

A Study on the Disclosure Experience of Adoptees

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Abstract : Disclosing family origins to adoptees is an important topic in the adoption process. Adoption agencies usually educate adoptive parents on how to disclose to adoptees, but many adoptive parents worry that the disclosure will affect the parent-child relationship. Thus, how adoptees would like to receive the disclosure and whether they subjectively feel that the parent-child relationship is affected are both topics worthy of further discussion. This research takes a qualitative approach and connects with adoption agencies to interview six adoptees who are now adults. The purpose of the interviews is to learn about their experience receiving disclosures and their subjective feelings after learning of their family origins. The aim is to reveal the changes disclosure brought to the parent-child relationship and whether common concerns are raised due to the adoptive status. We also want to know about factors that affect their identification with their adopted status so that we can consequently give advice to other adoptive families. In this study, it is found that adoptees see disclosure as a process rather than an isolated event. The majority want to be told their family origin as early and proactively as possible and expect to learn the reasons they were given up for adoption and taken in as adoptees. The disclosure does not necessarily influence the parent-child relationship, and adoptees care more about the positive experiences they had with adoptive parents in their childhood. Moreover, adopted children seek contact with their original family mostly to understand why they were given up for adoption. The effects of disclosure depend on how the adoptive parents or other significant people in the lives of adoptees interpret the identity of the adoptees. That is, their response and attitude toward the identity have a lasting impact on the adoptees. The study suggests that early disclosure gives adoptees a chance to internalize the experience in the process and find self-identification.

Keywords : adoption, adoptees, disclosure of family origins, parent-child relationship, self-identity

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