

“What should I tell him?” The  
concealing/revealing strategies of parents of  
intersex children

## Pilot Studie

Focus: Parents of Intersex Children in Germany  
and Israel

Data: 17 narrative Interviews

Period: 2013 - 2016

## Main Differences between Israel and Germany:

- Prenatal Testing
- Political Activism
  - Self-help Groups
  - Political Discourse

## Concealing Strategies

- Genital Surgeries
  - Secrecy

→ Disordered Relationship

→ High Emotional Pressure

## Revealing Strategies

→ Role-Models

- Talking more or less open with friends, neighbors and teachers

→ Self-Help Structures

→ High Energy required

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Anike Krämer M.A.

*„We were living in an apartment building and a nice lady who had just moved in went down the stairs and I had to leave at that moment and Annette was right beside me. We are very open, so it is clear that she is both and she said: “Hey, is your little rascal a girl or a boy?” as we went down the stairs. You think that question has a quick answer ... and I said, “Well, I am in hurry. My child was born with ambiguous genitalia and I can explain it to you another time but I have to leave.” And then I asked my child. In my head the questions went round and round. Did I have to clarify it? Did I have to tell her in that situation or not? But my kid was standing beside me and I couldn’t say she was a girl. She would wonder what had happened and think “up until now I wasn’t a girl [laughs]” and I would have to deny that.“ (Oppermann 2013)*

*“We didn’t talk about it with everybody, we didn’t talk about it with people with whom we didn’t want to talk about it.” (Kleis 2013)*

*„I can actually say that there were no problems with the openness and disclosure. There was nobody that we had talked to who reacted in a strange way, but also when you did not talk about it and she was naked somewhere, nobody said anything.“  
(Kleis 2013)*

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*“It is true that you don’t pee like other children and you spray [your pee] and you remember the surgery that we did and now we need to do another one to repair it because we want everything to work as it should.” {...} I explain[ed] that there are people with many problems; Yaron has hearing problem, and Roni cannot see very well and wears glasses and you have a penis problem. We discussed this before the surgery and I told him that there were people, including children, who had different problems.” (Sigal 2015)*



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Anike Krämer M.A.

*“We talk about her being a girl and also a little bit of a boy. We tell her she has a vagina and a penis because she is also a little bit of a boy. And so we try to keep it at the level of talk. But this is certainly abstract [...] She talks about her penis, so we know that she knows that there is something. On the other hand, she recently said, “In the kindergarten I am only a girl.” If you ask her if she feels more like a girl or more like a boy, she answers that most of the time she is like a girl and sometimes also like a boy. “I also play with cars,” for example.” (Kleis 2013)*

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## Anike Krämer M.A.

### Conclusion:

- Medical exposure has big impact on parents
- Role-Models and Self-Help has a big influence
  - Parents in Israel and Germany have other options for action
- Concealing Strategies: Surgery and Secrecy
- Revealing Strategies: Disclosure and different Wording

Thank you for your attention!

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