

Make Room for Daddy: The Impact of Father Involvement on the Adoption Dialogue in Transnationally Adoptive Families

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Recent research on strengths in adoptive family functioning has highlighted the possibility that the challenges couples face during their arduous journey to adoptive parenthood may later benefit their coparenting, rather than compromise it. Adoptive fathers are more highly involved in parenting than other fathers and adoptive couples participate more collaboratively than nonadoptive couples in certain tasks of childrearing. Recent meta-analytic findings that international adoptees function better than domestically adopted children and not significantly more poorly than their nonadopted peers generated speculation that there may be strengths unique to this adoptive family environment. This presentation reports on poster differences in coparenting around adoption in families where fathers are either highly or minimally involved in addressing the topic.

It will be based on a sample of 67 internationally adoptive heterosexual couples with children between the ages of 4 and 7 years old, placed with the family as infants. Parents were interviewed conjointly about their experiences and philosophies regarding communication with young children about adoption. Quantitative coding of extent of paternal involvement yielded a continuum. Two subsets of couples, one at each end of this father involvement continuum, will be selected for qualitative examination of what their interviews reveal about the impact that a father's participation has on the coparenting process around addressing adoption. Themes that differentiate the two

groups will be illustrated with presentation of narrative excerpts documenting families' experiences with early adoption conversations.

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