
2. What age were you adopted? If you were older, do you remember anything from before you were adopted?
3. At what age did you find out you were adopted? How did you find out?
4. Overall, would you say you had a positive or negative childhood experience with your adoptive families?
5. Have you contacted or thought about contacting birth parents?
6. What were the emotions/experiences like between you and your adoptive family if you did reach out to your birth family?
7. Would you adopt children if you had the chance?
8. What is your relationship with your adoptive families now? Birth families if possible?
9. What advice would you give to adopted kids or parents looking to adopt to make the adoption process easier/healthier?

Out of the 4 that I interviewed, all were male, two were in their early 20s, one was in their teens, and one was in their 50s. Some important insights that I gathered from these interviews influenced my final product:

- "I felt so different from my family, even as a kid."
- "I never felt like I had my own things"
- "Home didn't feel like home because of language my parents would use"
- "Race was a big issue and challenge in my family because I'm Black and they're White, I rarely felt understood."
- "Discussions about birth family was always a sensitive topic"



OPPORTUNITIES AND PARAMETERS

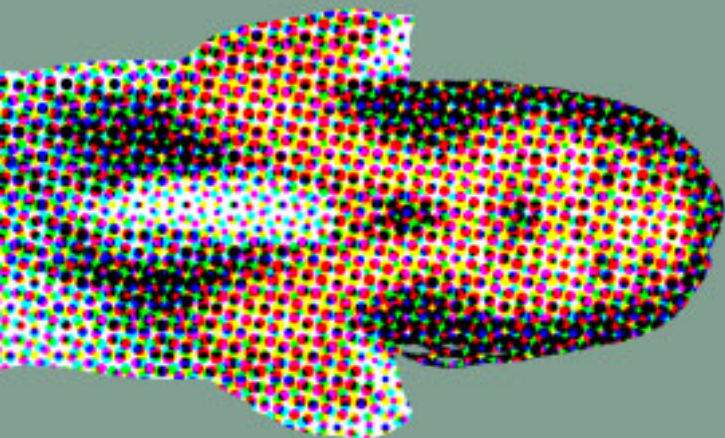
I felt that I had a lot of opportunities and ideas going into this project. I generated ideas ranging from creating a family connection game, introducing a new way to approach the adoption system, adoption therapy sessions, adoption social media, adoption groups at schools, creating a family album, an informational platform, adoption “merch”, etc.

From generating a range of opportunities, I set up the parameters for my project. I wanted to create a digital product because I never had before and I wanted to learn those skills. The parameters for my intended user changed throughout my project. It was initially supposed to just be something children would use, then it turned into children and parents, and I ended with the user being just the parent(s). I also set up

I knew that I also wanted to focus on bringing positivity, clarity, and a voice to the adoption system. I also kept in mind of how my topic fits into The Commons and how I wanted to achieve that. My topic fits into The Commons through reproduction of care and the commons on communication and knowledge.

My opportunities and set parameters led me to my How Might We statement.

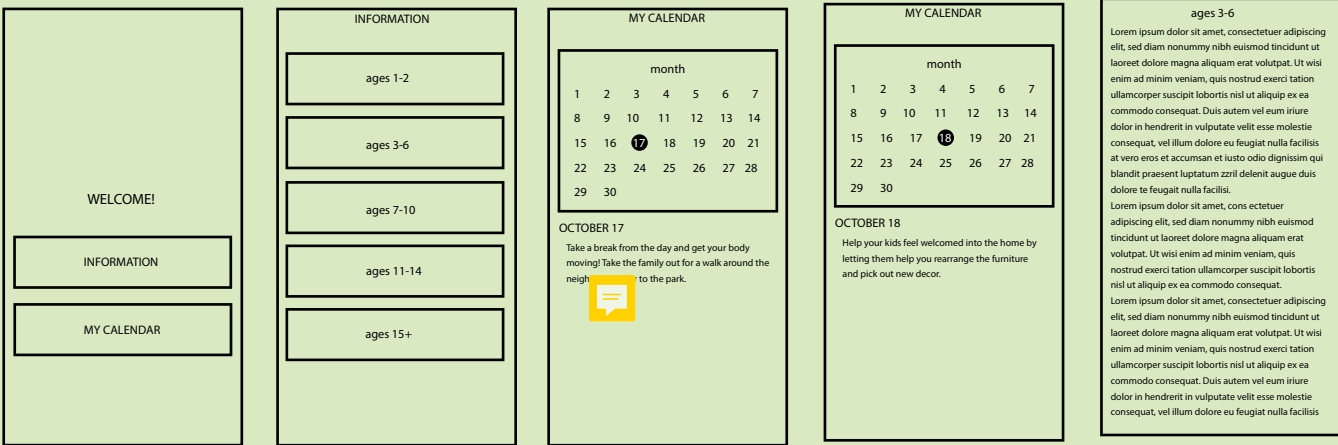
HMW How might we aid adopted children and adoptive parents in the family integration process through a designed product?



DESIGN PROCESS

My design process always starts with thinking and research. After researching, I often start to generate ideas, create wire frames, and look at precedents for what I may want to achieve. After I've decided on a direction that I want to go, then I will start to organize my research into drawings. My drawings will go through several iterations before coming to my final and will often show me aspects that I didn't realize before. Throughout my project, I was still performing research to broaden my perspective.

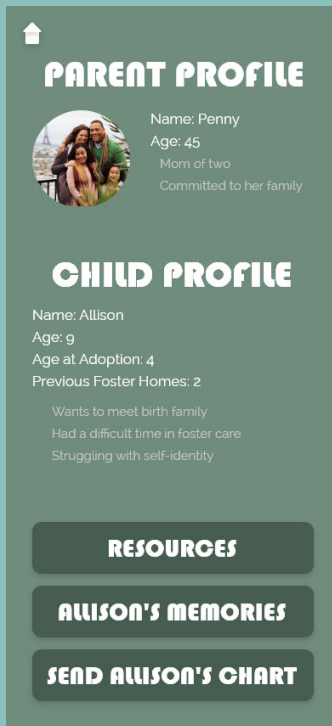
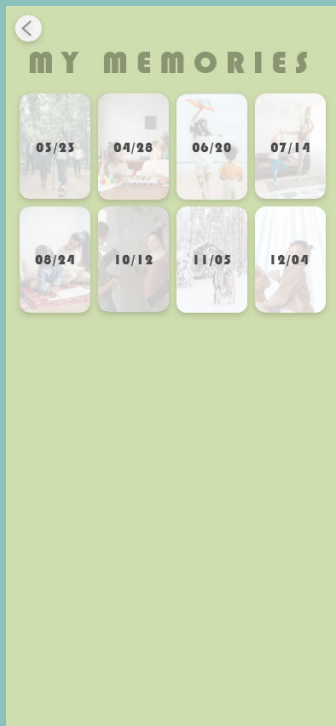
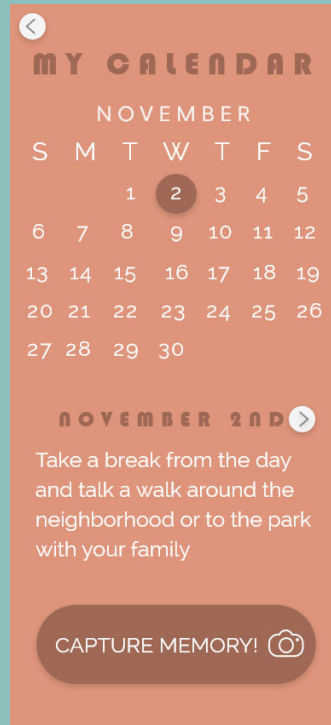
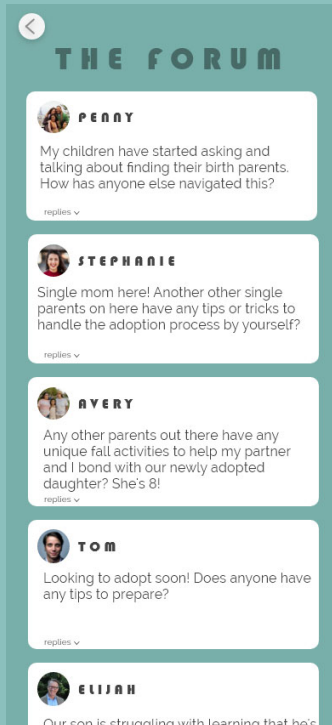
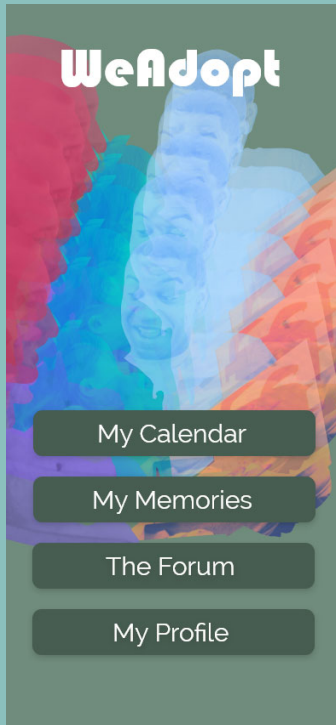
INITIAL WIRE FRAMING



FIRST PROTOTYPE

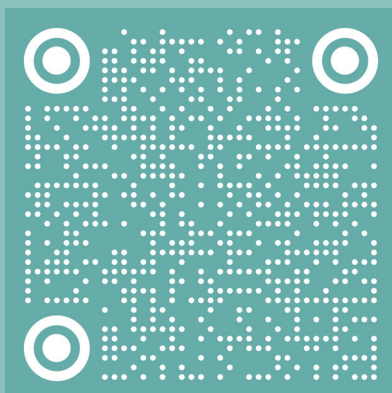


THE PRODUCT - WeAdopt



I have decided to focus on the moment when a child is adopted and brought into their adoptive families and how they can easily integrate into these families at any age through an online platform and experience.

The platform experience I will create will be intended for parental use. Parents will be able to download the app before or after they adopt, and use it accordingly. There will be a variety of activities that families will be able to participate in, which is the main focus of the app. Some of the activities are from the Insights I gained through my interview process. Parents will be able to "capture memories" during their activities to look back on. Lastly, parents will be able to communicate with other adoptive parents through a forum and access a variety of adoption resources.

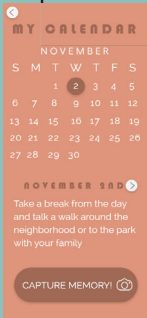


PLATFORM FLOW

welcome page

"my calendar"

takes the parents do their daily activity or task for the day to complete with their child/children. Parents should add each activity according to age and physical/mental ability according as they see fit. Opportunity to add photos or comments to the date to look back on



Profile

"my memories"



The Forum

takes parents to a forum message board where parents can ask a questions and replies can be made within that thread. This is a way for adoptive parents to connect, share tips, and ask questions around adoption

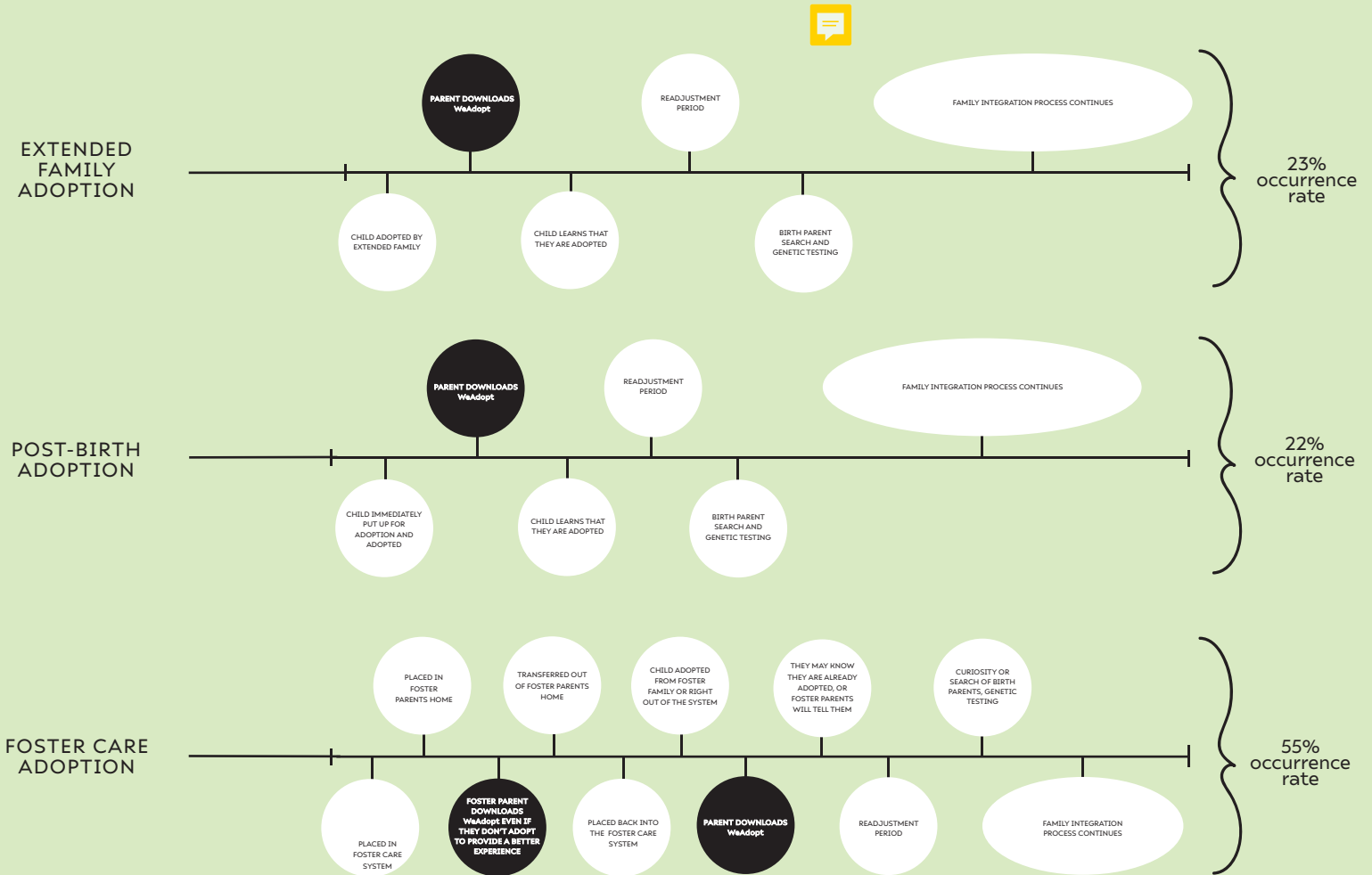


takes parents to their "memories" homepage where they can preview past memories from activities that they've done with their families

parents will be able to view their information as well as their child's information. They can send their child's chart to anyone they would like and they will be able to access the child's info and memories. Parents can find multiple adoption resources within their profile too.



SUPPLEMENTAL RESEARCH DRAWING






IMPACT

I picture this app being able to be integrated into our everyday lives. The Foster care system/adoption system and therapists would notify new adoptive parents of this platform before or when they adopt a child. My hope is that it will help adoptive families be able to connect, learn from each other, make memories, learn from the resources provided, and to help adoptive parents learn how to be the best they can be for their adopted child, no matter the circumstances. I want this app to help adopted children feel understood and heard when it comes to discussing their difficulties and questions, and for this understanding to come from their families. My family is the most important thing to me, and I want others to feel the same.



BIBLIOGRAPHY

- 20K Children Placed Infographic - AdoptUSKids. <https://adoptuskids.org:443/for-the-media/help-raise-public-awareness/20K-children-placed-infographic>. Accessed 25 Sept. 2022.
- Carranza, Monica. "Effects of Adoption on Child Development." Child Abuse Prevention, Treatment & Welfare Services | Children's Bureau, 17 Nov. 2021, <https://www.all4kids.org/news/blog/effects-of-adoption-on-child-development/>.
- "Children Adopted from Foster Care: Child and Family Characteristics, Adoption Motivation, and Well-Being." ASPE, <https://aspe.hhs.gov/reports/children-adopted-foster-care-child-family-characteristics-adoption-motivation-well-being-0>. Accessed 3 Dec. 2022.
- Neil, Elsbeth. "Making Sense of Adoption: Integration and Differentiation from the Perspective of Adopted Children in Middle Childhood." *Children and Youth Services Review*, vol. 34, no. 2, Feb. 2012, pp. 409–16. ScienceDirect, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2011.11.011>.
- "Seven Core Issues in Adoption and Permanency." The North American Council on Adoptable Children, <https://nacac.org/resource/seven-core-issues-in-adoption-and-permanency/>. Accessed 21 Sept. 2022.
- US Adoption Statistics | Adoption Rates In The US.  <https://www.lifelongadoptions.com/adoption-statistics>. Accessed 3 Dec. 2022.
- "When to Tell a Child They Are Adopted." Choosing Therapy, <https://www.choosingtherapy.com/when-to-tell-a-child-they-are-adopted/>. Accessed 22 Sept. 2022.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First, I would like to thank those who participated in my research and discussed some difficult topics about their childhood or current situation. I would also like to thank all of my classmates and the MDD program for their support. Lastly, I would like to thank my instructor Elpitha Tsoutsounakis for being supportive and encouraging me to do my best. You've all made an impact on this project and I cannot thank you enough for that.

COLOPHON

This report utilizes both Raleway and Felix Titling typefaces. Document is set in RGB color mode. Images are stock and resourced from Unsplash. This report was produced through Adobe Illustrator version 27.0.1 and Adobe Photoshop version 24.0.1.