

IDENTITY NEEDS AND OPENNESS IN ADOPTION

Identity is NOT:

- ❖ Stable and unchanging, or formed once and for all
- ❖ Formed and negotiated by the individual alone
- ❖ A solely internal process

Identity IS:

- ❖ Fluid and changing over the course of the life span
- ❖ A joint task of the individual and other “identity agents”
- ❖ Constructed through communication, conversation, and narrative

*A child will develop his or her adoptive identity based on conversation and communication with “identity agents” (primarily adoptive parents) who serve as a guide through the identity formation process. A healthy adoptive identity **can** be developed with or without openness. However, open adoptions provide many opportunities for identity conversations. Here are some ways openness can facilitate identity formation.*

Inracial Adoption		Transracial Adoption	
Identity Need: Adoption Identity	Openness Provides:	Identity Need: Racial/Cultural Identity	Openness Provides:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal and genetic history: A child can evaluate how he is similar to or continues the family history as well as areas of individual differentiation • Resolution to questions surrounding loss of biological family • Contradiction to child’s self-blame for the loss of biological family: Recognition that the loss was not her fault • Promotion of security in the adoptive family 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to navigate racial difference between self and family • Sense of acceptance from racial/cultural group • Opportunity for biculturalism • Opportunity to relationally develop identity prior to adulthood • Experience community of origin independent of parents • Preparation for racist encounters