Domestic Infant Adoption: Family Communication about Adoption and Adopted Child Curiosity

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Definition of Openness

- A continuum of contact and communication between members of the adopted child’s birth and adoptive families.
  (Grotevant & McRoy, 1998)

- Confidential
- Mediated
- Fully Disclosed
Openness as a dynamic process

- Intensity of desire for contact by any member of the adoption kinship network (adoptive parents, adopted children, birth parents)
- Adoptive and birth family dynamics
- Current level of openness
- Emotional Distance Regulation
Adoption Related Family Communication

- David Kirk’s classic theory
  - Acknowledgment of Difference
  - Rejection of Difference

- Adoption Communicative Openness
  - Brodzinsky
  - Grotevant and Neil
Adoption Communicative Openness

- Communication with the child about adoption
- Promotion of the child’s dual connection to two families
- Empathy with and tolerance of the child’s feelings about adoption
- Communication with the birth family
- Empathy for birth relatives
Adoption Related Communication and Child Curiosity

Possible Responses

- Share all available information
- Share all available information while seeking more
- Share some information and withhold other information
- Withhold all available information
What are adopted children placed as infants curious about at adolescence?

- 1. Reasons for placement
- 2. Other children being parented
- 3. Appearance
- 4. How the birth parent “was doing”
- 5. Personality characteristics
Information Seeking

The gathering of information previously unknown to the adopted person about his or her adoption and birth family.

(Wrobel & Dillon, 2009)
Thoughts for Practitioners and Families

- Curiosity is a normative experience and changes over time.

- Communication about adoption should remain open and flexible.
Thoughts for Practitioners and Families

- Deciding yes or not to information seeking is a normative process yet not all adopted persons seek out additional information.

- When contact exists between birth and adoptive families, there should be flexibility in the amount and type of information shared.