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



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Pilot Studie

Focus: Parents of Intersex Children in Germany and Israel

Data: 17 narrative Interviews

Period: 2013 - 2016



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Main Differences between Israel and Germany:

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

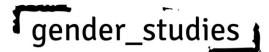


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Concealing Strategies

- 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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"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)



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"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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"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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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



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Thank you for your attention!

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