

WHO COUNTS AS FAMILY

| Keep — one-page takeaway

Scope note: this territory has a literature written largely by the adoptees inside it, and it does not fit in one lesson. Treat this as orientation. Expect to read further, seek consultation, and consider referral or co-treatment.

Kinship adoption

- The biological family who couldn't raise them is the family who did. The original family system is inside the adoptive family system.
- Often no adoption language was ever used, so the client may not present with adoption framing. The material surfaces around the family, not around "adoption."
- Overlapping roles: grandmother who is also mother, biological mother who is also aunt, cousins who are also siblings. The cultural script doesn't fit.
- Grief happens inside ongoing relationships, often with the crisis (addiction, death, incarceration, removal) witnessed directly.
- Adoptive parents carry their own grief about their own child. Many kinship adoptees grew up managing that.
- Don't import adoption framing. Follow what the client notices.

Same-sex parent adoption

- More visible since the 1990s, more common since 2015 marriage equality.
- Older adoptees may have had one legal parent for years, or parents married in some states and not others. Legal precarity is part of the family history.

Single parent and other configurations

- Follow the client's own account rather than the configuration's reputation.

Continued considerations

- How many kinship adoptees are already on your caseload, unnamed as such?
- What does your intake do with a client whose grandmother is also her mother?
- Sit with this: what's lost when a family never had language for what it was?