relationships. These studies explore the significance of sibling relationships when children are separated from their birth parents; contact between separated siblings; and the relationship between sibling group structure and adoption outcomes.

This is followed by a section of personal and professional accounts relating to the needs of siblings for contact with each other. Of particular interest in this section are Shobha and Marylin's (sisters who were separated by Shobha's adoption before Marylin was born) account of their first meeting as young adults; and Joy Wilkings' story of the sibling relationships between her four adopted children, two of whom are biologically related.

Section Four covers the needs of siblings in situations where there are also other special considerations – siblings who are of non-Anglo-Celtic background; siblings who have been sexually abused; siblings where one or more of the children have Down's Syndrome; siblings who are adopted by single adopters; and non-biologically related siblings who grow up together in residential care.

Section Five explores the needs of adults who search for siblings from whom they were separated many years earlier. A particularly poignant story in Pam Hodgkins' chapter concerns a man who has grieved for the loss of his baby sister Mavis, who was relinquished for adoption over 50 years ago.

The final section of this excellent collection explores the implications of the contributions in all sections for policy and practice in child placement. Audrey Mullender (p. 340) states:

> at present most children are still being cut off from at least some of their siblings ... all decisions about siblings need to take into account sibling relationships ... over a lifetime ...and to involve children as partners and as experts in their own lives.

This is a thought-provoking and well written book which has a lot to offer adoption professionals and adoptive parents.

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Telling the truth to your adopted or foster child

Betsy Keefer & Jayne Schooler   Bergin and Garvey, Westport, Connecticut, 2000. 235pp.

In previous generations, adoptive parents often struggled with the issue of whether, and how, to tell their child that s/he was adopted. This is no longer an issue in the Australian context. However, there are nevertheless other things which Australian parents and professionals find difficult to discuss with children in their care. This book covers talking to children about such issues as parental mental illness and substance abuse, sexual abuse, prostitution, rape and incest, as well as the ways in which adoptive parents can choose to address more general adoption issues with their child.

Telling the Truth to Your Adopted or Foster Child explores why parents may be reluctant to discuss with their children difficult information about the child's past and how certain myths (eg, the need to protect the child, fear of losing the child, or fear of telling the child at the 'wrong' time) influence this reluctance. It also discusses the impact of secrets on family relationships and explores ways of sharing even the most difficult information with children in an age-appropriate way.

In a chapter entitled *The Ten Commandments of Telling*, the authors go through some basic principles which underlie the sharing of information with children and adolescents. These include not trying to 'fix' the pain of adoption, never lying to a child and remembering that the child probably knows more than the parents think s/he does.

The most important aspect of this book for me are the practical examples of how difficult information can be shared with a small child, an older child and a teenager. The authors give many examples of what can be said to children at each of these stages of development. In addition, there is a chapter on

the 'tools' of communication - life books, games, stories, doll and puppet plays, letter writing, etc.

The book also has a chapter on the need for communication about racial and cultural issues in transracial and transcultural placements. One of the things I particularly like about this chapter is the suggestion for family code words or gestures to signal an end to situations in which another person is behaving rudely or inappropriately.

Finally, this very informative book provides guidelines on how parents can prepare teachers and schools for the issues which adoption and foster care may present. There is a good section on the pros and cons of sharing the child's history with schools and specific suggestions for ways in which teachers can handle projects such as making a family tree.

Telling the Truth to Your Adopted or Foster Child is a highly practical book which is as useful to parents and professionals in Australia, as it no doubt also is in the United States. I thoroughly recommend it.

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