

A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY OF THE ADOPTION EXPERIENCE
OF ADOLESCENTS AND THEIR FAMILIES

by

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ABSTRACT

A descriptive study was conducted to investigate the adoption experience within the family. Adoptive families who participated in this study were assumed to be a relatively heterogeneous sample of the target population - families with at least one adopted child who had been adopted early in life, and who was presently 14-18 years of age. Thirteen adoptive families participated in the study. Qualitative data regarding each individual's perception of the adoption experience was obtained through semi-structured interviews. Each participant also completed the Family Environment Scale (Moos, 1974), which was used as a descriptive measure only. Data from the interviews underwent a qualitative data analysis to arrive at the themes and patterns that described the adoptee's and the adoptive parents' experiences. Parent-child perceptual discrepancies were also analysed to assess the similarities and the differences in family perceptions regarding the adoption experience.

Conclusions that can be drawn based on the results of the qualitative analysis is that adoptive families appear to be vulnerable to problems during the adolescent stage of the family life cycle because of the adoptee's emerging curiosity and the problems of openly communicating these concerns within the family. Results from this study also point to the need for adopting couples to receive education regarding the role of adoptive parenthood, and counsellors who work with adoptive families should be aware of when the factors of adoption can contribute to family difficulties and dysfunction.

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A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY OF THE ADOPTION EXPERIENCE
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CHAPTER I

Introduction

Family therapists have volumes of resource material available to them as an aid to studying family dynamics. In recent years, the number of reconstituted families formed through divorce and remarriage have generated further resource material regarding the dynamics of single parent families and blended families. Family therapists acknowledge that these reconstituted families require, in many cases, a different frame of reference for treating these families' problems (Olson, 1970). A family group that has received little attention from family therapists is the adoptive family.

Although the adoptive family is a minority in North American society the dynamics of the adoptive family warrant serious investigation because of the evidence that suggests that adoptive families are more vulnerable to stress and familial problems than biological families (Sorosky, Baran, & Pannor, 1978; Kirk, 1981). For years the myth existed that to adopt was little different than bearing one's own children (Pringle, 1967). But many researchers now agree that the roles and relational norms of the adoptive family group depart significantly from those of the biological family (Kirk, 1964; Sorosky et al, 1978; Sokoloff, 1979). Although adoptions do take place among step-parents and relatives, it is with the process of non-relative adoptions with which this research is concerned. In these instances the child has a biological, medical and genealogical history that is different from that of the adoptive family.

Allan Gurman (1982), a family therapist wrote:

Whitaker's (1976) idea that people are fragments of families brings to mind the question: from which family is the adopted child a fragment? To which family tree is the child attached - the biological family, the adoptive family, both, or neither? (p. 70)

The resolution of this dilemma at an intellectual or emotional level is not always an easy task for the adoptive family. Families with adopted children often have unresolved problems related to the sense of belonging of the adopted child and the nature of that belonging (Gurman, 1982). This problem is unique to those families where no biological ties exist. The factor of adoption adds another dimension for exploration and resolution in the adoptive family, and can get in the way of the developmental tasks facing both parent and child (Erickson, 1961).

Why focus on the adopted adolescent? The focus of the present study is on adopted adolescents and their parents. Adoption is an ongoing process which affects the adoptive family members' during each stage of the adoptee's maturation (Sokoloff, 1979). Developmentally, adolescence is a potentially more stressful time for the adoptee and his parents because of possible conflicts around the issues of adoption. This subject will be elaborated on in chapter two. Mackie (1982) reports that many adolescent adoptees referred to him for treatment appeared to have had trouble-free childhoods, but upon reaching adolescence suddenly developed problematic behavior much to the anxiety and bewilderment of their parents. Winnicott (1971) believes that all children reorient to life at puberty and adopted children at this age have a special task and need specialized help. He further states that adoptive parents also need specialized help in managing their feelings stirred up by the adolescents' curiosity about their origins and their strivings for independence.

Statement of the Problem

Many hypotheses have been generated in an attempt to explain why the adolescent adoptee might be at risk for problems, but little empirical data has been obtained from the adopted adolescent to verify these hypotheses. A further problem is that the adolescent has been studied in isolation from the family. In order to understand the special problems that adopted adolescents might face, research must include a look at the family relationships, and the feelings and perceptions of both parent and child so that the dynamics of the adoptive family relationship can be elucidated.

A rarely considered factor in the study of families is the lack of congruence between family members' perceptions of their relationships and interactions (Olson, 1970). Olson (1970) believes that the level of intrafamily stress may be elevated due to the discrepant perceptions of parents and their adolescents regarding family issues and dynamics. For the adoptive family, discrepant perceptions between parent and child regarding adoption issues might be a factor adding to the strain of adoptive family life, particularly during adolescence. This issue will be explored in the present research.

In order for therapists to competently counsel adoptive families an understanding of the dynamics of the adoptive family is, in this writer's opinion, absolutely essential. Adult adoptees have reported that if the subject of adoption was raised in therapy they were assured that it was unrelated to their problem, and must not be allowed to become an excuse for their present difficulties (Sorosky et al, 1978). Adoptees who are already overwhelmed with confusion and self-doubt find their self-doubt reinforced in a process of therapy that does not recognize that adoptive

status can be a source of disturbance itself (Sorosky et al, 1978.).

The adoptive family, like the blended family, does not function like the biological family, and therapists must become aware of adoption psychology and recognize when psychological problems might be related to the client's adoption experience.

A great deal of research has been conducted by child welfare professionals on adoption over the years, but unfortunately the data base remains small concerning the adoption experience itself. So much has been written about the adoptive family, and so little on what it feels like to be adopted, that its time researchers began really examining the adoption experience through those individuals most involved -- the adoptee and the adoptive parents. Assessing the cause of adoptive family problems is only relevant once the researcher knows what has been experienced. The theoretical notions concerning the nature of the adolescent adoptee's emotional problems have been verified only through retrospective accounts by adult adoptees. Adolescent adoptees and their parents have not had the opportunity to describe their experiences in any systematic studies known to this researcher.

The purpose of this study is to explore the adoption experience within the family to find out how adoption is experienced by adolescent adoptees and their parents. This will be accomplished through in-depth interviews with the adoptees and their parents. For the purposes of this study, "experience" is defined as, the reaction to adoption including the entire range of thoughts, feelings, or behaviors which relate in any way to adoption, and the meaning given to these events, and the effect on the families' everyday lives.

As this study is descriptive in nature, the following questions are addressed:

1. How does the adopted adolescent experience adoption? What problems if any, do they face?
2. How do the adoptive parents experience adoption? What problems if any, do they face?
3. Are there any recurring patterns in the adoptive family situation? Are there common themes in the lives of the adolescents, and adoptive parents?
4. What are the similarities or differences between the parents' and adoptees' perceptions of the adoption experience?
5. What implications do these findings have for therapists counselling adopted adolescents, or adoptive parents?

By describing the adoption experience from the perspective of the adopted adolescent and the adoptive parents, the information gleaned from this qualitative research can be used by adoption agencies to benefit the adoption process; and counsellors who work with troubled adolescents or families would be more aware of when the adoption situation can create family difficulties, and therefore be in a better position to treat the presenting problem(s).

CHAPTER II

Review of the Literature

A Background Look at Adoption

Historically, legal adoption in North America is a relatively new process. Adoption has existed for centuries in most parts of the world, but the first general adoption laws weren't enacted until the mid-nineteenth century (Derdeyn, 1979). English Common Law, the foundation of much of North American law, did not recognize adoption as a legal procedure until 1926 (Derdeyn & Wadlington, 1977). During this early period of adoptions the laws were designed to meet the needs of the adopters, not the adopted child. Many adoptions were arranged casually through newspaper ads such as; "mother wants to give up baby boy, two weeks old", or "wanted to adopt a baby girl up to four years" (Derdeyn, 1979). Throughout the 1920's and 1930's the social service agencies in the United States had to recruit adoptive parents for white infants. Negative attitudes toward illegitimacy and toward bringing children of "different blood" into a family set up strong barriers to adoption (Reid, 1957). This attitude led to a belief by many adoption workers that the adopters were doing the child a favour by adopting him/her. The pressures arising from this recruitment policy led to an emphasis on matching parent to child, and guaranteeing that the child was without physical, emotional or mental defects (Reid, 1957). Children who didn't pass the tests were usually considered unadoptable and put into foster care. Babies were held for continued observation and developmental tests in order to reassure the adopters that the baby had good health and intellectual potential.

This early adoption procedure placed greater emphasis upon the study and screening of the child than upon the characteristics of the applicants. But during the late 1940's and early 1950's psychiatrists and other professionals

began examining the adoption agencies' infant tests and procedures, and pressure began mounting on the agencies to research their policies and procedures more fully. Bowlby's (1951) research on maternal care and mental health, and the suggested effect of maternal deprivation on an infant's development, promoted a shift in emphasis from heredity to mental health concerns. Agencies were encouraged to modify the use of infant tests and promote the placement of children at an earlier age. The decade of the 1950's was a period that produced a growing application of mental health principles to adoption. Prior to that time little significant research on adoption had appeared in the journals, and much of the theory and practice was based on the limited experience of the adoption worker.

Adoption is now viewed as the most suitable means of providing stable homes for children whose biological parents will not, or cannot care for them, and secondarily, providing children to childless couples. Differences in the adopted child's biological, medical and genealogical history from that of the adopters has led to the societal concern that the adopted child could suffer from bad heredity. This concern, in turn, led to the belief that adopted children should not receive all the rights and privileges due natural or "born to" children. For some time adopted children did not have inheritance rights from their adoptive families. In British Columbia the legislation was changed in 1953 to allow adopted children to inherit from their extended adoptive families. Although the concern over bad heredity, or bad blood, is not the serious issue it once was, the issue of illegitimacy, with all its negative connotations, has fostered a pessimistic view of some adoptees' potential.

Social climate in the late 1940's and 1950's was different in many respects from that of the 1970's and 1980's, particularly with regard to two key issues in adoption - heredity and illegitimacy (Raynor, 1980). During the 1940's and 1950's, illegitimacy was considered shameful, and if a girl was illegitimate there was the fear that she might grow up to repeat the "sins" of the unwed mother. In fact, one of the original purposes of the sealed record in adoption was to protect illegitimate children from the stigma attached to their status (Baran, Pannor, & Sorosky, 1974). Adoption legislation in B. C. states that "the fact of illegitimacy shall not be referred to in the adoption order" (Adoption Act RSBC 1979, Ch. 4, s 10(5)), thus indicating that illegitimacy is stigmatized in society. Unfortunately, most adoptees tend to assume that they are illegitimate because of the nature of adoption itself.

During the last decade changing societal attitudes toward illegitimacy, the more common use of oral contraceptives, the greater availability of safe, medical abortions, and the increased number of unwed mothers electing to keep their babies, has had a tremendous impact on the number of children available for adoption. In 1960 a family could adopt a healthy Caucasian infant even if they already had two or three children. In the 1980's prospective adoptive parents must meet eligibility criteria and they face a wait of up to five years to get a Caucasian infant (Murray, 1984).

Traditionally, the process of adoption has followed a system of secrecy. Records have been sealed after an adoption is legalized, and the adopted child is "as if born to" the adoptive family. Many adoptees have grown up not knowing that they were adopted. By the late 1950's adoption workers were urging adoptive parents to tell their children that they were

adopted early in life. The agencies wanted the children to know that they were adopted and that they were wanted or chosen by their adoptive parents. (Raynor, 1980). Although the agencies supported this policy, many parents would not, or could not bring themselves to tell the child. Today most workers believe it is in the family's best interest to tell the child early, and most parents tell their adopted children now about the circumstances surrounding their arrival in the family.

In tackling research on adoption it is important to keep in mind that society's changing morals, attitudes and values have influenced the practice of adoption. It is potentially harmful for a researcher studying adoption outcome and adoption experience to try to generalize too much from the past. Most adopted children today know that they are adopted, and communication about adoption is more open than it was 20 years ago, so the follow-up studies of the 1950's and 1960's do not completely reflect the generations of the 1970's and 1980's. Information gleaned from this research must be interpreted cautiously, bearing in mind just when and where it was done. A current example of the changes in society's attitude is the Cabbage Patch doll phenomenon that hit North America in 1983. It is now trendy for young children to play at being adoptive parents and this reflects a more open attitude toward adoption and its place in this society. It should also be mentioned however, that this doll craze has also generated some negative feelings from some individuals involved in adoption reform, as they believe that the marketing approach taken with these dolls has trivialized adoption and its attending problems.

In recent years an increasingly vocal group of adult adoptees have begun pressuring government to reassess its policy and open the adoption files. The controversy over sealed vs open records generates much heated debate from all those involved in the adoption triangle - the adoptee, the adoptive

parents and the biological parents. This is an issue mired in emotionalism, and subject to the vested interest of different pressure groups (Burgess, 1976). Questions that this controversy generates are: does the government have a right to deny an adult adoptee his/her birthright; what protection do the birth parents deserve if they wish to maintain anonymity, or, on the other hand, wish to have a reunion with the relinquished child; and what rights belong to the adoptive parents - should they have a guarantee that they can raise their adopted child without outside interference? These controversies have created a new facet to the adoption experience that no new adoptive family can ignore. In B.C., activist groups such as the Canadian Adoptees' Reform are working toward pressuring the government to reexamine their adoption policies. The media has also become involved in these issues and have subsequently published stories of birth parent/adoptee reunions and separated sibling reunions. The publicity that stories like these generate is leading to increased public awareness of the adoption process, but it is also complicating the process for those individuals involved in the adoption triangle. Couples who adopt today may not have the secrecy of records ensured in the future, and adopting couples may have to be prepared for their adopted children to investigate their biological origins. In order to further understand the circumstances surrounding the formation of the adoptive family, B. C.'s adoption policy is briefly outlined in the next section.

Adoption policy in British Columbia. In B. C. most adoptions are handled by the Family and Childrens' Services department of the Ministry of Human Resources. B. C. adoption policy is based on the provisions of the Adoption Act and is geared toward protecting the interests of the child.

In 1935 provisions were made in the Act to introduce secrecy of adoption documents. In B. C., when an adoption is legalized, "an adopted child becomes the child of the adopting parent, and the adopting parent becomes the parent of the child as if the child had been born to that parent in lawful wedlock" (Adoption Act, Ch. 4, s 11). In accordance with this legislation, adopted children receive all the rights and privileges that natural children receive from their parents. The relationship of parent to adopted child carries with it the same mutual rights and obligations that exist between children and their birth parents (Murray, 1984).

When couples adopt a child they are given non-identifying background information on the biological parents if they want it. The adoption worker will prepare a birth family history (deleting all identifying information) for the adopting parents, and this is available after placement. The adopted child has no legal access to these records, but at 19 years of age they can apply to receive this information from the Post-Adoption Services department of the Ministry of Human Resources.

In 1975 the Berger Commission on Family Law recommended the establishment in B. C. of an adoption registry which would help interested adult adoptees and their birth parents to reunite (Murray, 1984). Many adoptive parents became alarmed at this recommendation, lobbied successfully, and deterred the government from implementing the recommendations of the Commission (Murray, 1984). However, requests by adoptees to be put in touch with their biological relatives is increasing although the Ministry of Human Resources does not assist in these reunions but continues to make background information available.

The number of adoptions taking place in B. C. has dramatically shifted over the years and has begun to affect the government's policy regarding adoption. Prior to the 1970's the problem was homelessness. Babies often waited in hospitals or foster homes for some family to choose them. In 1960, 882 children were placed in adoptive homes, and in 1970, 1,943 children were placed (MHR Report, 1970, Note 1). In 10 years the placement of children in adoptive homes increased by 120%. It is the children of this decade, some of whom are now adolescents, that have participated in this study. The number of healthy Caucasian infants has steadily declined since then so that now the demand for healthy infants and young children far exceeds the supply (Murray, 1984). Because of this growing demand it is now the parents that are being chosen, not the babies. Eligibility criteria were introduced in 1981, so if you want to adopt in B. C. today you must be; a B. C. resident between 22 and 40 years of age, legally married or living common-law, childless or with only one child permanently in the home, or unable to have any children (MHR Family & Childrens' Services Procedure Manual, Note 2). A positive aspect to the present adoption situation is that because of the demand for children, more older children and special needs children are being placed in adoptive homes. So while it is a frustrating, often sad experience for the childless couple waiting for a baby, in this writer's opinion, it is preferable to having a glut of adoptable babies and no permanent families for them.

Although MHR arranges most adoptions in B. C., private adoptions do take place and appear to be on the increase. These kind of adoptions are often arranged through a physician and then registered with MHR. The changes

in policy have been influenced by the shift in the ratio of adoptable child to adoptive family, and is continuing to evolve to meet the demands of society. Current adoption practice, although differing from country to country, and province to province, still functions from a rather limited data base regarding the nature of adoptive family relations. What has been learned about the adoptive family is discussed next.

Adoptive Family Relations

Our society's cultural values have typically put great emphasis on blood ties and family kinship. Adoption has accordingly, been viewed as a second best alternative to biological parenthood. The fact that society has given priority to biological parenting can reinforce feelings of being different, impaired, or inferior in couples who adopt (Andrews, 1979). Most researchers generally accept that adoptive family relations are subject to strains not found in the biological family (Toussieng, 1962; Kirk, 1964; Sorosky et al, 1978).

Although adoption authorities normally make clear the legal and administrative responsibilities of adoption to the adopting couple, often the emotional responsibilities are unclear. If infertility is the reason for adoption, the adoptive parents must face the reasons for being unable to bear their own children. Other adoptive parents must come to terms with their feelings about illegitimacy. Adoptive mothers will not experience pregnancy and birth in relation to their children, and the adopting couple faces a series of different preparatory experiences before assuming the role of adoptive parents (Pringle, 1967). Kirk (1981) has clearly

outlined 10 situational discrepancies - contradictions between "culturally promised events" and actual personal experiences - that typically confront the adoptive family. These situational discrepancies are outlined on Table 1. Kirk's (1981) inventory of the situational discrepancies between biological parenthood and adoptive parenthood does not however, completely apply to families where biological children coexist with adopted children. Some of the role handicap of adoptive parenthood is alleviated in mixed families because often the parents don't have the infertility burden to cope with. Family constellation has not been extensively studied in adoptive families, but the ordinal position of an adopted child, or the presence of natural born children in the family could be a contributing factor in the successful/unsuccessful adjustment of adoptive families. The mixed family might also face some additional tasks in integrating an adopted child into a sibling group of biological children. Increased psychological stress may be experienced by adopted children in families where children differ in status, and the "own" vs "adopted" distinction can serve to exemplify differences (Kraus, 1978). In order to further understand how family structure can affect adoptive family relations it is clear that more research is indicated.

Once the adopting couple receives a child their tasks as parents continue to deviate from those of biological parents. One of the adopters' main tasks is to come to feel and experience the child as their own. Jaffee & Fanshel (1970) refer to this as entitlement, the adoptive parents must feel that the child belongs to them, and that they are entitled to him/her. Toussieng (1962) believes that the lack of a

TABLE I

Situational DiscrepanciesBiological Parenthood

1. Preparation for adult life presumes that there will be children. Thus couples have a mental link between marriage and the ability to have offspring.
2. The child's impending arrival makes possible sharing of news with family & friends.
3. Biological parenthood is rewarded in society. Medical and hospital plans help defray the costs of a child's arrival.
4. Once married, the couple have no further requirements to meet to make them eligible for parenthood.
5. The biological parents are ultimately independent in the procurement of their child.
6. Parental status is initiated during pregnancy and fully secured at birth.
7. Parents are expected to make the new baby one of their group, to integrate him in the family.
8. Preparation for parenthood is gradual, pregnancy provides a timetable that moves them towards parenthood gradually.
9. Maternity clothes act as an external sign to others of the couple's changing position, & assists them in moving toward parenthood.
10. At the time of the child's birth the family usually gathers around the couple and looks for family likeness in the newborn, & frequently they are participants in religious ceremonies to acknowledge the new baby's part in the family group.

Adoptive Parenthood

1. There is little preparation for sterility. Not many couples ever consider sterility as a possibility in their marriage.
2. The uncertainty connected with adoption plans frequently inhibits any discussion with family & friends.
3. Adopting couples have few equivalent arrangements to take care of the child's arrival. Tax laws don't provide for the deduction of adoption expenses.
4. Adopters have to show authorities that they are fit for parenthood.
5. Adopters are ultimately dependent on the services of a middle man, i.e. the agency or lawyer.
6. Parental status is not fully secured at the time of the child's arrival. Guardian rights remain in the hands of others until adoption is legalized.
7. Adopters must tell the child about his adoption and this can hamper the integration of the child into the family.
8. Preparation for parenthood tends to be abrupt, with no clear-cut timetable by which to shape their thoughts and feelings re parenthood.
9. For adopters there are few signs to impress on others & on themselves the changing position for which they are reaching.
10. In adoption there are no ceremonies of this order to mark the new member's arrival in the family. Knowledge of the rupture of the family line precludes looking for family likeness.
(Kirk, 1981, pp. 31-34)

biological tie leads to insecurity felt by the adoptive parents, and further, to their difficulty in believing the child really belongs to them. This attitude tends to create anxiety and tension in the child which can, in turn, affect the entire family relationship. The need for the parents to feel entitled to the child, and the need of the child to feel integrated with his adoptive family tends to conflict with the accepted requirement that children be told about their adoptive status (Triseliotis, 1973). Stone (1972) has referred to this as a double bind situation, adoptive parents find themselves in a "treat her like your own, but tell her she isn't" situation. This conflict ties in with a second very difficult, but important task for adoptive parents - helping adopted children base their identity on the concept of two sets of parents (Triseliotis, 1973). This is usually achieved by revealing the child's adoptive status at the appropriate time and through sharing with the child information about the adoptee's origins.

The accomplishment of a number of tasks for the adoptee are no less important to the success of the adoptive family. The adopted child must eventually accept the loss of the biological parents and the rejection that this implies, but he must also try to accomodate an image of the biological parents and his genealogy in his developing self (Triseliotis, 1973). Yet the adopted child must also come to feel a sense of belonging in the adoptive home and identify with the adoptive family to some extent. The adoptee must integrate the concept of adoption and what it means with the two sets of parents, a task that many adoptees have great difficulty with. The tasks unique to both adoptee and adoptive parent

can be hampered by a number of variables that will be discussed when the empirical literature is reviewed.

Adoptive families have also been viewed as more vulnerable than other families due to the following factors:

1. Pregnancy stress - birth mothers facing adoption of their babies may experience greater stress and anxiety which can have possible effects on the baby in utero.
2. The child may have been exposed to an anxiety laden atmosphere in the very early months of life.
3. The adoptive parents and the adoptee are unescapably affected by societal attitudes toward illegitimacy, either explicitly or unconsciously.
4. Adoption is not the prevailing pattern of child rearing and therefore constitutes a minority group (Pringle, 1967, p. 27).

These factors suggest that adoptive families can face handicaps right from the beginning of the formation of the family, although none of these factors have been systematically explored to determine the validity of such a view.

A theory of adoptive relations has been outlined by David Kirk (1964; 1981), who is himself an adoptive parent. Kirk conducted a number of research projects over a 10 year period (primarily the 1950's) on the subject of adoption and adoptive parenthood. The result of his endeavors produced his theory of adoptive relations. He proposed that the transition to adoptive parenthood was considerably more stressful than the transition to biological parenthood (Kirk, 1964). Kirk (1981) identified two main themes that stood out in differentiating how adoptive families coped. Adoptive parents appeared to learn to cope with the handicap associated with their unique role by either rejecting the differences or acknowledging the differences between their families and non-adoptive families (Kirk, 1964).

The "rejection of the difference" coping method serves to deny that the adoptive family situation is different from that of biological parents, while the "acknowledgment of differences" coping method serves to affirm the peculiarity of the adoption situation (Kirk, 1964). Kirk (1964) argues that it is the rejection of differences coping style that places the adoptive family at risk for adjustment problems because this method of coping does not promote communication among family members about adoption issues. He believes that the rejection of differences approach may assuage the adopters' pain of their own inability to have biological children, but does not in the long run, further the achievement of their family's integration (Kirk, 1981). Those parents who adopt the acknowledgment of differences coping style find this coping behavior conducive to good interpersonal communication, and, therefore, to order and stability within the family (Kirk, 1964). Kirk (1981) admits that one family may not consistently demonstrate these coping behaviors, and that most families will mix the two coping methods in their day to day lives. For example, the rejection of differences coping mechanism may prove the most satisfying mode of accommodation for new adoptive parents as it aids the adopters in moving into parenthood in feeling that the child is theirs; but when the child is old enough to ask questions about adoption, the acknowledgment of differences coping behavior should take precedence. Kirk (1964) reiterates that parental coping must be oriented toward the acknowledgment of differences method as consistently as possible for successful adoptive family relations. A high degree of acknowledgment of differences behavior is associated with empathy with the child and with the readiness of adoptive parents to think of the child's biological parents (Kirk, 1981).

The capacity for communication with the adoptee is also enhanced by the parents' readiness to acknowledge the differences between biological and adoptive parenthood (Kirk, 1964) . Kirk (1964) believes that adoptive parents need education for their special tasks as their role is not laid down by tradition and learned automatically in the course of growing up. He believes there is a genuine problem in being the "real" parent, and at the same time accepting the biological parent.

Kirk's theory has been widely acknowledged by other professionals in the adoption field, but it really has not been extensively tested by further empirical studies. Other adoption researchers have not used the two different coping styles as dependent variables in their studies. In the present study an attempt was made to label the study families as RD or AD, based on Kirk's premises, but it was noted that each family appeared to use both coping styles and no overall judgements could be made for any of the study families. Further empirical research is needed in this area to more closely correlate accepted theory with the current reality of adoptive family relations.

Because the focus of this research is on the adopted adolescent and the family, the issues unique to the adopted adolescent will be outlined next.

The Adopted Adolescent

Families with adolescent children face challenges and stresses which are unique to this stage of the family life cycle (Mackie, 1982). It is a time when adolescents experience a rapid period of maturation and begin to move toward independence from their families. Tonkin (1984) has outlined five developmental tasks that face the adolescent. The first task involves accepting one's physique and learning how to use it effectively. The second

task involves developing appropriate sex roles and learning to be comfortable with what it means to be male or female in our society. The third task is to achieve economic and emotional dependence, especially from the family. Fourth, the adolescent must develop appropriate peer relationships, and lastly, adolescence ends with the fifth developmental task, developing an adult lifestyle in a reasonable, rational way (Tonkin, 1984). During adolescence intellectual maturation also takes place as the adolescent reaches formal operational thought.

Erik Erikson has greatly influenced the literature on adolescent development with his writing on youth and identity. His work has provided a theoretical basis for the investigation of what many believe to be the single most critical aspect of personality development during adolescence - identity formation (Adams & Montemayer, 1983). Erikson (1968) has described the essential task of adolescence as the development of a sense of identity. The term identity has been defined by Erikson (1956) as, " a persistent sameness within oneself and a persistent sharing of some kind of essential character with others" (p. 57). Erikson (1968) reiterates that this search for identity becomes especially acute during adolescence as a result of rapid change in the biological, social, and psychological spheres of life.

All these developmental tasks are the same for adopted and non-adopted adolescents, but many researchers believe the factor of adoption can aggravate or accentuate some of the difficulties inherent during this stage of the family life cycle (Kirk, 1964; Stone, 1972; Triseliotis, 1973; Sorosky et al, 1978). Empirical evidence regarding the adolescent adoptees' development is limited. Much of the existing literature is based on

clinician's theoretical notions gleaned from experience with disturbed adolescent adoptees, or from retrospective personal accounts by adult adoptees.

Comparative studies of clinic populations of adopted and non-adopted adolescents have produced conflicting results. Nemovicher (1960) concluded that adopted adolescent boys were less well adjusted than non-adopted peers, while Mech (1973) reports that no significant differences were found between adopted and control groups on measures of adjustment. Frisk (1964) studied 19 teenagers attending a psychiatric clinic and noted that they were balanced in general but developed problems in adolescence. He attributed their problems to confusion of identity which likely caused an unfavourable course of development in their family.

Given their stage of life, and the various developmental issues facing them, researchers have been able to elucidate some special problems the adolescent might face due to his/her adoptive status. It is not until early to middle adolescence that children recognize that adoption involves a legal transfer of parental rights and responsibilities from biological parents to adoptive parents (Brodzinsky, Singer & Braff, 1981). It stands to reason then, that with this new cognitive skill will come new questions. Sorosky et al (1978), who obtained much of their information through interviews with adoptees, believe that adolescent adoptees have greater difficulty working through the psychosexual, psychosocial and psychohistorical aspects of their personality development than their non-adopted peers. These issues will be outlined below.

Psychohistorical Aspects. During adolescence adoptees reflect more deeply upon the adoption process. They recognize the element of chance that placed

them in one family instead of another and their curiosity about the biological parents may be intensified (Burgess, 1976). As a result, genealogical concerns become more of an issue. Typically, adolescents don't concern themselves too much with their genealogy or ancestry, but for adoptees a lack of knowledge about their origins can be a cause of maladjustment (Sorosky et al, 1978). Wellisch(1952) first described this phenomenon and termed it genealogical bewilderment. A genealogically bewildered child is one who either has no knowledge of his natural parents, or only uncertain knowledge of them (Sants, 1964). The resulting state of confusion and uncertainty undermines the security and thus affects the child's mental health. According to Sants (1964), who later elaborated on Wellisch's theory, any child with at least one unknown parent is susceptible to this problem. Sants uses the children's story, The Ugly Duckling by Hans Christian Anderson, to illustrate the plight of the genealogically deprived. The Ugly Duckling tells the tale of a swan who is hatched in a duck family. The swan is rejected because he can't do what the others in the family can do as a result of his different genetic endowment (Sants, 1964). Persecution leads to poor self-esteem, depression, and wandering as the ugly duckling searches for an identity. This bird's difficulty, according to Sants (1964), was that none of the ducks knew he was a swan, they didn't know his genealogy. Consequently, they could not understand his skills or his potential. The ugly duckling needed to identify with others in order to feel that he belonged, but he couldn't identify with the ducks that differed so much from him. Sants (1964) concludes that many adopted children can feel like the ugly duckling. This concern over their genealogy

may not appear at every stage of development, but evidence suggests that genealogical concerns begin in early adolescence (Sants, 1964).

In a retrospective study of adult adoptees searching for background information or birth parents, all of the adoptees emphasized their need to know about their genealogy in order to complete themselves (Triseliotis, 1973). It was during adolescence that they reported the most intense curiosity and desire for this information, even when their parents had given them information before (Triseliotis, 1973). The strength of the adoptees' desire to search into their backgrounds usually reflected the type of family relationships prevailing at home. The more unsatisfactory the relationships were, the greater the adolescents' desire to search into their backgrounds (Triseliotis, 1973). Triseliotis (1973) discovered however, that even when such feelings were strong, only a small number of adoptees acted on them, and the eventual decision to search was motivated by some crisis in the adoptee's subsequent adult life situation. Although the term "identity crisis" has become an overused cliché, for adolescent adoptees the term may aptly describe what they experience.

Erikson (1968) states that it is necessary for the adolescent to know about the past in order to plan for the future. This is a period when a synthesis of the past and future takes place. Where the past is void, there is an inability to make decisions about the future so that the adolescent tends to drift (Stone, 1972). For the adopted adolescent, the lack of knowledge about the past can lead to identity confusion and trigger intense curiosity about their origins (Triseliotis, 1973). The adopted adolescent has the difficult task of integrating into her identity two genealogies, the one being that to which she is bound by

a social bond, and the other by a biological bond (Mackie, 1982).

This task is aggravated when the adoptee has information regarding the biological parents either distorted or withheld from her. Toussieng (1962) has described a number of cases in which adopted adolescents start roaming around aimlessly, though occasionally they claim to be intentionally seeking the fantasied "good, real parents". Toussieng (1962) has interpreted this phenomenon as an acted out search for stable introjects (persons with whom to identify) that were never provided by the adoptive parents.

Fantasies regarding the biological parents can preoccupy the adolescent adoptee as she tries to create a picture of the past based on what little information might be available. When things are going poorly at home the adoptee can imagine the other parents understanding her better than her adopters (Burgess, 1976). Adolescent fantasies can also be focused on the negative aspects of their heritage and exemplify feelings of abandonment and rejection. It seems apparent that many adolescent adoptees have a renewed need to know about their origins or roots, and when the opportunity to explore them is removed, increased anxiety and stress may be the result. There is considerable controversy regarding the extent of the adoptee's interest in knowing about, or meeting the biological parents. Some researchers think these concerns are common to most adolescent and young adult adoptees (Sokoloff, 1979; Sorosky et al, 1978), while others believe that the curiosity is greatest in adoptive homes where there has been strained relationships and difficulty communicating openly about the adoption situation (Triseliotis, 1973; Raynor, 1980). Either way, the adolescent's curiosity during this time can cause the adoptive

parents a great deal of anxiety.

Psychosexual aspects. Adolescent adoptees' continuing sexual maturation can promote a special interest in the nature of their conception. Issues of sexuality are heightened in adolescence, and the adoptee's sexual growth may challenge the adoptive parents' unresolved conflicts over their own sexuality or infertility (Tonkin, 1984). The terms "bad blood " or "bad seed", have been used in the literature to refer to parents' often suppressed fear that their adopted child is destined to repeat the real or imagined mistakes of the birth parents (Shapiro & Seeber, 1983). Tonkin (1984) states that these beliefs about the promiscuity of the birth mother may be projected onto the adoptee and affect the ways in which emerging sexuality is handled within the family. This, in turn, can lead to a self-fulfilling prophecy and the sexual acting out by the female adoptee who may believe that bad tendencies were transmitted to her through her biological parents.

Adopted adolescents are reported to have a greater tendency toward sexual acting out, particularly girls who have a propensity to identify with an image of a promiscuous biological mother (Sorosky et al, 1978.). Raynor (1980), in a retrospective study of adoptive families, reported that there were several instances of sexual acting out among girls in the study during adolescence. Erikson (1968) writes that an individual who does not have a sense of identity will avoid interpersonal intimacy, or will become involved in superficial, promiscuous relationships. For the adolescent adoptee problems in solidifying an identity may also create problems in achieving sexual maturity. In addition, some clinical evidence indicates that adopted adolescents are more vulnerable to incestuous and sexual abuse experiences than are non-adoptees (Tonkin, 1984). The universal incest taboo

is removed in adoptive families and this may be a contributing factor to this problem.

Dating and heterosexual relationships can also bring new areas of conflict to the adopted adolescent not apparent with their non-adopted peers. Often the lack of knowledge regarding their origins raises questions and conscious or unconscious fears about dating a biological relative (Sorosky et al, 1978). This fear of possible incest with an unknown relative can increase the anxiety the adolescent already feels about dating and sex. It has also been reported that male and female adoptees may demonstrate a compulsive urge to procreate, thereby providing them with their first contact with a blood relative (Sorosky et al, 1978). Another area where adopted adolescents can have special problems is with their peer relationships.

Psychosocial aspects. In adolescence, acceptance by peers and sexual attractiveness are paramount. A feeling of belonging is very important to adolescents and if an adoptee is already feeling a sense of difference due to his adoptive status, any further experience of isolation can increase feelings of rejection and abandonment (Stone, 1972). Adopted adolescents who are ashamed of their adoptive status may avoid close relationships for fear of being exposed. Some adopted adolescents will look for acceptance in a social group that is below the social level of their family. Sorosky et al (1978) conclude that this behavior seems to be an effort to find a group identity corresponding to the predestined group the adolescent imagines he belongs to. In contrast, other adoptees will compensate for these feelings of inadequacy by wearing their adoption as a badge and readily telling everyone (Sorosky et al, 1978). A review of this

literature seems to indicate that how adolescents feel about being adopted is an important factor in determining how successful their peer relationships will be.

In addition to the three aspects of adopted adolescent's personality development that have been discussed here, there is one other unique situation that should be mentioned - the adoptee's physical appearance. Most adolescents experience anxieties about their physical normality (Tonkin, 1984). Whereas most children can look to their parents or older siblings to see what they might end up like, adopted children can't do that as they have no common genes with their family group. Adopted adolescents don't know what they are going to look like, and this increasing concern with physical appearance can lead adoptees to try to explore their biological roots more fully (Tonkin, 1984).

Parnell (1961) studied how physical resemblance between fathers and sons affected their closeness. Nine hundred male students were somatotyped and it was found that 70% of those students who got along well with their fathers had physiques very similar to them. Where the father's and son's physiques were very different, the proportion of sons who got along well with their fathers was relatively low, 20-30%. Parnell (1961) suggests that imitation occurs much more readily where the person the son wants to imitate is similar in somatotype and genetic structure to begin with. In reviewing this study, Sants (1964) concludes that if differences in genetic structure between natural father and son can hamper identifications, it seems more likely that identification will be even more hampered when there is no hereditary link between father and child. No further empirical studies

have been able to assess Sants' claim, but it seems plausible that a lack of physical similarity in the adoptive family can increase the adolescent adoptees' anxiety regarding their physical appearance. This issue will be discussed again later in the paper.

One further aspect that adoptive parents may have to deal with when their adopted child reaches adolescence is the adolescent's use of adoption to gain control over the parents. Establishing independence is an important task during adolescence, and adoptees have the issue of adoption to help them. Statements like, "I don't have to listen to you, you aren't my real mother", are used by some adolescents to gain leverage over their parents (Rowe, 1979). Rowe (1979) believes that how the subject of adoption is handled in the family is an important indicator of adolescent behavior. If adoption has been discussed openly and honestly in the home, the adolescent will be less likely to use adoption to try to win a family argument (Rowe, 1979). Bohman (1972) noticed in his study of adoption with adoptive parents that they seemed to fear the adolescent period. The adoptive parents felt insecure about how they might handle the teenager's questions about adoption. The parental anxiety felt during this stage may have implications for how the adolescent adoptee will deal with his adoptive status, if the parents feel anxious about it, it is quite likely that the adolescent will too.

In outlining some of the unique problems facing adopted adolescents that have been reported in the literature, it is clear that not all adopted adolescents will experience these difficulties. The theme running through the literature seems to reflect the adoptees' need to know about their origins in order to effectively accomplish the developmental tasks laid out in adolescence.

Empirical evidence to dispute or support many of the theoretical views regarding the adopted adolescent is grossly inadequate. Many of the empirical studies seem to stop short of recruiting adolescents in their samples for reasons that are unclear. This is rather curious because there are many theoretical issues to debate regarding the adolescent adoptee. The empirical research that has been completed on the adoptive family, and the framework it builds in understanding the dynamics of adoptive family life will be examined next.

The Empirical Picture of Adoption

Studies on the process of adoption have, for the most part, originated from genetic researchers and child welfare organizations. For the researchers interested in genetics and the heredity vs environment controversy, adoptive families are an ideal subject pool. These studies will not be discussed in this literature review as the adoption situation is used as a medium to assess genetic concerns and they do not focus on the social or interpersonal aspects of the adoption experience. Research that has been stimulated through the child welfare organizations has attempted to determine which factors in the child, adoptive parents, and society influence the adoptive process, and to what extent this process can be forecast prior to placement (Bohman, 1972).

Psychiatrists and other helping professionals became involved in studying adoption when it was noticed that a significant number of adopted children were showing up at mental health clinics. A number of clinical studies have been done to assess this problem and they will be discussed in the next section.

Prior to the 1960's very little follow-up research had been done to

assess the long term outcome of adoptive placements. Social workers who were assessing adoptive applicants and making placements had little factual knowledge of the adoption process to rely on. Gradually the child welfare organizations began studying this process in order to get better information about how adoption works out after child placement and what could be done to improve practice and outcome (Bohman, 1972). The studies on adoption outcome have usually focused on variables within the adoptive situation such as the effect of family structure, the age of parent and child at the time of placement, and the response of child and parent to the reality of adoption. The development and adjustment of adopted children, and the isolation of factors important in predicting success or failure in adoption has also been studied in a number of retrospective studies. This empirical picture of adoption will be discussed in the remainder of this chapter.

Clinical studies of adopted children. In 1960 Marshall Schechter, a psychiatrist, wrote a paper on the increased incidence of psychiatric difficulties in adopted children. Over a five year period of private practice he had observed that 13% of the children he saw were adoptees, while the estimated number of adoptees in the general child population was only about 1%. He claimed that adopted children were more liable to require psychiatric attention than their incidence in the general population would suggest. Schechter's (1960) observations were based on a small sample of children seen in private practice, and his estimates of the number of adoptees in the population was erroneous, but nonetheless, his assertions raised many questions among professionals in the adoption

field. Many theoretical and clinical papers have been written since then as researchers have tried to discover why adopted children might be more vulnerable to emotional difficulties. Two major questions surfaced in the literature that many researchers have tried to answer: do adopted children come to the attention of psychiatric facilities out of proportion to their presence in the general population; and do the clinical symptoms differ between emotionally disturbed adopted and non-adopted children (Offord, Aponte, & Cross, 1969). In tackling the former question, Schechter, Carlson, Simmons & Work (1964) surveyed a number of public and private psychiatric clinics in an attempt to ascertain percentages of adoptees in treatment. Schechter's earlier assertions were supported in that all of the settings reported a higher percentage of adoptees than would be expected from the estimated percentage of adoptees in the population (Schechter et al, 1964).

Other researchers who have assessed the prevalence of emotional problems in adoptees have concluded that adopted children are referred for psychiatric treatment anywhere from two to five times as frequently as their non-adopted peers (Toussieng, 1962; Humphrey & Ounsted, 1964; Simon & Senturia, 1966; McWhinnie, 1967; Work & Anderson, 1971; Bohman, 1970; Brinich, 1980). On the surface, the sheer volume of studies supporting the increased incidence of emotional difficulties in adoptees appear to present a convincing case, but these results should be treated cautiously. In attempting to ascertain whether more adoptees have psychiatric difficulties it is relevant to know how many adoptees are in the population. Obtaining an accurate statistic is very difficult because of the number of private adoptions that take place unrecorded, and the number of sampling variables involved in computing such

a statistic. Intra-familial (relative) adoptions or step-parent adoptions could be included in a general statistic thus spuriously inflating the adoption rates. Also, the majority of these studies have been based on relatively small samples and clinic populations that are self-selected, so these factors in themselves introduce potential sources of bias. In addition, the age range of patients, the sex ratio, income level of the families and other relevant variables have not been comparable across studies (Reece & Levin, 1968). Kirk, Jonassohn & Fish (1966) state that adoptive families appear to represent higher socio-economic groups that tend to contribute disproportionately to the case loads of private psychiatric and counselling facilities. Given the number of extraneous variables and methodological flaws inherent in this kind of research it is difficult to truly ascertain what the percentages of adoptees seeking treatment are.

The studies assessing presenting symptomatology of adoptees in clinic samples have fared somewhat better than the incidence studies. The majority of these studies used control groups, and although they differ in their diagnostic classification systems, methods of selection and matching, they do provide a sounder basis for generalizations. Menlove (1965) looked at symptoms and diagnoses of 51 adoptees matched with a control group of non-adopted children and reported that more adoptees were diagnosed as having anti-social symptoms and syndromes related to aggressive behavior than the non-adoptees. A number of other studies have produced similar results (Schechter et al, 1964; Simon & Senturia, 1966; Reece & Levin, 1968; Lifshitz, Baum, Balgar & Cohen, 1975). Although some adolescents were included in the clinic samples, in most of the studies discussed the subjects were children under 14 years of age.

Tonkin (1984) estimates that primary care physicians can expect that about 1 in every 50 adolescents in their practice is adopted, and that 1 in every 10 of their problem cases is adopted.

Offord et al (1969) attempted to evaluate the overall severity of the adopted child's disturbance and found that adopted children manifested significantly more severe anti-social behavior in the home, school and community than a matched control group of non-adopted emotionally disturbed children. These researchers further concluded that those children adopted later tended to have more severe anti-social symptoms. Humphrey & Ounsted (1964) reported that children adopted after six months of age were more prone to anti-social conduct, particularly stealing and destructive behavior, whereas those children adopted in early infancy did not differ in symptoms from non-adopted children. These studies support the view that early placement is advantageous to the child.

Some conflicting results have also been reported in the literature. In a study assessing both incidence and symptomatology of adoptees, it was found that a higher incidence of adopted children were presented for psychiatric treatment, but the researchers could not detect any major differences in the presenting problems, or in the family circumstances that differentiated the adopted and non-adopted groups (Sweeny, Gasborro & Gluck, 1963). In a well controlled study by Austad & Simmons (1978), 33 adopted children were assessed on their presenting symptoms. They discovered such a variety of complaints and symptomatic behavior in the children that no significant trends appeared that could differentiate the adoptees from the non-adopted children. What Austad & Simmons (1978) noticed however, was

the way the symptoms were described by the parents in the sample. They seemed not so often concerned about their child's emotional well-being as they were upset that their adopted children did not conform to expectations (Austad & Simmons, 1978). The majority of the adopted childrens' symptoms fell into five major symptom categories - oppositional behavior, aggressive behavior, anti-social acting out, academic problems, and difficulties in peer relationships. Although there were no significant differences between non-adopted and adopted children in their presenting problems, this study does reflect other clinical studies in that the adopted child seems to have problems of an aggressive and anti-social nature. The researchers suggested that the surface behavior and symptoms bringing the adopted child to treatment may reflect parent-child interpersonal difficulties (Austad & Simmons, 1978).

The evidence presented here, and in the literature, seems to support the conclusion that some adopted children and adolescents seen in psychiatric settings demonstrate serious aggressive and anti-social behavior, particularly if placement in an adoptive home was done past early infancy. This is a problem worthy of further study and verification since the outlined symptoms are often difficult to treat and generally predict conflict with the law if left untreated (Reece & Levin, 1968). Why some adopted children might develop emotional and behavioral problems has also been studied in an attempt to assess what factors within the adoptive family might make these children more vulnerable to difficulties. A number of theories and hypotheses have been advanced to explain the increased vulnerability of adopted children. These theories and hypotheses are discussed next.

The etiology of psychological difficulties in adopted children. The most commonly cited explanation for the adoptee's problems are; the adoptive parents and their personality problems, and interpersonal problems between parent and child (Lifshitz et al, 1975). Attempting to assess the relationships among adoptive parents' personalities and attitudes, and emotional disturbance in their children is, of course, very difficult due to the number of variables involved, and the difficulty in assessing the specific dynamics taking place. It is therefore understandable that very little solid empirical evidence exists.

Toussieng (1962) postulated that the major reason for emotional disturbance in adopted children is an unconscious and unresolved aversion to parenthood in either one or both parents, particularly the mother. A mother who has not resolved her conflict about being a mother is likely to demonstrate this conflict in her early relationship with her child. Toussieng (1962) writes:

Mothers who feel damaged in not giving birth and are in conflict about mothering the child, in telling the child about adoption will be less sensitive to the child and will be apt to choose the wrong time, or do it in a way that pushes the child further into emotional difficulties and into fantasies regarding biological parents. (p. 64).

Issues regarding infertility have frequently been cited in the literature as areas of potential conflict for adoptive parents (Toussieng, 1962; Humphrey & Ounsted, 1964; Kirk et al, 1966; Walsh & Lewis, 1969). If the parents are adopting because they can't have a child of their own, their feelings about infertility and the fact that they miss the experience of pregnancy and childbirth, are factors that can contribute to difficulties in their subsequent relationship with the adopted child (Hersov, 1979).

Humphrey and Ounsted (1964) interviewed 53 adoptive families referred

for psychiatric advice in an attempt to identify precipitating factors that might lead adoptive families to experience difficulties. They identified a few factors that were unique to the adoption situation. In over half the cases the mothers were over 30 years of age when they adopted their first child, and many of them had 10 years of childless marriage before adopting (Humphrey & Ounsted, 1964). Although in the 1980's this doesn't seem to be that relevant a factor, Humphrey and Ounsted (1964) suggested that late parenthood could have an effect on the child's development because older parents have a tendency to be more overprotective, anxious and rigid. Other researchers have also reported late parenthood as a factor in the subsequent adjustment of some adopted children (McWhinnie, 1967; Sorosky et al 1978).

Whether the child had been parentally deprived before adoption also emerged as a factor in the Humphrey and Ounsted (1964) study. Most adoption workers now emphasize the importance of early placement for adoptive children. They recognize the potential source of stress on the child in being placed in a number of temporary facilities prior to adoption. One study has shown that infants placed for adoption who were moved prior to the time of developing focused attachments (around 5-6 months), experienced very limited disturbance, while those placed after this time experienced far greater disturbance and stress (Yarrow & Goodman, 1965). These results support the conclusions of Offord et al (1969) that children placed after the age of six months experienced more severe difficulties.

Humphrey & Ounsted (1964) also reported that in half the study referrals, the disclosure of adoption had either been mishandled, avoided or postponed

by the parents. There were several instances where learning of adoption at the wrong time, or in the wrong way precipitated an emotional crisis in the child's life. Fear of unknown heredity was another factor that emerged in the study. The researchers noted that this was usually a reaction to the child's deviant behavior. Adoptive parents have the option of being able to detach themselves from the usual parental guilt by displacing the blame for the child's behavior onto genetic qualities (Sorosky, Baran & Pannor, 1976). This tendency for some adoptive parents to blame their child's problems on heredity has been well documented in the literature (Clothier, 1943; Eiduson & Livermore, 1953; Elonen & Schwartz, 1969; Walsh & Lewis, 1969; Raynor, 1980). In a study of adoptive mothers in a child guidance clinic a common source of difficulty for them was the guilt they felt about taking a child that didn't belong to them (Walsh & Lewis, 1969). These mothers had a tendency to develop a defensive attitude and project these difficulties onto the child's heredity. The parents' feelings about getting somewhat of an unknown commodity when they adopt a child can affect the subsequent parent-child relationship in that the parent may become wary each time the child demonstrates behavior that is foreign to the family.

Other researchers have concluded that incompatibility between parent and child leads to emotional difficulties in the adopted child (Jackson, 1968). Jackson (1968) discovered that neither the early adoption of the child, nor the manner, nor the time of telling the child about his adoptive status were major factors in alleviating emotional disturbance in adoptees. Jackson (1968) also found that intellectual and temperamental incompatibility between adoptive parent and adoptee was a prominent

feature in forty cases of seriously disturbed adopted children. Mismatches between parent and child in temperament and coping styles has also been cited by Tonkin (1984) as an area where parent-child conflict can emerge and flourish.

It has also been hypothesized that adopted children aren't more prone to disturbances than their non-adopted peers, and that adoptive parents are just more attune to psychiatric problems and are more apt to seek help for their children (Sweeny et al, 1963). Or, adoptive parents are more over-protective and anxious about their children and have a tendency to overreact to normal developmental phases that their child is going through (Austad & Simmons, 1978).

Many reasons have also been advanced that attempt to explain why emotionally disturbed adopted children seem to be particularly prone to behavior problems of an aggressive or anti-social type. Simon & Senturia (1966) have outlined a few of them:

1. The hostility between the parents for the infertility is projected onto the adopted child.
2. The adopted child may act out the unconscious hostile and sexual impulses of one of the parents.
3. The situation of the special child story where the parents are encouraged to let the child know they got her specially, makes it difficult for both the child and her parents to openly express angry feelings toward one another.
4. Potential adoptive parents are subjected to such extensive scrutiny by adoption agencies that when they are chosen they have such a reaction formation against their unconscious hostility that it makes it difficult for them to set realistic limits on their child.
5. The adopted child in his efforts to struggle with the problems of who his real parents are and why they gave him up, may have a constant identity problem and may identify with his "bad" biological parents

Tonkin (1984) believes that the adolescent who presents with behavior problems may be an adoptee who has been sexually abused, is overprotected, or acting out a projected bad seed theory.

One last factor that should be mentioned here as it has been prominently discussed in the literature, is the "family romance fantasy" that was first postulated by Sigmund Freud (1909/1950). The family romance fantasy is purportedly a universal phenomenon in all children. When any children feel rejected by their parents they have a tendency to imagine themselves with other parents who are more loving. For the adopted child the family romance fantasy has a reality base. Eiduson & Livermore (1953) indicated that disturbed adopted children could not synthesize their ambivalent feelings for their adoptive parents because two actual sets of parents existed, one set which could be described as bad and the other set as good. Eiduson & Livermore (1953) concluded that patients in their study perceived their adoptive parents as inadequate and viewed their biological parents as their adequate set of parents. Other researchers have raised concerns that the family romance syndrome would further a splitting of identifications between biological and adoptive parents, and leave the child at risk for identity and emotional problems (Andrews, 1980).

It is quite apparent that the theories outlining the nature of the adoptee's emotional difficulties are as diverse as there are researchers studying the issues. While enough clinical evidence exists to allow researchers to conclude that the adoption process can contribute to the development of emotional disturbance, very few empirical studies have been done to validate the diverse and confusing hypotheses concerning the stress

factors in the adoption process. What clinical and theoretical papers do exist, have, as can be noted in this review, a decidedly psychoanalytic bent to them, which is understandable considering the bulk of the clinical research was done during the 1960's.

The theoretical probability of an adopted child being seen in a particular psychiatric setting seems to be dependent on a complex set of circumstances and variables including, the child's age at the time of adoption, the parents' particular coping mechanisms, and parent-child compatibility (Austad & Simmons, 1978).

A much smaller proportion of the adoption literature has been devoted to the more normative behavior patterns of adopted and non-adopted children. These non-clinical studies have drawn their samples of adopted and non-adopted children from the general population and therefore should be more easily generalizable than the clinic studies of adopted children. This research is discussed next.

Non-clinical studies of adopted children. As with the clinical research, studies which have assessed non-clinical samples of adoptees have also produced mixed results. Several studies have failed to find any significant differences between adopted and non-adopted children in their personality characteristics and academic or emotional adjustment (Mikawa & Boston, 1968; Elonen & Schwartz, 1969; Lawder, Lower, Andrews, Sherman & Hill, 1969; Norvell & Guy, 1977), while other researchers have found significant differences between the two groups. Lindholm & Touliatos (1980) studied adopted and non-adopted children of elementary school age and found that the adopted children were rated by their teachers as having more conduct

disorders, personality problems and socialized delinquency than their non-adopted peers. They also noted that boys tended to experience more maladjustment than girls, and differences between the sexes were greater for adopted than non-adopted children on the same three variables; conduct disorders, personality problems and socialized delinquency (Lindholm & Touliatos, 1980). Other researchers have reported similar results.

Bohman (1972) observed poorer school adjustment and a greater incidence of emotional problems in 10-11 year old adopted boys than in non-adopted boys, and he found no differences between the girls in the study. Seglow, Pringle & Wedge (1972) found almost the identical results when they measured emotional maladjustment among seven year olds. The adopted boys demonstrated greater maladjustment than the non-adopted boys, and again, no differences were reported among the girls (Seglow et al, 1972). The fact that adopted boys might manifest more problems than adopted girls is interesting in light of the evidence that suggests that adopted girls show much more interest in their adoption than do adopted boys (Farber, 1977). In a longitudinal study of adoptees from birth through to latency age, it was reported that females showed markedly greater interest, involvement, and at times, suggestions of more conflict around the idea of adoption than did the males in the study (Farber, 1977). Females tended to demonstrate the most intense interest in the idea of adoption during the ages 8 through 10. Farber (1977) observed that few males showed any interest in the idea of adoption at any time. She concluded that this lack of interest might be due to defensive maneuvers to avoid confronting the idea of their adoption. If this is the case, adopted boys might be observed to experience more

behavior pathology than adopted girls because they are acting out their conflicts, while the girls have a tendency to ask questions and verbalize their feelings more often in order to reduce their conflict over the issues of adoption. Clearly, this purported sex difference needs to be more thoroughly researched.

Again, as with the clinic studies, it is difficult to interpret the overall picture regarding adoption and adjustment. Some of the non-clinical studies suffer from the same methodological flaws as the clinical studies; small samples, poorly matched control groups, non-comparable measures and non-comparable age groups. Brodzinsky, Schechter, Braff & Singer (1983), tried to remedy this situation by designing a study that would overcome the methodological flaws of the previous research. One hundred and thirty adopted and 130 non-adopted children drawn from the general population between 6-11 years of age, were well matched on relevant demographic and family variables. The children were rated by their mothers and by their teachers on a number of psychological and educational variables.

Overall, the adopted children were rated by their mothers as lower in social competence, and as manifesting more behavior problems than non-adopted children. Significant differences were noted between adopted and non-adopted children on depression, social withdrawal, hyperactivity, delinquency, aggression and cruelty (Brodzinsky et al, 1983). Mothers of adopted boys rated their children as having more uncommunicative behavior, hyperactivity, aggression and delinquency than the ratings made by mothers of non-adopted children (Brodzinsky et al, 1983). Although it could be argued that the adoptive mothers in this sample were perhaps just more sensitive to their childrens' problems, or perhaps

they overreacted to normal developmental issues, but results from the teacher ratings consistently identified adoptees as being more problematic than the non-adopted children. Adopted children showed poorer adjustment than their non-adopted peers on every single scale measured - originality, independent learning, school involvement, productivity with peers, inattention, intellectual dependency, failure anxiety, negative feelings, unreflectiveness, and irrelevant talk (Brodzinsky et al, 1983). Adoptees, both boys and girls, received significantly lower teacher ratings on social competence and school achievement, and significantly higher teacher ratings on school-related problems and psychological problems than non-adopted children (Brodzinsky et al, 1983). These results appear to support the view that adopted children are more vulnerable than other children to emotional, behavioral and educational problems. It should be noted however, that although adopted children were rated as more poorly adjusted in comparison to non-adopted children, their behavior still fell within the normal range, that is, they did not manifest really severe pathology, but displayed more extreme forms of behavior than are found in non-adopted children (Brodzinsky et al 1983).

In addition to the comparative studies that have been completed regarding the relative adjustment of adoptees vs non-adoptees, a number of follow-up studies have been completed that have tried to identify the factors leading to successful or unsuccessful adjustment of adoptive families. Most of the studies on adoption outcome are descriptive in nature and have relied on interviewing techniques to obtain the data. Some of the research has focused on the adopted child several years after placement in an adoptive home (Ripple, 1968; Elonen & Schwartz, 1969;

Lawder, Lower, Andrews, Sherman, & Hill, 1969; Bohman, 1972), while other researchers have interviewed adult adoptees regarding their adoption experiences (McWhinnie, 1967; Jaffee & Fanshel, 1970; Triseliotis, 1973; Sorosky et al, 1978).

One of the difficulties in this area of adoption research is that by the time the studies are published and the information disseminated, the conditions to which they relate may have changed (Pringle, 1967). Because of this fact, generalizing the results of these studies to new generations of adoptees and adoptive parents must be done cautiously. This research should be seen for what it is - as general descriptive information that can help one understand how adoption is experienced given the time frame and circumstances of the study. In spite of the limitations, the follow-up research offers the adoption researcher much new information on which to build new hypotheses. The remainder of this chapter will deal with the results and implications of this body of research.

The follow-up research. The majority of studies assessing adoption outcome report that most adoptive families do very well (Witmer, Herzog, Weinstein, & Sullivan, 1963; Lawder et al, 1969). Witmer et al (1963) assessed adoptive family functioning after 10 years and reported that 70% of the families were functioning successfully. Seventy-three percent of the families studied by Lawder et al (1969) were rated as good or superior in their adjustment and functioning. Other researchers have reported similar results (Kadushin, 1970; Seglow et al, 1972; Raynor, 1980). General conclusions have been drawn based on this kind of research that the environment is very important to the child's development, and overall, child welfare workers can have every confidence in adoption as a viable

successful method of child placement (Raynor, 1980).

When Elonen & Schwartz (1969) conducted a follow-up study of adoptive families, they concluded that adoption per se was not a causative factor in the emotional problems of adopted children, but rather the problems stemmed from the adoptive parents' reactions to their children, their questions and feelings, and to the important events in family life. Ten percent of these parents reported that their adopted child had been upset in adolescence about being adopted. Lawder et al (1969) report in their research on 200 adoptive families, satisfaction in parent role, warmth and affection toward the child, and acceptance of adoptive role were more important variables for successful adjustment than marital satisfaction, communication about adoption, or role compatibility.

Isolating what variables might promote more successful adjustment in adoptive families is difficult, and the results of researchers' efforts are still rather confusing. However, there does seem to be agreement regarding some variables' significance. It is generally agreed that the personal characteristics of the adoptive parents and their attitudes have great bearing on the outcome of an adoption, while their socio-economic status, income, and education appear to be inconsequential (Bohman, 1972). Placement of a child should be done as early as possible, but there is some disagreement as to when is the most advantageous time; and at least one study found no relationship between a child's age at placement and adjustment (Ripple, 1968). It is also generally agreed that a child should be told early about his adoptive status, but there is some dissensus regarding what age is most appropriate for disclosure; and in one study

it was reported that adoptees who didn't know they were adopted did not differ from adoptees who did know, in the quality of relationship with their parents, or the degree of psychopathology they manifested as adults (Eldred, Rosenthal, Wender, Kety, Schulsinger, Welner, & Jacobsen, 1976).

It seems apparent that trying to assess global factors of adjustment and adoption outcome is a formidable task that necessitates controlling for, and measuring a complex number of variables. This is perhaps why the state of adoption research has not progressed technically, or methodologically, and still relies on descriptive research to a large degree. However, it is from this descriptive research that some of the richest data emerges.

The most thorough accounts of the adoption experience have been obtained from adult adoptees and/or their parents in retrospective studies. These retrospective studies must rely on the participant's candor in responding to questions, and in their ability to accurately recall events and feelings that took place in the past. However, the participant's perception of events, is a valid reflection of their perceived experiences and adds depth to the information obtained. The information gleaned from these studies provides a more solid base for research, and the present study has evolved largely from this data.

The retrospective studies. Alexina McWhinnie (1967) was the first researcher that truly examined the adoption experience from the perspective of the adult adoptee. McWhinnie (1967) interviewed 58 adopted adults aged 18 to 60 and concluded that, "within the adoptive home there are potential problems of adjustment very different in kind from the normal problems of biological parent-child relationships, and that these can relate to the

whole area of communication and attitudes about a child's adoptive status" (p. 407). One of the research findings was that family communication regarding adoption was limited, and when it occurred it was usually one way, from parent to child (McWhinnie, 1967). Even though the adoptees were curious, they were reluctant to bring it up and waited for their parents to mention it. McWhinnie (1967) suggested that parents might need help with communicating the facts of adoption to their children because it appeared to be such a closed subject at home. If communication breaks down in the adoptive family, McWhinnie (1967) believes that the adoptee will seek this information outside the home.

While exploring the issues regarding biological parents, it was noted that although many adoptees talked of wanting in adolescence to meet their biological parents, they were emphatic that they did not want these parents to know who they were. Only 5 of the 58 adoptees interviewed, viewed a reunion as a way of finding a mother who would understand them better than their adoptive family (McWhinnie, 1967). These findings tend to confirm the view that adolescence is the time when questions regarding origins begin to percolate, and further suggests that in most cases, this curiosity does not indicate a need for reunion with biological parents, but rather it is a search for information re origins. McWhinnie (1967) also noted that although adolescence is a time of intense curiosity, there is a period around age 9 when there is likely to be a great deal of discussion about parents and adoption among the adoptee's peers. She suggested that this might be a good time for parent-child discussion on the subject (McWhinnie, 1967).

Based on what she had found in the interviews with adult adoptees,

McWhinnie (1968) extended her research to include group counselling sessions with adoptive parents. Two areas of discussion were clearly avoided by the parents; discussion of the biological mother, and discussion about how much background information regarding their child they could remember. McWhinnie (1968) concluded that anxiety about adoption lies with the parents, not the child, and that they feel ambivalent about bringing up someone else's child. McWhinnie (1968) also noticed that all the parents in the group expressed anxiety about their child as an adolescent. The parents seemed to feel threatened by this particular stage of development and wondered whether they would cope adequately as parents when their children reached adolescence. These findings support Bohman's (1972) observations that adopted parents feel anxious about the adolescent stage and wonder how they will cope. If many parents already feel anxious about their child's adolescent years, these findings suggest that this parental anxiety may set the stage for, or promote, parent-child conflict as the child reaches adolescence.

Another interesting finding in the McWhinnie (1968) study was that some of the extended family members of adopting couples who already had biological children, were not in favour of adoption. This was particularly true of the grandparents, some of who were quite rejecting of the adopted child (McWhinnie, 1968). These family prejudices would further serve to create anxiety among the adoptive parents, and one can only speculate as to the effect this attitude might have on the adopted child. The concern of grandparents regarding adoption, and their reservations about their own children adopting has been reported in some other studies (Ripple, 1968; Jaffee & Fanshel, 1970; Raynor, 1980).

Research into adoption outcome became more popular during the 1970's, and two follow-up studies were undertaken that took a novel approach to the examination of adoption outcome (Jaffee & Fanshel, 1970; Jaffee, 1974; Raynor, 1980). Adoptive parents and their adult adopted children were interviewed separately to explore the ways in which adoption had affected their lives. Jaffee & Fanshel (1970) reported on the perceptions of 100 adoptive parents concerning the development and adjustment of their adopted children. In addition, 33 of the parents' adopted children took part in the study. The resulting sets of reports were then compared to obtain a two-generation portrait of adoption outcome. Raynor (1980) followed a similar research design when she studied the adoption experience of 60 adult adoptees and their adoptive parents. Both studies constructed their own measures of family adjustment, and an attempt was made to identify families that had achieved good adjustment and those who had fared poorly. As could be expected, a wide range of life adjustment was found within each sample, from adoptees with serious adjustment problems, to others who had experienced uneventful lives. However, within these samples some fairly consistent themes were discovered. Only the most salient findings will be discussed here because the massive amounts of data obtained in these studies would make recounting all the research findings much too lengthy for the purposes of this review.

Jaffee & Fanshel (1970) found that overall, the adoptees and their parents presented congruent accounts of the nature of the adoptee's functioning over the years, particularly with regard to the adoptee's academic functioning, social relations, current relationship with parents,

and degree of closeness in the family. In the areas reflecting adoption issues the results were markedly different. There was intergenerational disagreement regarding the parents' view of adoptee satisfaction with the information given re the biological parents, and the adoptees' views of the amount of information received. One-quarter of the adoptive parents felt that they had given full information about the biological parents to the child, while only 1/10 of the adoptees felt that their parents had given them full and truthful information (Jaffee & Fanshel, 1970). More than half the adoptees said they had pressed for more information about the biological parents, but only 1/5 of the adoptive parents gave the same report (Jaffee, 1974). In an attempt to explain these findings, Jaffee and Fanshel (1970) suggested that when adoptees asked for information they did it in such a tentative manner that the parents didn't recognize what they wanted. Raynor (1980) noticed that adoptive parents felt a sense of insecurity when it came to talking about the biological parents and background information, even when parent and child had a good relationship, and even when the child became an adult. Often these parents failed to pass on background information that might have helped to increase the child's positive self-image (Raynor, 1980).

Baran, Pannor & Sorosky (1974) interviewed 60 adoptive parents regarding their attitudes about the biological parents and background information, and discovered that the parents were extremely protective of their child's possible encounter with the biological parents. They expressed concern about their child being hurt by a reunion and were adamantly opposed to biological parents initiating a reunion. Although

the couples expressed interest in having factual information about the backgrounds of their adopted children, it was clear that their greatest area of concern, and where they needed the most help, related to their feelings and attitudes towards the biological parents. The resolution of the ambivalence they felt toward them determined, for the most part, how they dealt with these issues when confronted by their children (Baran et al, 1974).

There now appears to be considerable agreement among researchers that both the child's and the parent's feelings about the biological parents are of central importance when examining adoptive family functioning. The research findings suggest that adoptive parents have a tendency to feel defensive about the issues involving biological parents, and that adoptees have a tendency to feel uncomfortable and guilty requesting such information from their parents. Adoptees who did press for more background information tended to encounter more personal and social problems and to experience personality difficulties as they grew up (Jaffee, 1974). Raynor (1980) found that a desire to make contact with the biological parents was related both to adoptee satisfaction and to adjustment. Those adoptees who had a desire to contact biological parents were viewed as being less happy in the adoptive home and less well adjusted than adoptees who did not have this desire (Raynor, 1980). However, out of the 160 adoptees interviewed by Raynor, only 21 wished to actually meet their biological parents, while almost all of them said they would welcome more information about themselves. Again, the adoptees' feelings suggest that a need for information, rather than a need for a reunion with a biological parent is at the root of their curiosity. Triseliotis (1973) examined the

differences between a group of adoptees who were mainly seeking background information and a group of adoptees searching for biological parents in a retrospective study conducted in Scotland. He concluded that almost all the adoptees who described their home life and family relationships as unsatisfactory were now searching for the biological parents, while a significant number of those who perceived their family relationships as satisfactory were searching mainly for background information. Triseliotis (1973) wrote:

the majority of adoptees searching for their origins conveyed a picture of alienation and poor self-image which they generally attributed to depriving experiences within the adoptive home. The search for background information was generally associated with a better self-image and a more satisfactory home life (p. 91).

These findings pointed to the importance and quality of family relationships as the primal force that determined the search and influenced its objectives (Triseliotis, 1973). A caveat should be added here however, as most of the adoptions in the Triseliotis study took place during the 1940's and 1950's. Adoptees of these generations had not been exposed to the searching controversy that has become popularized in the media during the last few years. The media attention and adoption reform public support that this issue has received, has moved it away from the secretive, taboo topic it was 30 years ago into the mainstream of most adoptees' lives. Today most adoptees are aware of the searching issue and the controversy it stirs among the parties of the adoption triangle. For this reason the results of the Triseliotis (1973) study have lost some of their generalizability to the generations of adoptees today. The results of this study have however, reinforced the popular view (although it is diminishing) that adoptees must be disturbed to want to search

for parents who had relinquished them at birth. This view has fostered fear and guilt in adoptive parents who have inquisitive children, and guilt and ambivalence in adoptees who have a need to know of their origins. Sorosky et al (1976) found that the need to search for the biological parents proved to be related more to the innate personality characteristics of the adoptee and less to the nature of the adoptive family relationship when they studied search motivation in a group of adult adoptees.

Parental satisfaction has been used in the past as one of the major criteria of adoption outcome. When adoptive parents in the Jaffee & Fanshel (1970) study were queried as to their overall satisfaction as adoptive parents they generally responded favourably. The majority of adoptive parents did not attribute any problems experienced to adoption per se, or to their child's adoptive status. Even parents with problem children reported little connection between their children's adjustment difficulties and their adoptive status (Jaffee & Fanshel, 1970). This does not rule out the "heredity" explanation for a child's particular problem that other researchers have found, only that the study families did not believe that the child's problems were caused because he was adopted. This reflects Kirk's (1964) theory that the "rejection of the difference" coping behavior may be in operation here. Some adoptive parents don't want to view adoptive parenthood as different from biological parenthood, and attributing special problems to adoptive parenthood would do just that. When Raynor (1980) assessed parental satisfaction she found fairly congruent perceptions of adoptee and parental satisfaction. However, she continued to find the tendency of adoptive parents to blame heredity

when their children had problems, while the children tended to blame themselves when they had problems (Raynor, 1980). Parents with a tendency to rely on heredity more often had children with behavior problems, particularly children who acted out their problems in an anti-social way (Raynor, 1980). It is unfortunately, impossible in a retrospective study to determine cause and effect. Did these parents hold their views on heritability before they adopted, or did they form these opinions as a reaction to their child's problematic behavior?

An interesting area of inquiry in both the Jaffee & Fanshel (1970) and Raynor (1980) studies that bears particular importance to the present research was the parents' perception of their adopted child's similarity to them. Jaffee & Fanshel (1970) reported that the more similar to them in temperament the parents perceived the child to be, the more likely that the parents reported less problematic adjustment in their children. Jaffee & Fanshel (1970) also asked parents whether they perceived a physical resemblance with their child, hypothesizing that this might reflect the degree to which close identification had developed between parent and adoptee. Only 10% of the total sample of parents saw a close resemblance, and for parents of high problem children it was difficult to view their child as anything like themselves. Raynor (1980) reported that if the child's adjustment was good, parents tended to readily identify with her and if the child had emotional problems or achieved poorly, parents seldom saw her as like themselves. Raynor (1980) concluded that to look alike, or share an interest, or have a similar personality or temperament, all increased satisfaction as parents frequently mentioned these points with pleasure. It has already been mentioned how adopted

adolescents can feel anxious about their lack of resemblance in the family and how this can affect their sense of belonging in the home, but it now appears that this issue may have more serious life-long consequences for the adoptee. Feelings of being different from their adoptive family was associated with behavior problems in 3/4 of the adoptees who felt that they had no likeness to their parents (Raynor, 1980).

These research findings resurrect the "matching" controversy that has been debated in the adoption field for many years. Some years ago many agencies' policy was to try to match child to adopter on variables such as physical traits, intellectual capacity, background, ethnicity, etc. This approach has received criticism from adoption researchers for a number of reasons. First of all, it seemed rather useless to try to match an infant on these nebulous variables, and an initial match on appearance was, of course, no guarantee of later resemblance. Also, it was thought that trying to match babies to adopters did not orient the adopters to the reality of adoption and would encourage them to pretend the child was born to them (Ripple, 1968). Kirk (1981) believes that the policy of matching led parents to ignore the inherent differences of adoptive parenthood and encouraged the "reject the differences" adoptive parent role. However the feelings of the adoptive family members seems to dispute the views of the professionals. McWhinnie (1968) noted that adoptive parents approved of matching a child to adopter, and they were particularly pleased when outsiders commented on how similar to them the child looked. Both adoptive parents and children made it clear to Raynor that a feeling of likeness was part of the feeling of kinship. One of the characteristics of unhappy adoptions was this sense

of difference and not belonging on the part of the adoptee (Raynor, 1980). Both adoptive parents and adoptees expressed pleasure at sharing some similarities, and the perceived similarities seemed to be conducive to identification between parent and child (Raynor, 1980). Given the positive manner in which adoptive families perceived similarities amongst themselves and the problems faced by those adoptees who felt different from their adoptive families, it suggests that trying to match child to adopter is not as destructive a procedure as has been intimated, and that at best it can enhance family identification. In the present study the absence of physical similarity was frequently mentioned by the adoptees as accentuating familial differences and reminding them of their adoptive status.

Although the retrospective studies have helped to increase the knowledge base regarding adoptive families' functioning, more current knowledge regarding the stages of adoptive family life is needed, particularly during the adolescent stage. It is hoped that the present study will add a new dimension to the adoption research that has already been completed by exploring the adoption experience of both adopted adolescents and their parents. In order to fully understand the experiences of the adoptive family it is imperative that the perceptions of both parent and child be examined. The present study addresses the issues of family communication, family relationships, biological parents, and the individual adoption experiences of the participants in the study to arrive at a description of the adoption experience within the family. In the following chapter the design and analysis of this research is outlined.

CHAPTER III

Methodology

Design

The goals of this study were threefold. First of all, there was a goal to explore and describe the adoption experience of the adolescent adoptee. Secondly, there was a goal to explore and describe the adoption experience of the adoptive parents, and thirdly, a goal to explore and describe the similarities and differences between the parents' and adoptees' perceptions of the adoption experience. The questions and goals posed by the researcher were qualitative in nature, so accordingly a qualitative research strategy was implemented. The research was designed as a descriptive, qualitative study based on separate interviews with adopted adolescents and their parents.

Qualitative research paradigm. A qualitative research strategy allows the important dimensions of the cases under study to emerge from the analysis without presupposing in advance what those dimensions will be (Patton, 1980). Qualitative designs subsequently begin with specific observations and build toward general patterns. Categories emerge as the researcher comes to recognize the patterns. This inductive approach is in contrast to the experimental, or deductive approach to research which begins with specific hypotheses and variables before any data is collected (Patton, 1980). Qualitative research does not replace the experimental, quantitative paradigm, but rather adds a new dimension to how one can investigate human experience.

In qualitative research the investigator is looking for the commonality which underlies individual variations (Giorgi, 1975). It is

recognized that each person's experience has unique characteristics, but that some characteristics may be common to all individuals in the same situation. In qualitative designs validity is based on the accuracy of the analysis for the unique group under study. The results, which uncover the common elements unique to one group, are therefore not easily generalizable to other populations, rather the satisfaction and value derived from this research strategy is in adding to the depth and richness of understanding of the phenomena under study (Giorgi, 1975).

Basically, qualitative data consist of quotations from individuals, descriptions of situations, events, interactions and activities. The purpose of the data is to understand the point of view and experiences of other people (Patton, 1980). Sociologist John Lofland suggests that there are four elements to collecting qualitative data, and the four elements outlined here were instrumental in guiding this research:

1. The researcher must get close enough to the people in the situation to be able to understand the depth and detail of what is going on.
2. The researcher must aim at capturing what actually took place and what people actually say - the perceived facts.
3. Qualitative data consists of a great deal of pure description of people, activities and interactions.
4. Qualitative data consists of direct quotations (Lofland as cited in Patton, 1980, p. 36).

The main method of obtaining qualitative data is, of course, through in-depth individual interviews.

Sample

Adoptive families who participated in this study were assumed to be a relatively heterogeneous sample of the target population - families with

at least one adopted child who had been adopted early in life by non-relatives, and who was presently 14-18 years of age.

The sample of adoptive families were obtained through a variety of community resources. Advertisements were placed in one daily newspaper (circulation approx. 290,000), and one weekly newspaper (circulation approx. 100,000), on four separate occasions. In addition, 100 posters outlining the project were distributed to community centres, libraries, and Ministry of Human Resources offices in the Greater Vancouver area. Three associations in direct contact with adoptive families - the Adoptive Parents Association, Canadian Adoptees Reform, and the Adoption Research Project, were mailed letters outlining the study and asking for their participation and cooperation in publicizing the study. Finally, four radio stations in the Vancouver area broadcast announcements outlining the project for about five weeks. Interested parties were instructed to contact the researcher by phone or through the mail. This study is therefore limited by its dependence on individuals who had enough interest or concern to volunteer for the research. However, in a descriptive study of this nature, this was not considered to be a significant biasing factor. Thirty seven inquiries were received of which only 21 fit the sample criteria. Of these 21 inquiries, 15 were made by adoptive parents and six were made by adolescent adoptees. The 21 family members who expressed an interest in the research were mailed an introductory letter (Appendix A), and a family consent form (Appendix B). Six of these families declined to participate. Of the 15 parents who made inquiries, two adoptees did not want to participate and two sets

of parents did not have the time to participate. Of the six adoptees who made inquiries, two of them could not get their parents to participate. This reduced the eligible sample to 15 families. Two of these families participated in the pilot interviews, so the results of the study are based on 13 families. In two of the participant families there was more than one adoptee that wanted to participate, so the final sample consisted of 15 adoptee interviews and 13 parent interviews.

Instruments

Interview guides. Separate interview guides were constructed for the adoptees and the parents (Appendices C & D). The questions on both guides were formulated by the researcher, but were guided by the review of the literature and the work of other researchers. The interview guides provided the subject areas within which the interviewer was free to probe, explore and ask questions in order to elucidate the subject. An interview guide serves to make the interviewing process more comprehensive and systematic by delimiting the issues to be discussed (Sellitz, Wrightsman, & Cook, 1976.).

During the development phase of the interview guides, six objective adoptive parents, unconnected with the research project were asked to critique the questions as they were developed. This was done in order to gauge the sensitivity of adoptive parents in general to the adoptee's interview guide, and to remove any questions that were considered too inflammatory by the reviewers. All the parents involved in the screening found the questions to be acceptable and non-threatening. Two pilot interviews were also conducted with adoptive families in order to test

the content validity of the interview guides and to familiarize the interviewers with the procedure. The interview guides were slightly revised after the pilot interviews into their present format.

Family Environment Scale (FES). The Family Environment Scale (Moos, 1974), is a 90-item true-false test designed to assess the social climate of all types of families. It focuses on the measurement and description of the interpersonal relationships among family members along three major dimensions: relationship dimension, personal growth dimension, and the system maintenance dimension. Ten subscale scores can be computed from these three major dimensions. In addition to the subscale scores, a Family Incongruence score can be measured by summing the differences in subscale scores for each pair of family members.

Internal consistency coefficients for the subscales range from .64 to .78. Test-retest reliability coefficients calculated for 47 members of nine families over an eight week period vary from .68 to .86 (Moos, 1974). Validity data on the FES is limited but some validity information is available that is relevant to this study. A comparison study was made of 42 clinic families and 42 matched normal families on the FES (Moos, 1974). Clinic families obtained significantly lower scores on the Cohesion, Intellectual-Cultural Orientation, and Active-Recreational Orientation subscales, and higher scores on both Conflict and Control subscales. Clinic families also obtained higher Family Incongruence scores than the normal families (Moos, 1974).

The differences between these two groups are consistent with expectations and therefore provide some support for the scale's construct

validity. The FES is being used in this study as a global measure of family climate. It was not used as a diagnostic tool, but as a descriptive tool to aid in describing the families under study. The FES is also appropriate for use with adolescents and adults and is easily administered in about 15 minutes.

Procedure

When the participant families returned the family consent forms, another package containing the Parents' Questionnaire (Appendix E) and the FES (Appendix F) were mailed to each parent individually. The adoptee participating in the study was mailed a separate confidential package containing the FES and the appropriate instructions. After the families had received their respective questionnaire packages, the researcher arranged a mutually convenient time for the interviews. When the family members met for the interview the researcher collected the questionnaire packages from them.

The interviews. The interviews conducted were of a semi-structured or focused format. A semi-structured format was followed because it has the advantage of being reasonably objective while still permitting a more thorough understanding of the participant's views and reasons for them (Borg & Gall, 1979). The focused interview provided the appropriate combination of objectivity and depth that was required in this research. Each interview was 1-2 hours in length and was audiotaped with the consent of the participants.

The adoptive parents and the adoptee were interviewed separately, but at the same time. This necessitated the need for two interviewers, but

alleviated the problem of families discussing specific interview content and thus biasing the results. The interviews were conducted by the primary researcher and another female graduate student with interviewing and counselling skills, and a background knowledge of the adoption process. The two interviewers counterbalanced the number of adoptee and parent interviews they did so that approximately 50% of the parent interviews were conducted by each interviewer, and 50% of the adoptee interviews were conducted by each interviewer. In two of the families there was more than one adoptee taking part in the study. The primary researcher interviewed the adopted siblings separately, while the second interviewer interviewed the parents. The interviews were either conducted in the family homes or on the university campus. Confidentiality and parent-adoptee separation during all the interviews was stringently maintained.

At the conclusion of each interview the participants were invited to contact the researcher if they should recall anything significant, or if they just wanted to discuss the content of the interviews again. Three weeks after the conclusion of the interview, each participant was mailed a letter of appreciation (Appendix G), which also offered them the opportunity to meet for further discussion or counselling if they so desired. No follow-up sessions were requested by any of the participants.

Method of Data Analysis

The focus of the data analysis was on identifying the themes and patterns in adoptive family life. The organization and subsequent analyses of the data were patterned after a method outlined by Patton (1980), but with some variations dictated by the demands

of the study and the judgement of the researcher. There were three major phases to the interview data analysis - a separate analysis of the adoptee interviews, a separate analysis of the parent interviews, and an analysis of the parent-adoptee similarities and differences regarding their perceptions of the adoption experience.

The parent and adoptee interviews were analysed in the same manner with one exception. In two-parent families the parent interviews were scrutinized for parental agreement and disagreement. When both parents agreed on a response this was classified as one content unit. When parents disagreed, these responses were classified as separate content units and included in the data pool as such.

In order to elucidate the method of analysis followed for the separate interviews, the procedure is outlined below:

1. Each interview was transcribed verbatim. Twenty-eight transcripts were typed and they varied in length from 12-18 pages.
2. Each transcript was photocopied so that there was a master copy and a working copy.
3. The transcripts were then edited. Only that information which had absolutely no relation to the research questions were edited. This included social chatting at the beginning of the interview, and some adolescent diversions into unrelated topics during the interview.
4. Each transcript was read and reread to get a sense of the interview. While reading, the researcher underlined phrases relevant to the basic research questions and made notes in the margins regarding any salient thoughts, feelings, or subjects that were being described.

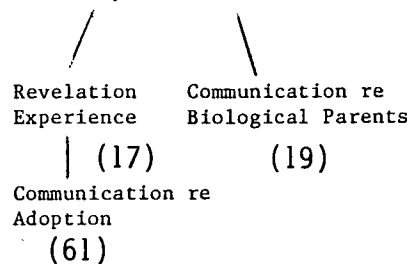
Any recurring regularities in the data were also noted in the margins. This was the first step in classifying the data, the purpose being to facilitate the search for themes.

5. Major categories or topics were formulated based on the areas covered in the interview guide, responses to the interview questions, and on the notes in the margins. The major categories determined for the adolescent interviews were; Family Communication, Family Relationships, Biological Parents, Self Perceptions and Social Relations. The major categories determined for the parents' interviews were; Family Communication, Family Relationships, Biological Parents, and Adoption Experience.
6. Once the major topics were elucidated, the interview data was sliced into content units - statements or passages reflecting the content of the interviews.
7. The resulting content units were written on 4"x6" index cards and coded with an identification number. For the adolescent interviews 487 cards were done, and for the parents' interviews, 362 cards were done. The cards or content units were then sorted into the major categories. Patton (1980) recommends using a cut and paste methodology here, but it was too time consuming. It was more efficient to write the content units onto cards, rather than cutting and pasting because of the volume of data collected in this study.
8. The next step involved discovering the sub-categories or topics. Cards within each major category were sorted and resorted until clear cut sub-topics began to emerge. Tables 2 and 3 outline the nature of the data classification system and the relative frequencies

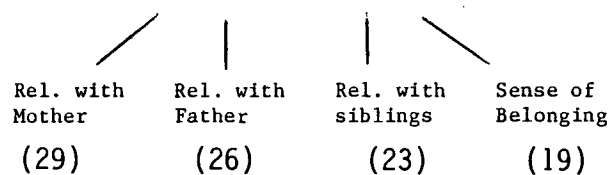
TABLE 2

Adoptee's Interview Classification System

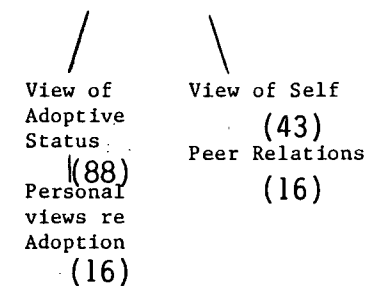
(1) Family Communication



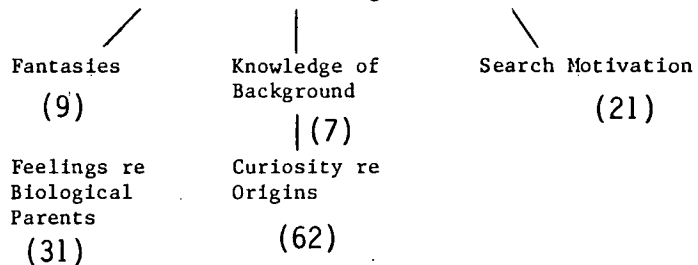
(2) Family Relationships



(3) References to Self



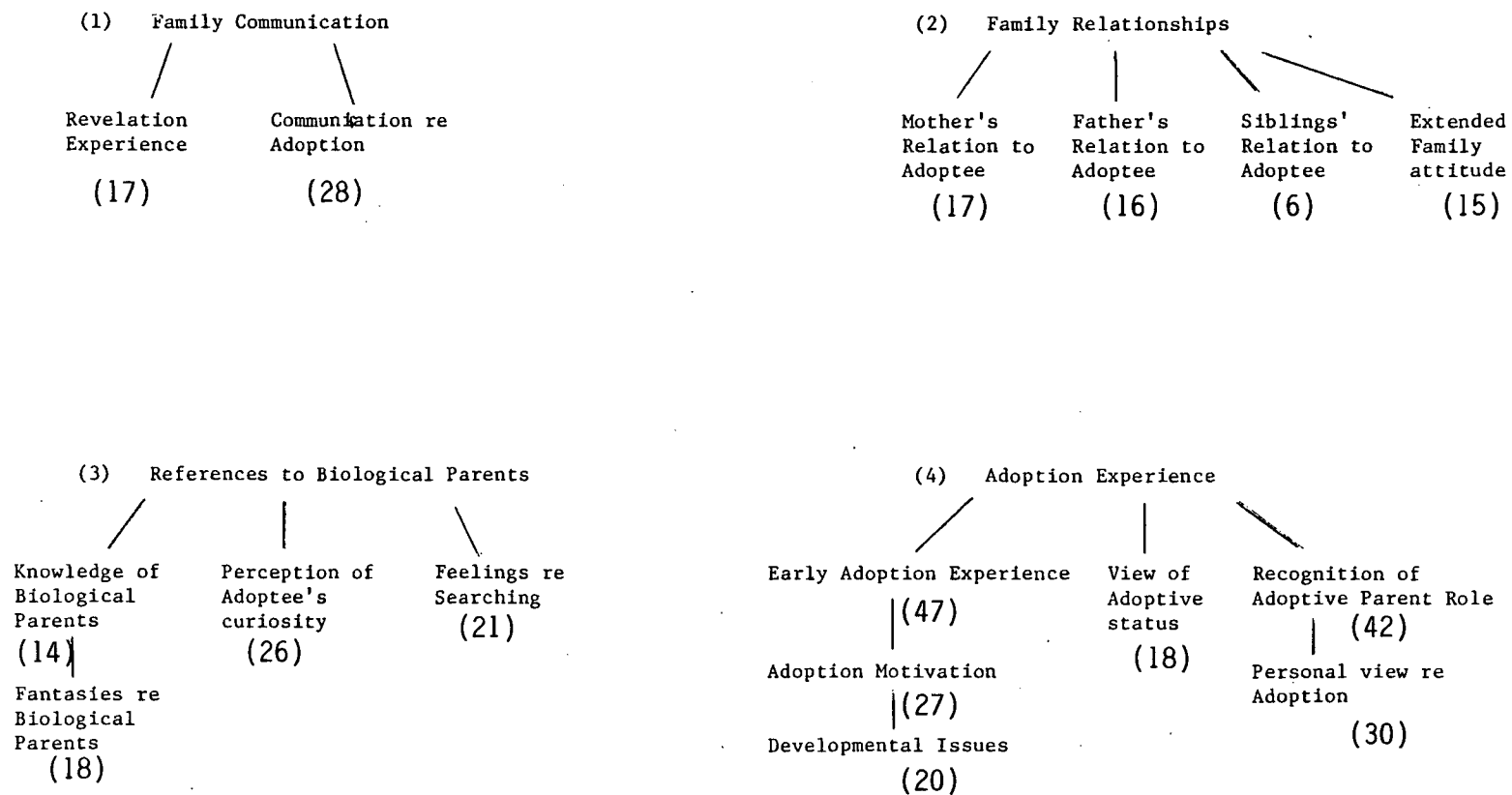
(4) References to Biological Parents



Relative Frequency (#) = the number of content units within each sub-category

TABLE 3

Parents' Interview Classification System



Relative Frequency(#) = the number of content units within each sub-category

of the content units in each category for the adoptee and parent interviews. Categories can be judged by two criteria; internal homogeneity, which is the extent to which the data that belong in a certain category hold together, and external homogeneity, which is the extent to which differences among categories are bold and clear (Patton, 1980). These two criteria were kept in mind during this part of the analysis. When there is a large number of miscellaneous or overlapping data items this usually indicates problems with the category system. Both of these potential problems were kept to a minimum in developing the classification system.

9. Once the classification system was finalized, an index of inter-rater agreement was calculated to measure reliability. This was accomplished by measuring percent agreement - the extent to which a second sorter put content units into the same categories as the primary researcher.
10. The content units were then analysed within each sub-category to arrive at the themes and patterns in the data. The thematic structure was derived from the content units. This procedure involved reading and re-reading the individual content units, and moving back and forth from theory to data.
11. It is easier to define a theme by giving illustrations than by defining it in generalized, abstract terms. The final step in analyzing the interview data was to select passages from the cards that described or reflected each theme. These examples were then transcribed from the content unit cards to data sheets and coded

and labeled with a word or phrase to denote the theme. This was done so that the researcher had a systematic list of the identified themes with the attending examples, and thus it was not necessary to go through the cards each time the researcher wanted an example of a particular theme. This was of immeasurable help when writing the results section of this paper.

Although an attempt has been made to outline the basic steps taken in this content analysis, some of the steps do overlap slightly, or occur simultaneously as the analysis progresses. While constructing the categories some themes were very clear, and it was only necessary to validate them with the analysis. The second phase of the analysis involved a comparative analysis of parent and adoptee content units to determine the similarities and differences in their perceptions of adoptive family life. Again, the basic steps followed in this analysis are outlined below:

1. The researcher separated those topics where parent-child comparisons could be made, i.e. Family Communication, Family Relationships, Biological Parents, etc.
2. The cards for each parent-child dyad were pulled from the data pool and then re-sorted by dyad into the major categories.
3. Then steps 10 and 11 of the previous analysis were repeated to arrive at a description of the themes and patterns reflecting parent-child consensus regarding their perceptions of the adoption experience.

In addition to the qualitative analyses, the FES scores were analyzed in a purely descriptive manner. Means and standard deviations were calculated

on the subscales, and a Family Incongruence score which measures the similarities and differences in the perceptions of different members within the family, was computed for each participating family member pair. Data from the Parents' Questionnaire was analyzed to obtain demographic information from the participant families. The results of these analyses are discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER IV

Results

The results of the quantitative and qualitative data analyses are summarized in this chapter. The results of the reliability check on the interview data classification system are also presented in this chapter.

Percent Agreement Results

A graduate student familiar with adoption issues was given the content units from each major category and told to sort them into the sub-categories constructed by the primary researcher. The number of matches or "hits" was recorded and then converted into percentage of agreement for each major category of the parent and adolescent interviews. These results are summarized in Table 4.

Demographic Data

Thirteen middle class families participated in the research. Nine of the families were two-parent families and four were single parent families. Eight of the families were considered "mixed" families, that is, they had both biological and adopted children, while five of the families had only adopted children.

The adoptive fathers ranged in age from 40-60 years (\bar{X} = 52.5 yrs.), and the adoptive mothers ranged in age from 36-57 years (\bar{X} = 47.5 yrs.). Fifteen adoptees participated in the research, 11 female and 4 male. Age range for the females was 14-17 years (\bar{X} = 15.3 yrs.), and for the males the age range was 15-18 years (\bar{X} = 16.5 yrs.).

All the parents in the study had received some post-secondary education, and had incomes over \$20,000.00 a year. All the children

TABLE 4

Interview Classification SystemInter-Rater Agreement

Major Categories	Adoptee Interviews	Parent Interviews
Family Communication	95%	95%
Family Relationships	97%	94%
References to Biological Parents	93%	91%
References to Self	89%	--
Adoption Experience	--	89%

were adopted before the age of two months, with the exception of one baby who was adopted at eight months of age. There were 13 government adoptions and 2 private adoptions. All of the parents interviewed indicated that they were highly motivated to adopt at the time that they received their adopted child. Five families adopted due to suspected infertility, four families had at least one risky pregnancy so decided to adopt, and four families adopted to add to their family.

One couple had a biological child after adopting two children. Eight of the adoptees in the study were the youngest children in the family, four were the second youngest children, and there were two only children and one second oldest child. Nine of the study families (5 mixed, 4 only adopted) had consulted a physician regarding their adopted child's school related problems or behavior problems.

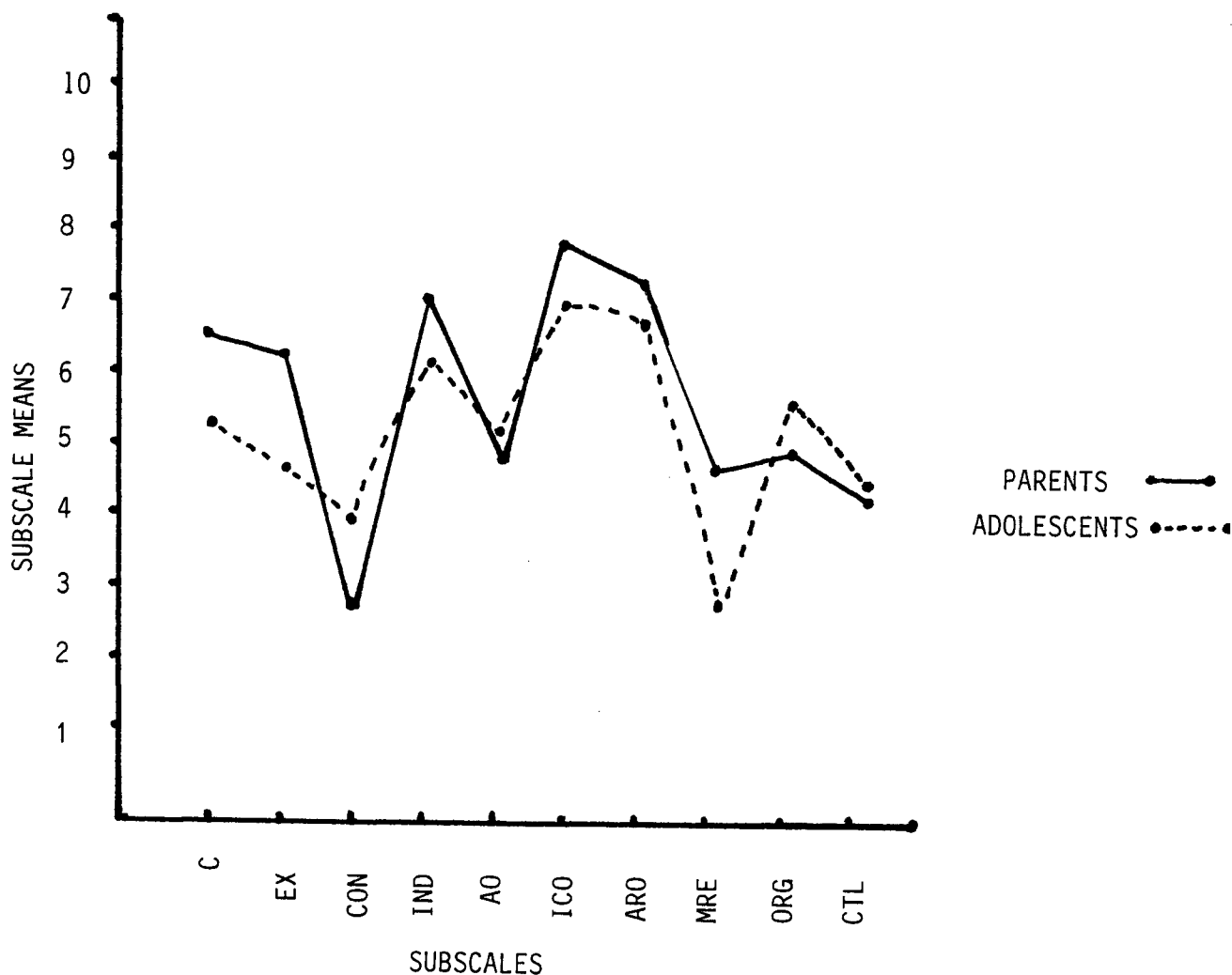
Family Environment Scale Data Analysis

The data from the FES was analysed in a purely descriptive manner. Only 11 families' scales were used in the analysis because two families returned incomplete questionnaires. Mean scores for the adoptees and for the parents on the FES subscales are plotted in Figure 1. The adoptive parents perceive slightly more cohesiveness and expressiveness in the families than do the children, and also view more moral-religious emphasis in their families than do the adolescents. Overall, the adoptees perceive the family environment only slightly more negatively than do their parents.

In addition to the mean score profiles, a Family Incongruence score - the extent to which the family disagrees about their family

FIGURE 1

FES Mean Profiles for Adolescents & Parents



Key

C= Cohesiveness
EX= Expressiveness
CON= Conflict

IND= Independence
AO= Achievement Orientation

ICO=Intellectual-Cultural Orientation
ARO=Active-Recreational Orientation
MRE=Moral-Religious Emphasis
ORG=Organization
CTL=Control

climate, was computed. Scores on this measure can range from 0-90, with a mean norm of 16.74 (S.D. 5.38). The study families had a mean of 14.3 (S.D. 3.45) on the Family Incongruence measure. These results suggest that the study families have fairly close agreement regarding the characteristics of the family's social milieu, and that the families in this research have family profiles consistent with that of the normative family samples as measured by Moos(1974).

Qualitative Data Analysis Results

Preface

Verbatim quotes from the participants in this study are frequently used to illustrate the themes and explicate the descriptions. The names used are fictitious and some identifying information has been changed to protect the anonymity of the participants. The results from the interview data analyses are summarized within each major category for the adoptee and parent interviews. When parent-adoptee comparisons are made they are summarized sequentially, that is the parents' perceptions will typically follow the adoptees' when comparisons are indicated.

Family Communication

Adoptees' perception of the revelation experience. All of the adoptees interviewed could not remember a specific time when they were told of their adoptive status. The most frequent response was, "I've just always known that I was adopted". On further probing two clear patterns emerged that seemed to be related to childrens' developmental

stages. At ages 3 to 4, adoptees have the first clear memory of being exposed to adoption:

Nancy, age 15: I remember that I wondered what is adopted you know, I guess I was about 3 or 4, and a boy said something about me being adopted and he said that we could be brother and sister and that confused me. I've always known it from the beginning and when he said that I wondered whether he was making it up so I went home and asked my mom and she told me again, and this time it sunk in deeper, it was like learning to speak almost, it just sort of filtered in.

Laura, age 16: I remember being told and being kind of confused because I remember being told a story at bedtime, and they told me and I didn't understand, I was only about 3.

Linda, age 15: I guess I was about 3 or 4 and I was walking with my mom and I saw a pregnant lady and I wondered if I came from a tummy, so I asked my mom and she explained it to me.

Barbara, age 15: When my mom told me she said there was no need to worry about it, they really loved me as their own daughter, and that in fact I was special because they chose me. The way she put it was with my brother she said we are stuck with him, but they chose me so that was special in itself, and I've always felt special. I was 4 years old then.

Tom, age 18: I remember being in the living room and my mom and dad sitting me down and saying this isn't important at all but we should let you know that you were adopted, I guess I was about 4. I thought it was neat that I was adopted, I just thought I was special and my other brother and sister weren't. My parents didn't tell me that but I thought I was special.

Questions regarding adoption and the adoptee's particular status surface again around age 7 or 8:

Cheryl, age 16: I think I was about 7 or 8 before I realized I could have natural parents, it wasn't like realizing, it was like wondering all of a sudden.

Richard, age 17: I think I first remember it hitting home when I was about 7, that is when I really realized where I was from, it was when I was about that age that I realized that I was different, nobody knew that I was different, my mom said something about me being different or special.

Don, age 15: There was a clear time when I knew, and that was when I was about 8 years old I had a fight with my brother and he brought it up, it was awful I cried, but it wouldn't bother me now if he did that.

Shelley, age 17: I just remember all of a sudden thinking about it when I was 8 years old. I got really curious about why my parents would give me up, and what is adoption, so its not that I never knew about it until then, it was just that I started thinking about it then. Until I was 8 I thought everybody was adopted and then I realized not everybody is adopted because my brothers and sister weren't.

Linda, age 15: I forgot about it until I was 9 and I found the adoption papers, and I almost started crying because I thought why didn't you ever tell me, and she said she had tons of times before. But then I understood what adoption was. I felt as if my mom had been trying to hide it from me all those years. I was so upset, I felt like I was not wanted or something, I felt really mixed up. I was so mad after all those years of thinking this is my mom and finding out that it isn't. I kept on thinking where is my real mom?

It seems to be around ages 8 or 9 in the adoptees' lives that the realization they are adopted suddenly emerges. There is an element of surprise in their revelations, and for some, the feelings of shock and confusion as they realize what adoption means for them. Brodzinsky et al (1981) discovered that between the ages of 8-11, childrens' conception of adoption broadens. This cognitive change probably explains the adoptees' renewed interest and wonder in their adoptive status. These results further suggest that adoption knowledge results from a general process of construction of the concept, and not simply from a gradual accumulation of facts presented by the parents (Brodzinsky et al, 1981).

Parents' perception of the revelation experience. All the parents interviewed indicated that they told their children as soon as possible about their adoptive status. The adoptees' perceptions were confirmed by the parents' perceptions as all the parents also indicated that their children had always known about their adoption. However, none of the parents were able to tell when this information had really been understood by their child. The initial revelation experience was not accompanied by parental anxiety, the parents reported that it occurred in a relaxed manner and that their child seemed unconcerned about it:

Mother: Adoption was part of the family culture right from the beginning. We made a careful decision not to over or under emphasize it. The kids never seemed concerned about it then.

Mother: Well we never made a secret out of it, we just stated the case as it was, it just occurred naturally, and she wasn't bothered by it.

Some of the parents, on the advice of the social worker had read the Chosen Baby story to their child at bedtime, but 54% of the parents recounted a "tummy story" that seemed to trigger their child's interest in babies:

Mother: Some kids up the street said something to D. about coming out of my tummy, so at nap time I told him how it works, that he came out of someone else's tummy, and that seemed to satisfy him, he wasn't bothered by it.

Mother: My sister was pregnant and S. wanted to know how it got there and she asked was I ever in your tummy? So its an ideal way of bringing up adoption, so I told her about it then. She used to bring it up quite frequently when she was 3.

Mother: When L. first found out that she came from another lady's tummy she didn't say much about it for years, but then she started asking questions like, did I come from your tummy? Like I had lied to her or something, it bothered me alot that she kept asking me.

Mother: I told her about the tummy stuff when she was little, like I told her how we went searching for her and how we found her and she used to get me to tell her the story over and over again. But when she was 3 she asked a neighbor if she came out of her tummy because she knew she didn't come out of mine. That really bothered me because I didn't realize that she was thinking about it that much at such a young age. It was a surprise.

The anxiety regarding telling the children of their adoptive status occurred well after the initial revelation had taken place, when the children were old enough to start asking pertinent questions. For some families the child started asking questions around 3 years of age, but for the majority (69%) of families, the children were older when they began the real questioning, and the questioning period reached a peak around the ages of 8 to 9. The same time as the adolescents remember becoming curious about adoption. The themes of anxiety, uncertainty, inadequacy and feeling threatened, reflect how 54% of the adoptive mothers felt about their child's curiosity and questions:

- I think I felt threatened by all the questions. She would repeatedly ask them, it would satisfy her for a little while and then she'd ask again and I'd have to reassure her again. It was a little unsettling, I wasn't sure if I was going to give her the right answer and I didn't want to make her feel rejected.
- I personally found it fairly tense in that I was really wanting to say the right things. When he was 4 or 5 he asked, why did she throw me away? And I didn't know how to answer that, I couldn't believe a small child would think like that.
- She was always asking, I dreaded the next time she would ask this horrible question, it was really upsetting to have to keep saying that she came from somebody else.
- She asked alot of questions when she was 8, she would frequently ask how could my mommy not want me. I felt uptight I never thought I would either. I was worried that I wasn't handling it properly. When she was asking all those questions I thought it might have adverse effects on her. I was more uptight about what I was going to say and whether I might make it worse. I felt inadequate at handling the questions, I could handle the measles and practical things like that but this was different.

- From then on when she was 9 we had a real question period with her, who is my mother, what did she look like, why did she give me up, didn't she love me? And we dealt with one question at a time. When she was around 9 though she was asking these questions all the time, I felt threatened, we went through a really hard time then. She was rebellious, disrespectful, and had nightmares and wet the bed, and the kids at school were mean to her, everything sort of tumbled in on her.

The repetitious nature of the adoptee's questioning was quite unsettling for many of the adoptive parents. It is clear that they did not understand why their children were repeatedly asking the questions when they were doing their best to answer them. Although the fathers were aware of their child's interest in being adopted, it was usually the mothers who dealt with their child's curiosity and repetitive questions.

Family communication regarding adoption. All of the adoptees interviewed believed that the subject of adoption was an open topic at home. All of the adoptees presented a picture of a fairly, relaxed open atmosphere in regard to discussion of general adoption topics:

Barbara, age 15: We talk about it occasionally, its usually in a general sense, like adopting a child or something, like its not me as such, its just adoption in general.

Paul, age 16: We might end up talking about something related to adoption, but its not really a hot subject to talk about.

Shelley, age 17: It would be an offhand discussion most of the time. If we do talk about it, its when I was a baby or something.

Although adoption was not discussed very frequently in the study families, the adoptees perceived that it was an open subject, this matched the perception of the parents. The majority (86%) of the adoptees believed that they initiated most discussions about adoption

when they occurred in the home:

Cheryl, age 16: I talk about it whenever I think about it. I ask why I was adopted, why did they want a girl instead of a boy, there is no real family discussion I just talk about it when I want to.

Marie, age 14: I usually bring it up, I wonder about the people who had me alot and I wonder where, what my roots are and where I come from, that's what I wonder the most so I do bring it up.

Fourteen percent of the adoptees indicated that mother was the one that usually brought up the subject of adoption:

Alice, age 14: I don't talk about it that much I guess my mom brings it up but then I won't talk to her about it, I feel stupid.

Don, age 15: I don't talk about it that much at home because my brother bugs me, its usually my mom that brings it up, but I don't want to tell her everything I think because I don't want to get anyone in trouble, like my brother you know.

Parents' perception of family communication about adoption. All

the parents interviewed agreed with the perception of the adoptees that the subject of adoption was an open topic at home. However, the children and parents differed in their perceptions of who usually initiated the discussions. Eighty-four percent of the parents, primarily the mothers believed that they usually brought the subject of adoption up in the home:

Mother: We were just having a talk one day and when he got up to go he said I wonder what my mother was really like, so it made me more aware that its on his mind alot more than we would ever know. I initiate the discussions most of the time, its usually me that mentions it.

Mother: Often I'll bring it up, if she's got something to say I want her to say it. I want her to accept the fact that she is adopted so I bring it up. I want her to feel comfortable.

Sixteen percent of the parents believed that no one in particular brought the subject up at home, and that if it happened to come up it would just be discussed like anything else.

While family discussion about general adoption issues was perceived by both parents and adoptees as an open topic, discussion on a more personal level was more difficult for the adolescents. Eighty percent of the adolescents were worried about upsetting their parents with their questions and curiosity about their backgrounds:

Richard, age 17: I wasn't sure when I talked to my mom about it whether she'd get upset and think what have I done wrong, why is he curious all of a sudden? But from her reaction I don't think I upset her. It would be impossible to bring up a thing like that with my dad.

Shelley, age 17: I think my mom was worried about how I'd feel about it, about being adopted, so there is no reason for me to upset her with alot of questions.

Alice, age 14: We don't talk about it at all, my mom brings it up sometimes but I change the subject, it feels uncomfortable to talk to her about the birth parents.

Cathy, age 17: It would be very hard to say that I was curious, so I wouldn't want to do that because my mom gets upset easily, she would take it very personally. When I was younger I used to ask questions but I wasn't a very good child then.

When the adoptive parents were queried about discussing these adoption issues with their child, all the parents indicated that they were open and more than willing to discuss their child's curiosity about the biological parents with the adoptee. In one family, the mother perceived communication regarding these adoption issues as being open, but at the same time she was sending conflicting messages to her son regarding her willingness to discuss adoption:

Mother: He showed some anxiety about being adopted and so we tried to get him to talk more about these anxieties but he wouldn't say anything. So every once in a while I'll mention something in case he wants to talk, I've told him

about being sensitive about being his real mother and he knows that I feel slightly threatened but he also knows that I'm not afraid of him looking up his biological mother.

If a child gets the message that his interest in the biological parents is threatening or upsetting to the adoptive parents, he will be much less likely to discuss with them his feelings regarding adoption. In this particular family the adoptee had not discussed his feelings about being adopted because he did not want to hurt his mother's feelings. These results suggest that for the majority of families in this study, parents and adoptees have discrepant perceptions regarding the openness and the quality of communication regarding the adoptees' background.

Adoptees' perception of communication with siblings about adoption.

Communication with siblings regarding adoption issues was very limited among the adoptees interviewed. None of the adoptees had any really private discussions with their siblings about adoption, whether they were adopted or non-adopted siblings. There appears to be a definite lack of sharing in both mixed and only adoptive families when it comes to talking about adoption:

Cathy, age 17 (adopted sibs.): There is nothing to talk about, I don't talk to them about my feelings, its sort of private I keep it to myself.

Nancy, age 15(adopted sib.): I don't talk to my brother, he isn't interested in anything I do. He thinks I'm crazy because I want to find my parents.

Shelley, age 17(non-adopted sibs.): They don't bug me about it, they used to say that I was the special one, but I would never ask them about it, they never used it against me though.

Don, age 15(non-adopted sibs.): My brother has bugged me about it, he uses it against me, I would never talk to him about it.

In one family that was interviewed, the adopted siblings confided in each other but they did not confide in the non-adopted siblings:

Laura, age 16: No, I wouldn't talk to them (non-adopted sibs.) because they get touchy, because even a couple of months ago I got this background information from Victoria, and when they found out they wondered why, so I don't like talking to them about it, its like they are defensive, I think it bothered them but I do talk to my adopted brother, we talk about it quite often.

In another family it was suggested that the research gave them an excuse to talk about adoption, and if any family member was having problems this research might help them. They would not openly ask each other if adoption was a problem for them. In both mixed and only adoptive families, the adoptees had a tendency to view their adoption as a private matter, not to be discussed with siblings.

Family Relationships

Adoptees' perception of their relationship with mother. When the adoptees described their relationships with their adoptive mothers, most of them described fairly close, warm relationships. A second aspect that the adoptees were queried on was their perception of their similarity to their mothers. It was hypothesized that this might reflect the extent to which the child identified with the parent. Seventy-three percent of the adoptees felt that they were similar in some respects to their mothers, suggesting that they identified with their mothers to some degree. The adoptees who felt they were similar to their mothers also believed that they had fairly close relationships with their mothers:

Linda, age 15: My mom and I are more like friends, we are pretty open. I think we are pretty much the same, we both have bad tempers.

Barbara, age 15: We are really close, we get along really well, I look at some of her qualities and I think I'm like her quite a bit.

Marie, age 14: We are best friends, she is great, she is so understanding, I think I'm similar to my mom, we think alike and stuff.

Alice, age 14: She's like my best friend sort of but with a higher level of respect. We are pretty open with each other. We are both sensitive and quiet, we are alike.

Twenty-seven of the adoptees interviewed believed that they did not have very close relationships with their mothers, and they had a tendency to perceive themselves as being different from their mothers:

Laura, age 16: Our relationship isn't that good. I don't really talk to her about my problems or anything. I'm different from everyone in the family, I'm a totally different person from my mom.

Cathy, age 17: I don't speak to my mom about important things, like I wouldn't tell her about painful experiences she would probably like to be closer, I guess our relationship could be better, we are very different in our needs for order and stuff like that, our temperaments are different.

An interesting finding was that even when the adolescents perceived a close relationship between mother and child, 33% of these adoptees also indicated that they don't discuss personal feelings with their mothers:

Cheryl, age 16: I think we are really quite close, I respect her an awful lot, I can talk to her about alot of things, but I don't talk to her about personal stuff, my feelings and stuff.

Shelley, age 17: We have a very close relationship, we have a close family. I don't express my personal feelings to my mom though.

Mothers' perceptions of their relationships with the adoptee.

Ninety-three percent of the adoptive mothers described their relationships with their adopted children as good, close relationships. However, 62% of the mothers who perceived close relationships with their children did not think their child was similar to them at all in temperament or mannerisms:

Mother: I think our relationship now is quite close this has been worked out over the years, but I think he is happy with it now. He is different to me, I think he is very dramatic with his opinions and not like me at all.

Mother: We both enjoy a close relationship, we have an excellent relationship but I think she is pretty different from me. She's more outgoing and her temperament is different.

Mother: We have a close relationship, we spend alot of time together. There is a great deal of trust between us. She is quite different from me, she has a different manner to me, and she's a natural performer, I'm not.

Sixty-two percent of the mother-child dyads in this sample had discrepant perceptions regarding their similarity to each other.

Adoptees' perceptions of their relationships with father. Five of the adoptees' responses to this area of questioning were not analyzed because they did not have very frequent contact with their fathers due to divorce in the family. Sixty percent of the adoptees in two parent families indicated that their relationships with their fathers were okay, but not very close, while 40% indicated that they had poor relationships with their fathers:

Richard, age 17: We just sort of stay out of each other's way, we have nothing in common.

Tom, age 18: We have an okay relationship I guess, but he gets on my nerves, we aren't that close.

Marie, age 14: We aren't that close, we don't fight, its just not that good.

Seventy-seven percent of the adoptees also perceived that they were different in temperament and mannerisms from their fathers:

Cheryl, age 16: I'm alot different from my father, my temperament and everything is different.

Gathy, age 17: We talk alot but I don't tell him personal things, we are quite different I think.

Shelley, age 17: I guess our relationship isn't bad, but he is very set in his ways, we aren't alike at least I can't see it. My temperament is different from his.

Fathers' perceptions of their relationships with the adoptees. The adoptive fathers were aware that their relationships with their children were not as close as the mother-child relationships were:

Father: We like each other, we aren't as close as her and her mother are, she's less likely to talk to me about things that are seriously on her mind.

Father: We have a fairly good relationship but her mother would be the one she'd go to if she had a problem.

Father: She resents me because she thinks I play favorites with the boys, so I resent that, she would go to her mother with personal things, she certainly never comes to me with that.

Father: My perception of the relationship is that he's never wanted to do things with me, there is some block between us. He would never go and do things with me easily, he has a better relationship with his mother.

The adoptive fathers' perceptions of the similarities and differences in their children were congruent with the adoptees' perceptions. Those adoptees who thought that they were different from their fathers, had fathers who viewed the adoptee as different from them, and those adoptees who thought they were similar to their fathers also had fathers who had congruent perceptions.

Parents' and adoptees' perceptions of sibling relationships.

Parents who had only adopted children described their children's sibling relationships as normal, they did not perceive that any significant sibling problems existed. The adopted children in these families also did not perceive that any problems existed among their siblings, thus the parent-adoptee perceptions were congruent regarding sibling relationships. Sixty percent of the parents in mixed families also reported that no sibling problems existed, but 40% of the parents did perceive some sibling rivalry between their adopted and non-adopted children. The main complaint, according to the parents, was that the adoptee felt that the other sibling(s) received preferential treatment:

Mother: In the last few years N. has used her brother in a way when she's mad she'll say he is your natural child so he is your precious one and things like that. I think she is jealous of him. She says we favor him because he is popular or something like that.

Mother: She's extremely jealous of her sister, her sister is her dad's favorite, and he makes it very clear and that really bothers her, she gets along okay with the others though.

Mother: D.'s brother bugs him alot. He's really quite mean to him. I think D. is jealous of him, so I think there is some sibling rivalry there.

The adopted children in these mixed families agreed with their parents' perceptions regarding the sibling problems in their families:

Alice, age 14: My sister gets away with everything, she is my dad's favorite, it makes me sick.

Nancy, age 15: My brother gets special treatment. It's my opinion but I feel that way. I think both my parents give him preferred treatment, they sort of take his side.

Don, age 15: I don't get along too well with my brother, I stay out of his way. My dad gives special treatment and my brother always reminds me about that.

Sixty percent of the adopted children in the mixed families mentioned that although they didn't have any major difficulties with their siblings, they didn't have close relationships with their non-adopted siblings because they were so different from them:

Laura, age 16: I'm different from everyone in my family. I'm not close to my brothers and sisters but I get along with my adopted brother, we are close.

Tanya, age 15: I'm different from my brothers and sisters and they are quite a bit older than me so we don't have much in common.

Shelley, age 17: My sister and I never used to get along very well, its just that we are so different.

The adoptees' sense of belonging. All of the adoptees from only adoptive families felt that they belonged in their families:

Cheryl, age 16: I feel like I belong in the family I don't feel left out of anything, its like I was meant to be here.

Paul, age 16: I feel that I belong, I don't feel left out, this is my family, I think it's crazy some kids blame their problems on being adopted.

Marie, age 14: I belong in this family, there is alot of sense of belonging here.

Pam, age 14: I belong, the people who adopted me are my parents.

However, in the mixed families, 67% of the adoptees had difficulties in developing a strong sense of belonging in their families. Non-adopted siblings can reinforce the feeling of not belonging, as can the perception that the adoptee's personality is mismatched with other family members:

Alice, age 14: I think I belong sort of, like my brother and sister they are quite close so they sort of make me feel left out. I feel like I belong with my mom but not my dad.

Don, age 15: For awhile I sort of felt like I was different just being adopted, like I wasn't as much a part of the family as they were and it was pretty bad, I don't feel as belonging as the other kids.

Laura, age 16: I felt like a part of the family from the beginning I guess but when I was younger my brother and sister teased me alot, I didn't feel like I belonged at all then, or when I was depressed or fighting in the family. When I thought I was a mistake I really didn't belong then.

Tanya, age 15: Sometimes I look around the table when the whole family is together and I think I'm not really like them, its like I don't belong and somehow I just get a feeling that my grandparents haven't accepted me yet. Sometimes I get up and leave the table and just go to my room.

Richard, age 17: I guess I belong here but not that much sometimes. I don't belong with my dad we aren't at all alike, our personalities are so different.

Nancy, age 15: I don't belong here, that is the feeling that I get. It should have been somebody else, I belong somewhere else and I don't know where. Sometimes I don't even feel like I belong on this planet, I guess there is a part of me wanting to belong somewhere. Its like your feet are off the ground and you are just floating, floating around since I was born.

There was a tendency for adolescents who viewed themselves as different from one or more family members to also have some difficulties developing a strong sense of belonging in their families, however, the magnitude of this relationship can not be determined in such a descriptive analysis.

The extended families' attitudes towards adoption. Previous research had indicated that the grandparents' views on adoption had affected some adoptive parents ability to feel comfortable with their decision to adopt. So the adoptive parents in this research were asked to recall their early experiences with their extended families. Sixty percent of the parents

interviewed mentioned that their parents had expressed some opposition or concern about them adopting. Half of these parents were parents in mixed families, with both biological and adopted children. The adoptive parents were unprepared for, and surprised by their parents' reactions:

Mother: Everybody was supportive except my father. He did not accept her for quite a few years. It wasn't his granddaughter in his eyes because I hadn't given birth to her. My mom never said anything though.

Mother: Both our mothers made comments to me like did we know what we were doing, and they didn't know if they could accept them, I was surprised by their reaction.

Father: The grandparents give preferential treatment to our natural kids, and it is quite obvious, they ignore the adopted kids. We didn't expect it and then we thought they would get used to the idea but they haven't, they are very narrow minded I think.

Mother: I never thought there would be a problem but to my amazement there was a lot of opposition. They thought it was unnecessary and foolish, what about the other children, they have accepted her as a member of the family now, but initially they were very opposed.

These results suggest that some families' perceptions and feelings about biological ties are strong, and the idea of adoption causes them some difficulty. In 40% of the families, the extended family members expressed positive feelings about the couple's intent to adopt and were delighted to acknowledge the adopted child as a member of the family:

Mother: They were all delighted, nobody said anything to us, he was just automatically considered a part of the family.

Mother: Our parents were quite enthusiastic, they were anxious to have grandchildren so they were pleased, they forgot that they were adopted.

The Parents' Adoption Experience

The early adoption experience. Although all the adoptive mothers indicated that they felt prepared to adopt, on further probing it was discovered that actually receiving the child and taking the baby home produced fairly different experiences for mothers who already had natural children, and mothers who only had adopted children. Mothers with only adopted children did not perceive any major problems during the early period of adoptive parenthood, and did not appear to have any difficulties in developing maternal feelings:

Mother: Oh I latched on to her right away, she was my baby. It was like she was mine from the start.

Mother: As soon as we picked her up from the hospital she was ours. We had spent alot of time looking at her at the hospital so she really felt like mine.

Mother: Well the instant we got him he was ours, it was like that with all of them. It was very exciting.

Feelings of anxiety, ambivalence and guilt were experienced by 63% of the adoptive mothers who already had natural children. Many of these mothers commented on how they thought they should feel, and compared the experience to when they had their own children. Their main problem was in developing maternal feelings and feeling comfortable with the attachment process as it occurred. This problem was accentuated in two families where the babies were a couple of months older at the time of adoption:

Mother: Initially I didn't relate to her at all, I thought what have they given me. It was awhile before I honestly began to think of her as mine, but I did start to think of her as mine thank goodness.

Mother: I remember feeling sort of hollow in my stomach, I felt very nervous wondering if I'd made the right decision. If I'd been a 100% honest and brave I would have said no, it was having another person's baby in the house as mine. I felt really guilty feeling like that, but once I got used to him I felt ill that I could actually have turned him down.

Mother: I was nervous, I had my own kids and I didn't know how adoption was going to feel for me. I knew that giving birth produced strong maternal feelings but I didn't know what would happen with adoption. It was really nerve wracking for the first little while. I felt really inadequate because I couldn't relate to her at first, maybe because she was a couple of months old it was harder.

Mother: It was built up how much I was going to love it by my friends that it was exactly the same as having your own, so I thought what is wrong with me, why don't I feel this way? I just felt awful for a long time. I couldn't relate to this baby like I did with my own children, I thought it was like admitting I was a bad mother, so I had to keep up this front that everything was great. I felt really guilty and felt like I was baby-sitting, where are all the maternal feelings that I've had with the other kids. Nobody indicated that I might feel like that it was a complete shock, & I guess it was worse because she was a couple of months old when we got her.

None of the fathers interviewed indicated that they had any adjustment problems in becoming adoptive parents. For the fathers it was a much simpler, less emotional transition. The majority (88%) of the fathers did not view adopting as much different than having your own children, reflecting Kirk's (1964) "reject the difference" coping mechanism. The theme detachment seems to describe the fathers' role in the beginning stages of adoptive parenthood:

Father: It was really no different than picking the wife up from the hospital with all our other children there was nothing different, when we took her home she was just there, she belonged to us.

Father: It was just as though we brought our child home, it just seemed normal, I didn't feel nervous, I didn't feel anything, I didn't realize the significance of it, my wife was much more emotionally concerned than me.

Father: You don't think of the child as being adopted, you just concern yourself with taking care of it. I can't remember really feeling anything of any importance, we just had a baby.

Recognition of adoptive parent role. Although 39% of the parents said that they were never really aware of being adoptive parents, the majority (62%) of the adoptive parents reported that they were most keenly aware of their role when comments regarding family resemblances were made. This was true for both mixed and only adoptive families. The theme of a sense of difference was recognizable in the parents' responses:

Mother: You do think about it when someone says, oh doesn't she look like you, or gee your daughter has dark hair and both of you are blonde, and then you will think about it.

Father: Yeah, its funny, most people say she looks like you and we don't know what to say, those are the times you are aware of the adoption.

Mother: When somebody says, oh you don't look anything like your mom, then I'll think about it, or someone will say you look just like your mom and I look at them like they are crazy.

Father: When people say how much our natural son looks like me, and of course they can't say that about our adopted children. I don't know how common it is for a physical likeness between parent and child but the absence of that is damaging or hurtful to the adopted child. You can look at your adopted children and not see a family resemblance.

Father: When people say, oh you look like your father that sort of thing. People say that without thinking and R. doesn't like being put in that situation, I think he feels obliged to explain he's adopted.

Mother: When I see something that is so different from us or our families, it makes me wonder where she got it from and then I am reminded that she is adopted.

Mother: When someone refers to the differences in our biological looks, that's when I remember the most.

Accentuating the similarities or the differences in the child's resemblance to the family, or when parents notice different talents in their child both serve to remind the parents of their role as adoptive parents.

When the parents were queried on their views regarding the similarities or differences in adoptive and biological parenthood, 60% of the parents with only adopted children had a tendency to reject the differences between the two types of parenting:

Mother: We all have the same problems I think there is no difference if you have your own kids.

Mother: I don't see a difference, adoptive parents have the same satisfactions as other parents.

Mother: I don't think other parents have anything over us.

Forty percent of the "only adoptive" parents mentioned that parents with only adopted children do lack the opportunity to see their genes in a child:

Mother: Having a natural child might provide the satisfaction of seeing yourself in your child, seeing your talents in them. On the other hand, it can be very satisfying to not put any of that onto your child. When you have an adopted child you don't know what is coming so that's kind of neat, there are no expectations.

Mother: The only thing would be to see yourself in your child, and that would depend on how important that was to you. When you have your own children there might be that self-esteem you might feel in seeing yourself or an inherited quality coming out, and where with natural children sometimes you can see the resemblance, naturally you would feel good about that and an adoptive parents doesn't get that.

In the mixed families, no discernible patterns could be found. Some of these parents had a tendency to view questions regarding the differences or similarities in adoptive parenthood and natural parenthood as referring to them loving or caring for adopted children differently than natural children. In an attempt to clarify this issue these parents' interviews were scrutinized to try to identify whether any of the parents fell into Kirk's (1964) "reject" or "acknowledge" the difference coping styles. No discernible patterns were found here, and it was noted that the parents made a number of contradictory statements regarding their perceptions of the similarities and differences in the two types of parenting:

Mother: I don't think there is much difference in adopting versus having your own children, I don't see the difference.

This particular mother had said earlier:

Mother: I guess I gained alot from the experience because it was quite different than having my own children, it was harder so I learned from it, its a challenging experience.

And another mother said:

Mother: I don't look on my relationship with A. as being any different than with my non-adopted kids. She is my child I don't think of her as being adopted so no, adoptive parents are no different than other parents.

And the same mother later said:

Mother: Having an adopted child sure has been an experience, I expected to get a quiet little girl and boy was I surprised. It has been different raising her than any of the other kids. Being an adoptive parent is harder you have more to deal with.

The contradictions in many of the adoptive parents' statements, casts some doubt on the parents' understanding of the question and perhaps on

their willingness and openness in discussing this issue. It was also clear that this area of questioning was a greater problem for the mothers than for the fathers. The fathers typically did not perceive any differences between being an adoptive parent or a biological parent. Further research is warranted to clarify adoptive parents' perceptions on this issue, particularly when the parents have both biological and adopted children.

Something that most adoptive parents in this research weren't prepared for were the remarks of other people regarding their role as adoptive parents. Sixty percent of the parents in this study had people outside the family make remarks about them parenting an adopted child. The parents who were subjected to these remarks initially found them to be quite upsetting and felt defensive about their status as adoptive parents:

Mother: When your children are adopted most people mind their own business, but some people say all kinds of things to you, like you have to expect she will be a bad girl because her mother was, or alot of people would say, well since she's adopted you don't know anything about her. They say those things within the hearing of the child too, so you have to be prepared for that, at the beginning I wasn't so it was upsetting.

Mother: It has taken years to get used to all the remarks of other people and the questions. I used to cry about it. Everyone wants to have their own child, to give birth, and that is out of your life and you have to accept that. People would say I wonder what the real mother is like, like who am I, the babysitter?

Mother: People say such ignorant things, like how do you feel about the adopted kids, can you have the same affection for them, that kind of thing. One woman said to me, I love my sister's children dearly, and that must be how you feel about your adopted children, I couldn't believe it, what a thing to say.

Heredity vs environment. When the parents discussed their child's development over the years their views on heredity and environment eventually entered the conversation. Initially, many of the parents (80%) believed that environment was the most important element in shaping their adopted child's personality, but their experiences had shifted their beliefs somewhat. When parents see behavior or talents that are not in sync with the rest of the family, there is a tendency to attribute this to heredity. This theme was labeled heredity vs environment:

Father: We have looked at S. over the years and we have seen some interesting things take place. S. hates sewing and my wife is very fond of it. S. loves dogs and none of us are really dog inclined, even her taste buds are different, her taste in clothes and jewellery is different too. We think she was born with these differences, they are definite traits that she was born with. We haven't influenced her because these are things that aren't natural to our family. She came with them, her tastes are alien to the rest of the group.

Mother: I was under the impression that the environment was more important than heredity. When we first adopted I believed that hereditary things were not that important but then the way she would react to things, her temper tantrums and things like that would be influenced by environment, but now I've changed my mind. Over the years I notice that there are a lot of temperamental things that are inherited, that tendency is there and sometimes environment means nothing.

Mother: I used to think that inherited things were 5% and the rest was environmental, now I think it's the other way around. I think you can mold and shape things but you still have that first mold to work with and you can't change that, so that person is going to be shy or aggressive mostly because of inherited traits.

Mother: When I first got L. I thought I was going to shape her, I figured it was all going to be up to me, little did I know that a lot of it she is born with. There is a lot in her that I didn't give her, so a lot of the things that are good or bad aren't from me. There are times when I think why is she behaving like this I didn't teach her that,

and then I think maybe she was born that way.
I used to feel responsibility when she was bad,
I used to think what am I doing wrong, I don't
do that as much now.

Twenty percent of the parents interviewed who viewed problematic behavior in their children also had a tendency to look to heredity for the answers. It seemed to be their way of making sense of their child's behavior:

Father: Well in the early years we thought when you adopt a child and love them just as much as your natural child that it would form a family bond, that they would be an extension of yourself. We see now that there are differences in the genes of some children, that they are so strong that the environment doesn't make much difference. When there is an extreme situation not of our strain there must be something in the genes to account for it, the incredible differences. I think that is the explanation you are faced with whenever you have a child who is extreme. It just makes you wonder why is she like that, is it biological or what? If you have these problems you think of that, if you don't have problems you probably don't really think of it.

Mother: If you try to figure out where things come from for 15 years we have looked at whether nature or nurture makes the difference. It seems to me that the genes are there and you've just got to go with it and she isn't going to change those fundamentals. When you have a child with problems you can't help but think that, especially when you see such different behavior to your own.

Parents were asked whether they attributed any problems to their child's adoptive status and clearly the majority (69%) of parents did not perceive that their child's adoptive status had been a major factor in any problems their child had developed:

Mother: I don't think so; certainly none that he has talked about, we haven't seen any problems that he's had because he is adopted.

Mother: I think the problems we've had with L. have just been because she is the type of child she is. I don't think any of her problems are due to being adopted, its just her personality, she is a very determined child.

Father: We've had the usual ups and downs like with one of our own, the fact that she's adopted didn't make any difference at all.

Thirty-one percent of the parents interviewed were facing ongoing difficulties with their adopted children (i.e. alcohol abuse, withdrawal, identity concerns), and they had a tendency to speculate that the problems experienced might be accentuated due to their child's adoptive status. Again, it seemed that these parents were trying to make sense of their child's behavior:

Mother: He has been very angry and frustrated and I personally think a lot of it stemmed from being adopted. He's frustrated and angry about being adopted.

Mother: The fact that she is adopted has certainly presented her with some problems, I mean she would always have been difficult, but she said to me, how can I do anything until I find out why I look like this?

Father: I think it is an aggravating factor, I think she'd have had a terrible adolescence anyway and it's just been made that much worse. She's obsessed with being adopted.

Mother: I think she has had a lot of problems connected with adoption because she always worried a bit about wanting to know about her natural mother, she was the only one who was ever concerned with it.

Father: She's been very troubled, we've never had such serious problems as this. We think adoption has given her more problems.

Mother: There were other kids that weren't adopted so there was sort of a comparison thing going on all the time and it was obvious from the beginning that he was different from the other kids. So he's had problems with that, and it's caused him anxiety.

These results suggest that adoptive parents have a tendency to look to heredity to explain their child's unique behavior or personality, and that when problematic behavior is demonstrated, there is a tendency to look at heredity or the child's adoptive status as precipitating or aggravating factors in the development of the problem.

The Biological Parents

This next section summarizes the adoptees' and parents' perceptions regarding the biological parents, curiosity, and searching.

Adoptees' curiosity regarding their origins. Adoptees become curious about their origins at different times and for different reasons. Thirty-three percent of the adolescents remembered the ages 8 or 9 as being a time of intense curiosity, which coincides with some of the parents' recollections and the adoptee's cognitive development, but for most of the adoptees (67%) the real curiosity began a few years later when they reached 12 or 13 years of age, sometimes specific events seemed to trigger their curiosity:

Shelley, age 17: When I was 8 years old that was the height of my curiosity and after that I wasn't curious anymore. I was really curious when I heard other people talking about it and I wanted to know more about my blood parents. I asked alot of questions and I think that bothered my mom more than me.

Laura, age 16: I think I really started to wonder when I was about 8 I would walk down the street and think that could be my mom right there you know, so that is when it started.

Alice, age 14: I was about 12 when I really started thinking about it, I can't remember that much before then. I just started to wonder about the people who had me alot.

Marie, age 14: I was about 13 and I was at a reunion with all my mom's relatives and I didn't feel like I was part of the family and it really bothered me and so I asked my mom about where my roots were, that is when it started.

Don, age 15: When I was about 12 I found out I had a brother somewhere so then I got more curious, it triggered something and I wanted more information.

Tanya, age 15: I was about 12 I think and I was really close to this teacher who was about the same age as my real mom would be and she would talk to me and it just came up so I talked to her about being adopted and that sort of brought it out, so from then on I wanted more information.

The intensity of curiosity varied among the sample of adolescents, but all the adoptees admitted that some curiosity existed, even among those adoptees who apparently had no desire for more information there remained an element of curiosity. While talking to the adolescents about the curiosity they experienced, it was clear that most of them had ambivalent feelings about it. There was also an underlying fear of rejection expressed by some of the adoptees and concern about not wanting to hurt the adoptive parents. The theme of ambivalence appeared throughout the adoptees' discussions on the biological parents and the accompanying curiosity. A sub theme of fear of rejection was also noted in these adoptees' responses:

Paul, age 16: I'd like to just be able to see my mother without her knowing I'm me. I'd like to meet her some day but I don't know what she's doing, it could be very sad or happy, but you don't know if that was a scar that she wants to keep covered so I don't know.

Cheryl, age 16: I feel like going out and finding her, I don't ever want to find out why she gave me up unless she wants to tell me, I don't want to hurt her I just want to see what I'm like.

Laura, age 16: I often wonder about them, it would be interesting to see what they are like, half the time I'm sure they wouldn't want to see you and they kind of forget you, but I'd like to see them once.

Pam, age 14: I don't want to meet them, sometimes I resent them giving me up and sometimes I'm glad they did because of the family I got. Well it would be kind of nice to know but I might find out that they are mean people but I would like to know, but then I feel mad because they didn't keep me so its their fault, then I think it wasn't really their fault because they were so young. I'd like to know who they are but I wouldn't want to meet them.

Richard, age 17: I often feel very curious about it, usually it isn't temporary its for about a month or two, I just sort of work it away, I just sort of say to myself think of the negative aspects and why

my mother wouldn't want to see me because of the scars in her past, I just keep working at that until I forget it.

Shelley, age 17: I don't have any written information on my real parents and I'm not looking for any. The only curiosity there is is the curiosity anybody would feel, you'll always have it but I have no intention of pursuing it. I don't really want to think about it because I'm happy where I am and the more you know the more curious it makes you, I don't want to go looking up my parents, they probably don't want to see you so I don't want to see them.

It was also apparent that the adoptees' curiosity reflected a need to know about themselves, it did not reflect a need for a relationship with a biological parent, but rather a need to satisfy their curiosity about themselves. This theme was labeled genealogical bewilderment:

Don, age 15: It is mostly curiosity, not to go back and start a relationship with them, its just out of curiosity. I don't think about it all the time, I know I'll never go back to my old mother, I wouldn't want to but I would like to know who she is and see her.

Alice, age 14: I'd really like to meet her but I'm not sure how I'd react, I want to find out my background that is all really, I don't need another mother.

Tanya, age 15: I'd just like to find out my real background, just to know who the people were, I don't want to go back to them or anything like that.

Cathy, age 17: I get curious but I wouldn't take direct action on it, its not worth it, mom and dad probably wouldn't understand it and they would be hurt, like aren't they good enough parents you know? But I would like information like medical stuff that is all though.

The adopted adolescents' curiosity or genealogical bewilderment also included a physical identity component or theme. There was a keen interest in the biological parents' physical appearance and whether the adoptee might be like them. This curiosity appears to reflect the adolescent's normal concerns about physical appearance but in an exaggerated form:

Eighty-six percent of the adolescents mentioned their interest in their biological parents' physical appearance:

Nancy, age 15: I want to find out why I look like I do, why I act like I do, especially why I look like I do, I wish I could look like my mom.

Linda, age 15: I think what does she look like, do I look like her?

Richard, age 17: I'd just like to be able to see her, see what she looks like to see how similar we are in appearance.

Marie, age 14: I wonder what my natural parents look like and if I've ever seen them before. I want to find out what they look like but I'd be awful scared.

Cheryl, age 16: I'm really interested in appearance and what my mother was like, if she was a singer like myself or if she ever played the guitar like I do, when I think about it I just want to see what she looks like, I just want to see if I'm anything like her.

Alice, age 14: I want to see what she is like, mainly to see what she looks like.

Tanya, age 15: I want to see what she is like, like see if we look alike.

Tom, age 18: I would like to have some pictures of them to see what they look like. I've thought about that alot you know, why I look like this, I really would like to see some pictures of them, I wonder what she is doing, what she looks like.

Adoptees' knowledge of the biological parents. The adoptees in the study had varying amounts of background information on the biological parents, but most of them had read the biography sheets prepared by the adoption agencies for the adoptive family. Only two of the adolescents had not seen their biography sheets. When the adolescents received this

information they described feelings of excitement, awe and relief:

Marie, age 14: I was fascinated, I just loved it. It is like a picture. I'm amazed at what they are like and that I'm like somebody I don't know. There were things there that I could identify with like that she was musical and things like that.

Richard, age 17: It was strange, it was a piece of my past that I'd never known about and it was exciting, here is something on the people that made me literally. I was always wondering did I have an underage mother and why my father left, but she was 24 so I was sort of relieved to find that out, I don't know what it was relief from, just wondering how I was made.

Cheryl, age 16: I thought it was really neat getting that piece of paper, like wow, I wonder who I'm going to look like, it was really a weird feeling, its kind of another piece being put in the puzzle because it really is a mystery to me.

Laura, age 16: Its sort of like finding out about yourself again, things you didn't know about yourself you finally found and it was really interesting.

When the adolescents received this information there was a tendency for them to try to fit themselves into the picture they had of the biological parents. They built a picture on bare bones information and identified with it:

Richard, age 17: It was really weird when I got my bio sheet because I conform very much to my mother and father, like my father and cousin were really into mechanics and that was interesting to me because I sort of like that too.

Linda, age 15: I was quite surprised to read it. I found out my father was a singer and that was interesting because I like to sing, and my mom played the guitar and I play the piano, so everything sort of matched up and my mom's description described me totally.

Nancy, age 15: I have my mother's eyes and I think I have my father's nose, his eyebrows and his coloring. I got my mother's hair and structure, her eyes are the same color as mine and her personality is exactly like mine.

Cheryl, age 16: I looked at their descriptions and decided I look like my mother but I definitely have my father's height and I take after my mother more.

Even when the adolescents had this non-identifying background information on the biological parents, 80% of the adoptees were not satisfied with the information they had and desired more. It appears that the biography sheets are not enough to satiate the adoptee's curiosity:

Don, age 15: I'd always like to know more, like who she is, who is my sister but you know you can't find out.

Nancy, age 15: The bio sheets aren't enough, the law seems to think so, but it isn't enough to satisfy you.

Linda, age 15: I would like to know more, some things are really important like diseases and also things that happened during her life.

Two adoptees who had no biography sheets were satisfied with the information they had and were not interested in knowing any more:

Shelley, age 17: I'm not at all interested in knowing who they are, I'm satisfied with the information.

Barbara, age 15: I'm satisfied with the information I have, I don't have much of a desire to go out and find her at least at this point.

These two girls had been very curious about their origins when they were 8 and their parents had dealt with these issues at length during that time. It is possible that for the time being these adoptees' interest and curiosity in the biological parents had been satiated.

The parents' satisfaction with information re biological parents.

When the parents were asked what they knew about their adopted child's biological parents, 92% of the parents indicated that they weren't satisfied with the information they had, and many remarked that at the time you are given the background information you don't pay too much attention to it:

Mother: There were questions I would never have thought to ask at the time, all you think about is give me my baby. I'm not satisfied with the information now, there is alot more I want to know, things concerning the actual birth, it makes you angry because you want the information and nobody seems to have it.

Father: At the time we weren't concerned with his background. When he was 10 he wasn't achieving very well and we wondered about him and trying to figure him out so that is when we went back to the agency and got his bio sheet. We wondered is there anything in his background that would help us. We had no written information on him at all.

Mother: They had quite a bit of information on her but at the time we weren't interested in it. We wanted her no matter what information came with her, now I wish we had asked more questions.

Mother: It was a verbal discussion when we got him and at the time you don't pay attention you are too excited. It didn't sink in at all with me then I didn't know of what interest it would be.

Only one parent was not interested in any background information and was quite satisfied with the information the family had received:

Father: They didn't tell us much and we didn't pursue it. We didn't see any point. As far as I'm concerned the less you know the better because then I'd have to tell her and if we get pumped by her then we only know so much, and so if she was the type of person who really pursued this thing then she might have decided to look for her.

This family viewed the knowledge of the biological parents as a dangerous thing, however this attitude was not typical of the families in the study.

The parents were also asked whether they thought their children were satisfied with the information they had given them. The parents' responses indicated that 80% of them agreed that their child would probably like more information. However, 20% of the parents who had children who expressed a desire for more information did not believe their child was interested in more information. The parent-child discrepancies in these families indicates that either the adoptee had not communicated this message to the parents, or, the parents were not cognizant of the adoptee's expressed desires. In the majority of families, those parents who expressed a desire for more background information on the biological parents also had children who were interested in obtaining more information.

The adoptees' views on searching. Eighty-seven percent of the adoptees interviewed indicated that they would like to search for their biological parents. However, along with this desire to know of their origins were also feelings of ambivalence, apprehension, and rejection as the adoptees discussed this aspect of adoption. The need for these children to know more about their pasts was strong, but their responses also indicated that they wouldn't be looking for relationships with these people, but for information to fill in the blank spots:

Marie, age 14: I want to find out what they look like but I'd be awful scared. I think in time I'll know more about my real feelings and I'll be able to make the right decision about looking for my birth mother, I wouldn't want it to happen right now.

Richard, age 17: I want to go back to the hospital and check admissions when I was born and try to track her down that way. I don't really want to meet her, I want it to be one-sided, I want to see what she's like, if she wanted to see me then I would but not unless she wanted the interaction.

Tom, age 18: If I do find them I could be really mentally damaged or do the same thing to them. I would really like to meet her though, its been building up for a long time.

Cheryl, age 16: Its going to take alot of guts to do it but its very important to me. I don't know if it would hurt them or me, it would probably hurt my mom and also if I said I wanted to meet her and then seeing if she was willing to see me. I don't like being rejected and these people could say that they don't want to see me and then I'd feel bad because I don't want to walk around feeling totally rejected thinking that these people that gave me up don't want to see me.

Laura, age 16: I might lose something by searching but I just have to find out, it doesn't matter if its negative. You know you want to and you know that they won't let you its very frustrating, even if it might be negative I would still like to know who they are.

Don, age 15: It would fulfill my curiosity, there is a part of my life that is missing and I want to put it in place. I don't think there would be anything after the meeting, I don't think I'd ever see her again, you know you have nothing to start a relationship on.

Alice, age 14: I do want to find out but it depends on what they are like, I am not sure that I want to actually meet them, but I think it would be a neat experience, when I get older I think I will do it.

Nancy, age 15: Its actually stopping me from growing any more. I can't get on with life until I find them. When I know who I am then I can continue. I would be extremely scared though, its a funny thing to be scared of meeting your own mother. I may die tomorrow and my natural mother may already be dead so I have to do it now.

Tanya, age 15: I think you should be given the information when you are 18 then you can go find them if you want, but maybe the parents don't want to see you and maybe that would be hard to deal with, but I would still like to know, I'm going to look when I'm older.

And from the two adoptees who had no desire to search came these responses:

Cathy, age 17: I've read about it in books and newspapers, its like its a big reunion but that's such a farce, it was her decision she gave the child up so there is no attachment after that.

Barb, age 15: I think people who want to search for their natural parents are not secure in themselves like they figure that they have to have something like they are not complete, I feel complete I have that security, besides, the natural mother wouldn't want to see you, so why waste your time.

Although these adolescents were not interested in searching, there was a sub-theme of feelings of rejection implicit in their statements.

Parents' views on searching. When the parents were asked to discuss their views on adoptees searching for biological parents there was alot of discussion. This was a subject that every parent had a strong opinion on. Surprisingly, all the parents said they would support their children if they decided to search, providing the child was at least 18 years of age. Most of the parents did not think children under that age were mature enough to handle the task. Another pattern that was discernible in the parents' responses was their concern that the child might experience further rejection:

Mother: I don't think you need to do that at 14 or 16. I don't think they could handle it, they might be rejected which I think would be horrible and it might provide an out for her, you know, well I'll go and live with my natural mother if I don't get what I want here. She know that she has our support when the time comes, if she wants to look we will help her.

Mother: For awhile there I would have been uptight about it I thought how would I handle it, how would I react, but now I think she can handle it and by the time she is 19 she could certainly handle it so I would support her because I'm sure even if she became good friends with her mother we would still be her parents, so we'd support her.

Father: I would say to her be careful that you don't get burned yourself and don't go marching into a family where it might have been kept a secret, I'd say do it but with caution and through the proper channels.

Father: She might find the results disappointing but I wouldn't want to do anything to stop her, but I'd be a bit nervous about the consequences, but we would have to support her.

Mother: I would like R. to look up his mother for his own peace of mind. Right now he is too young to handle the feelings he is going to experience but when he is 19 if he decided to search I'd do everything I could to help him. Its not going to change our relationship, I'm afraid that maybe the mother won't want to acknowledge him and that would hurt him deeply, so I'm afraid for him in a way.

Mother: I'll help him if he wants to find them. I'm not particularly anxious for him to do it but he's allowed if he wants to do it. It wouldn't bother me if he wanted to search, I wouldn't feel threatened, I'm his mom and I don't think he'll run off and leave me. If he was going to search I'd try to prepare him for maybe being rejected because I've heard of that happening.

Two families were actively involved in a search and these parents felt compelled to assist their children based on the child's emotional problems and the child's intense interest in finding the biological parents:

Mother: I see nothing wrong with searching, I'm not losing position, I'm not worried at all. It used to upset me when someone would say what about

the real mother but I feel comfortable now. I don't think L. should do this on her own, they need a lot of emotional support. L. is very happy that I'm searching for her, I can understand her need so I am helping her.

Mother: She says I'll always be her mother but she's going to find her natural mother. She's been wanting to search for quite awhile. She says to me I know you are afraid, you are supporting me but you are afraid, and she is right. I know that she needs to do this, I understand this need to search but I guess it's natural to want to believe that you've been such a good parent that this child won't miss her unknown past, so from that angle you feel bad and resent it. You have to do this thing but I wish I didn't have to. I hope it doesn't happen too soon because of the emotions involved, I don't know whether she will handle it if it is a disappointment.

Father: I'm very supportive of it, it is a simpler issue for me I think. The only ambivalent feeling I have is that it could be hurtful for her. Maybe she would be different if she knew more about herself. Maybe she would settle down and be true to herself because right now I think she believes she must act in a certain way because that is how she imagines she should be.

Parent-adoptivee discrepancies in views of searching. Although 80% of the adolescents acknowledged that their parents had verbally communicated their support regarding the searching issue, the adoptees who were not actively searching (66%), viewed searching as a personal issue that did not warrant parental involvement. It was also clear that these adolescents felt uncomfortable about discussing such feelings with their parents, and in some cases, had difficulty accepting their parent's pledge of support as being a sincere one:

Don, age 15: I think my mom would help me if I wanted to look but I don't know whether I'd go to her for help, I'll just do it on my own.

Richard, age 17: My mom seems to be supportive but I think I'll do it on my own, I would like to do it without my parents knowing.

Cheryl, age 16: She is very supportive, I don't know if she feels threatened or jealous, I'd be jealous if my daughter wanted to find out who her real mother was. I'll probably do it on my own.

Laura, age 16: I used to think that she supported me but then once when we were talking about it she said out of the blue I don't mind if you want to find them, sort of don't worry I don't mind, but even though she said that to me I'm not sure, I don't know if she is being honest, but I think I'll do it on my own someday.

Marie, age 14: A while ago I brought it up and it didn't work out too well. She asked me some questions I didn't like and I got mad at her because she asked me where would I rather live with my natural mother or here and I didn't want to answer that because I didn't really know so I think I should keep those things to myself.

Twenty percent of the adolescents were unaware that their parents would be supportive of a search:

Cathy, age 17: I wouldn't want to ask my parents about searching, my mom is extremely sensitive, and even if it doesn't pertain to her at all she gets upset easily and very hurt. She would take it very personally. It would be very hard to say I was curious so I wouldn't want to do that.

Alice, age 14: I'm going to do it, I don't care if they help me or not. I wouldn't want to talk to my mom about it because I think she'd feel like she wasn't doing a good enough job as a mother or something and that could change our relationship.

These gaps in the parent-child communication on this issue suggest that the adolescents are very sensitive about this subject and do not want to upset their parents by mentioning their interest in searching for biological relatives. A parent's verbal pledge of support

is not enough to make the adolescent adoptee feel comfortable with their thoughts and feelings on this issue.

Adoptees' feelings about the biological parents. None of the adolescents were very interested in their biological fathers. Some animosity was expressed toward him, but 93% of the adolescents, male and female, never really thought much about him. The biological father's role in the pregnancy and subsequent adoption was viewed somewhat negatively:

Barb, age 15: I haven't heard that much about him. In a way I think he is kind of a jerk because he left her, but I don't have any really bad feelings toward him I guess.

Linda, age 15: I don't really think of him that much. I don't really want to talk to him. I call him a gigolo, he really hurt her feelings because how could you get a woman pregnant and then just take off. I'm more interested in my mom.

Richard, age 17: Sometimes I think he's a rat but I don't really know, it could have been her fault. I don't really think about him, I think about her.

Shelley, age 17: I don't know why but for some reason I've never even thought of him. I never really thought that there ever was one you know? I know there was but I've never thought of him. Probably because the mother gave me up, I think in terms of a mother being out there not a father.

Only one adoptee was interested in his biological father and he was concerned with the physical appearance of the man:

Tom, age 18: The only reason I'd like to see him is to see what he looks like, otherwise I wouldn't care.

The adoptees' feelings about the biological mother were radically different than their feelings about the father. Three themes emerged that served to describe how the adolescents felt about the biological mother.

Forty-seven percent of the adoptees had very positive feelings towards this woman and this theme was subsequently labeled pride, as these adolescents spoke of feeling respect and gratitude toward her. The second theme was labeled rejection, as 33% of the adolescents either felt rejected by her or believed that they were just an unpleasant memory. The third theme was labeled indifference, as 20% of the adolescents were not aware of any particular feelings toward the biological mother:

Pride

Cheryl, age 16: I think I'm very proud of her for having the guts and for caring enough about what my future would be, she gave me up knowing that I would be raised properly in a good home, so I'm really impressed with her, that would be a hard decision to make.

Marie, age 14: I think she must have been very brave, and she must have had a lot of guts and love inside her to have the baby and then give it up after going through everything. It must have been very hard for her because she was so young, I think that is special.

Rejection

Nancy, age 15: I think my mother should have been more careful, I just get mad that I couldn't live with a normal family with my parents being my own. I feel she gave me up because she wanted to get rid of me, but I guess if your own parents gave you up that is what you'd think too. I think it would have been braver of her to have kept me even if she was living in a two room apartment. A lot of girls put their babies up for adoption just to get rid of them, they don't want to have the burden.

Indifference

Shelley, age 17: I don't feel anything really, I don't feel bad or mad or hate her, she was just one of thousands of people who get pregnant and give it up. She was just someone in the past that gave birth to me.

The adolescents who felt indifferent towards the biological mother were uninterested in searching for her. The adolescents who held positive views or feelings towards the biological mother, also had parents who expressed empathy toward the biological mother and her situation and felt positive towards her.

Parents' feelings about the biological parents. Mothers and fathers had very different experiences in regard to their personal feelings about the biological parents. Fathers very rarely, if ever, thought about the biological parents, and all of them indicated that they really had no significant feelings toward them at all:

Father: I have no feelings for them, I don't know them.

Father: I must confess I don't think about the biological parents very often, in fact, probably not at all, he's here, I'm not looking back.

Father: I haven't thought of them for years, I really have no feelings about them, I don't think about them.

Mothers, on the other hand, tended to think about the biological mother on their children's birthdays and on special family occasions, while other mothers felt some sadness for the biological mother's loss. Mothers clearly had a more emotional tie to their child's biological parents, particularly the biological mother. Eighty-five percent of the mothers expressed these views:

Mother: I think about S.'s mother alot. For many years I had this feeling of being sort of linked to her, I felt alot of concern for her for many years. I feel a very close tie.

Mother: I think of her mother on her birthday and I wonder how she is managing, I wonder about how she is now.

Mother: I usually think about them at Christmas and on birthdays. She would come to mind sometimes and I would think well she must think about her child sometimes.

Mother: I think I did more thinking about the biological mother because I felt always a link, I always felt sad that this mother had missed so much. I felt extremely fortunate that we had her child and that it was somebody else's loss and there were many times when I've thought about her.

Mother: I think about the birth mother alot, at every birthday. Especially when he was younger because I'm sure it must have been a traumatic experience for her to give up that baby and I would love to meet her someday and show her the baby book. I don't think about the father but I think alot of the mother's feelings because those feelings for a child are so strong.

Fifteen percent of the mothers were also reminded of the biological parents when they noticed a particular trait in their child:

Mother: the times when I see a trait that she comes up with I'll sometimes think or wonder if her mother was like that.

Mother: I think of his mother because I think he looks like her. I've almost said that to him before. I wonder what the kid's parents were like because of the traits that I see.

The parents, like the adolescents, typically did not think about, or have any significant feelings for the biological fathers.

The Adolescents' Adoption Experience - References to Self

In this section the adolescents' views on their adoptive status, their feelings about themselves, and some developmental issues are summarized.

Adolescents' adoptive status. In discussing adoptive status with the adolescents, two patterns emerged that seemed to describe how they dealt with it. Sixty-seven percent of the adolescents viewed their

adoptive status as a fact of life:

Marie, age 14: It is a fact of life, I have to live with it whether I like it or not, its not affecting my life right now.

Shelley, age 17: I don't think about it, its something that happened when I was born, it was already decided and that doesn't affect my life right now.

Don, age 15: Its not a big deal, I don't think about it much.

The other pattern that emerged was the tendency of 33% of the adolescents to speculate on how a different outcome might have altered their lives. This speculation seemed to be typically reserved for when the adoptees had difficulties at home:

Laura, age 16: Spmetimes when I get into big fights in the family I wonder if I could have been in a better family. When things are bad at home I imagine myself in a different family.

Richard, age 17: I've always wanted to know how well could my mother understand me. I seem to have a particular problem getting my ideas across to my legal parents, and I'm wondering about my biological parents how would they understand me. That goes through my mind alot especially when I'm having difficulties at home.

Nancy, age 15: I often wonder if being adopted and if I'd stayed with my natural mother if everything would be different in my life. That makes me regret it because I think it would be better.

Tanya, age 15: I just wonder what the outcome would be if I was adopted by somebody else. Being adopted I sort of feel that it changes my life, you spend alot of time thinking about your parents when you could spend it on other things. Its taken up alot of my time, especially when things are bad at home.

When the adolescents were asked to describe when they were most keenly aware of their adoptive status, two clear cut themes emerged. Family get togethers reminded 53% of the adolescents they were adopted, as did

comments from others regarding the adoptee's resemblance or non-resemblance to other family members. Forty-seven percent of the adolescents mentioned this theme of family similarity:

Family Resemblance

Pam, age 14: When people say I look like my brother, or something like that, because we don't get our genes from the same people so how can we look alike? That reminds me all the time.

Shelley, age 17: I'm the only one with dark hair and people notice that and it reminds me I'm adopted.

Cheryl, age 16: A lot of people say I look like my mom and we don't look alike at all, that reminds me.

Alice, age 14: It's really funny when someone says, I can see the resemblance, and she's not even my real mother, so then I think about it.

This theme was also mentioned by 62% of the adoptive parents as reminding them of their role as adoptive parents. This suggests that the remarks of others pertaining to the adoptive families' similarities or differences in physical appearance serves to accentuate the adoptive families' sense of difference.

Family Get Togethers

Tom, age 18: Like at Christmas when the whole family is together I think about what my other family is doing, and then I sort of get depressed about it. I feel sad then and I just go up to my room. It lasts a day that is all, I never would tell anyone though, I just keep it to myself, that's when I remember that I'm adopted.

Tanya, age 15: At Christmas, especially Christmas, but at most family get togethers, birthdays and stuff I am reminded that I'm adopted.

Paul, age 16: At Christmas, and looking at other families, a lot of people say, you don't look like your father, and that's when I remember it too, that happens a lot.

Cathy, age 17: When we are all sitting around the table together thats when I think about it.

Linda, age 15: On my birthdays mostly, but at other family things too.

While discussing their adoptive status, the recognition that adoptees theoretically have two sets of parents fostered a vague sense of difference in 66% of the adolescents. Some of the adolescents appear to have reconciled this fact better than others. This theme was labeled sense of difference:

Alice, age 14: Everything is normal but you have this thing hanging over you, you are adopted and these aren't your real parents that gave birth to you. But otherwise everything is the same. Like you still have parents that love you, but you know they aren't your blood sort of, and you could have other ones that could be better or worse you really don't know.

Pam, age 14: You know you have two different families. I don't think there are too many good things about that, except you know you have another mother out there, it is different isn't it?

Nancy, age 15: I say to my parents you are my real parents but they aren't. I will always feel like a stranger, its like I'm living in a foster home, I have other parents somewhere so its different.

Cheryl, age 16: Well adopted kids know that they are adopted and they know they aren't living with their parents, so that makes them sort of different its different when you have two sets of parents.

Cathy, age 17: You don't have any real, real family so you could go off to another place and say you are somebody else because your name isn't your real name you know, its different when you know you have other parents somewhere.

Another strong pattern that emerged in the adoptees' discussion on their adoptive status was a belief that an unknown parent could be on the street somewhere. This theme was labeled is there a parent in the crowd? and 80%

of the adolescents had experienced it. This appears to be a situation unique to individuals who have one or more unknown parents. Some of the adoptees mentioned how they would scan the crowd in a public place looking for a face similar to theirs:

Marie, age 14: I sometimes wonder if I'm walking down the street if all of a sudden I'd see my birth mother.

Pam, age 14: I could walk down the street and think that could be my mom.

Cheryl, age 16: Its kind of weird thinking you could walk past your mother on the street and not know it.

Nancy, age 15: I could walk by anybody and that could be my mother.

Cathy, age 17: I mean one of your teachers could be your parent.

Richard, age 17: When I go out I look around at all the people and think which one could be my mother, like I could walk past her and not know it.

Tanya, age 15: Like when I go to hockey games or things like that I always look at the people because one of them could be my mother, like I stand where the stands are and watch for people that could look like me.

Barb, age 15: Its weird to think that even a teacher at school could be your parent.

Some of the adolescents who discussed this theme viewed their street search as a kind of game, but for most of them this tendency to peruse crowds and wonder about a possible relative being out on the street had a reality base to it. The possibility of this happening was all to real to them.

When the adolescents were asked if they thought being adopted had caused them any special problems, 60% of the adoptees did not perceive that adoption had been at the root of their problems, and they accepted responsibility for their problems without using adoption as an excuse.

Thirteen percent of the adolescents did confess however to having used adoption as an excuse to test their parents:

Tanya, age 15: Last year I felt like I wasn't one of the family. I was really cut off from them. I'm kind of embarrassed to say this, I guess it was partly caused by adoption, I used it as an excuse, I felt like I was all by myself and I couldn't talk to anybody about it, I really found it hard.

Cheryl, age 16: A couple of years ago I was really awful. I remember saying, I hate you because you aren't my real mother and stuff like that. I decided that I didn't have to listen to them because they weren't my real parents. It was a good excuse to get away with things.

Twenty-six percent of the adolescents did however, believe that being adopted had made life more difficult for them:

Don, age 15: It was harder for me to fit into the family because I was adopted, I didn't belong like the others, at times it was a problem for me.

Nancy, age 15: It is hard to be adopted, I can't get on with life until I find my natural parents, I want to find them now.

Richard, age 17: It seems that I can't get along with my parents too well. I think because I'm adopted that I have some problems getting along with them, we aren't suited personality wise, I think if I was in another place it would be different.

Adolescents who perceived that they had problems because they were adopted, also had parents who speculated that their problems were also due to, or accentuated by their adoptive status. On this issue parent and child had congruent perceptions.

Adolescents' personal views on adoption. The adolescents were asked to offer advice to other adopted children as it was hypothesized that their advice might reflect their own experiences. This was largely confirmed by the individual responses, in that the advice did appear to reflect the adoptee's own experience. Four themes, feeling different (40% response), sense of belonging (27%), gratitude (20%), and searching (13%), were discovered in the adolescents' responses:

Feeling Different

Paul, age 16: There is no reason to blame things on adoption, it doesn't make you any different from anyone else.

Don, age 15: Don't feel different because you aren't. Well, people hold it against you that they had no right to. You are different but not in the ways that they are saying you are different. You just don't have the same mother, it's not good for kids to feel different, just not belonging, I guess that is the part of feeling different.

Cheryl, age 16: Don't feel different, and don't let people make you feel different you are the same as everyone else.

Sense of Belonging

Marie, age 14: You belong, don't think you don't belong to your parents, you have known them all your life. The only difference is that they just didn't have you.

Pam, age 14: It's important to feel loved and that you feel that you are part of the family, the adoptive parents are the ones that brought you up so I guess they are your real parents, but you should feel that you belong there.

Gratitude

Barbara, age 15: If anyone has great parents like mine and they want to go searching for their other parents I'd say they were crazy

because that stirs up a lot of resentment. Always be grateful and try to make your parents proud of you. Consider yourself very lucky.

Shelley, age 17: Be glad for what you have, if someone cares enough to adopt you and give you a home you are lucky, you are no different from any other children. Don't think you have to pursue your real parents because it's not that important, be grateful you have a home and don't ever think you are hated by someone because you don't have blood parents, don't feel that they just discarded you because they didn't, they just couldn't keep you.

And from two adoptees who were searching for their biological parents came this advice:

Searching

Linda, age 15: I've tried to convince my adopted friends to meet their parents, a lot of them seem angry and they shouldn't keep all their feelings to themselves. But I think it would help them if they found out where they came from.

Nancy, age 15: Start looking for them now because you might not always get the chance. Talk to your parents about it, tell them that you are not going to hurt their feelings by doing this but that it will actually make you closer to your adoptive parents, that is what I think anyway.

The adolescents were also asked to give advice to other adoptive parents, and again, their statements largely reflect their own experiences. Similar themes were also uncovered here suggesting that these are important issues to the adopted adolescent. The themes were feeling different (40%), searching (40%), and early revelation (20%):

Feeling Different

Paul, age 16: Think of them as your own children because that is what they are, there's no reason to treat them differently than you would treat your natural kids.

Linda, age 15: Treat them like one of the family. Tell your kids early and keep telling them so that they get the feel of it. Let the kid come to you with questions, don't make them feel different.

Don, age 15: To point out that you aren't different and if there are other kids in the family express to them that you aren't different, then if the kids say something the parents should say that it isn't true because it isn't nice when it happens to you and they make you feel different.

Searching

Marie, age 14: If a child wants to go and find the birth parents I think the parents should support them 100%. All children are going to leave their parents someday and when they do it is sad, but they will always come back and say hello. If parents have that fear its too bad because then they will be keeping alot of things to themselves.

Nancy, age 15: understand their kids, that they are going to find them and they aren't going to leave you, and that to love your kids for what they are. Let them search and support them, don't be selfish about it, you should think of your child first not yourself.

Cathy, age 17: Don't be sensitive if your child expresses an interest in her background or past don't think that it reflects on you as a couple, be open and honest about adoption, don't hide it. Treat your adopted child the same as you would your natural child.

Early Revelation

Alice, age 14: Tell their kids right away, that is really important, tell them when they are so little so they grow up with it.

Tanya, age 15: Tell the kids very early that they are adopted and make them feel like they are part of the family, the sooner you tell them the better.

The adoptees' view of self. In describing themselves, the adolescents' perceptions varied from those who felt positive about themselves, to those who were confused and alienated. The themes that emerged here were; positive self-image (38%), insecurity (16%), and sense of alienation (46%). It should be noted here, that for the majority of adolescents, their views of self were intimately related to their adoptive status:

Positive Self-Image

Linda, age 15: I feel pretty lucky, I've got a nice family. I mean I could be stuck in some bum's house. Things could be better at school, but I feel pretty good about myself, I'm doing okay but I still want to find my birth mom.

Cathy, age 17: I'm getting better I know what I want to do now. I'm happier than I've ever been in my life. I'm alot more active in the family in positive ways now. I have resolved alot of things about being adopted.

Shelley, age 17: I feel quite good, I think I'm worthwhile. I am happy, being adopted hasn't been a problem for me at all.

Insecurity

Tanya, age 15: I feel insecure, very insecure. I get discouraged sometimes about the way I feel about myself. I have a bad attitude sometimes. I feel if my mom knew everything about me she'd hate me too. I feel unsure about being adopted, like what am I doing here sometimes you know? It confuses me sometimes.

Marie, age 14: I didn't really like myself before, its just a feeling I've had for a while, like if somebody says I'm pretty I go how can you say that I put myself down alot, but I'm getting better, I can accept myself now, I think reading my bio sheet helped.

Self-Alienation

Nancy, age 15: I find myself sort of in between now, trying to find myself, but its kind of hard when you don't know who your natural parents are.

I'm trying to find someone who is like me,
trying to find someone who might like me,
I'm just alien from everybody else.

Laura, age 16: This girl told me once how do you feel knowing that you are a mistake, so I went through about three years thinking I was a mistake, and really depressed for a long time because I thought I was a mistake. It was around grade 7 that it started to bother me, it was awful. I contemplated suicide and things like that, and now I need to know about my background so I can straighten that out, I don't know what or who I am.

Richard, age 17: Its like you have never been born, you just popped out of thin air from nowhere. You've got no background and no history yourself, you can have your parents' history but you can't have your own, who gave life to me?

Alice, age 14: Something inside me is missing, I just feel like I'm missing something, it got me thinking about my background. I look in the mirror and wonder who I am, its weird.

Cheryl, age 16: Often when I go to bed at night I look in the mirror and say who are you, like I don't really know, I guess that makes me feel insecure sometimes.

Developmental issues - peer relationships. While the adolescents were discussing their social relationships and school issues it became clear that many of them had, at different times, experienced some difficulties with their peer relationships. Most of these problems were described as typical childhood problems with friends, but 40% of the adoptees described problems of not fitting in with their peer group:

Tanya, age 15: At my other school I had lots of friends, then when I came to this school it turned out I didn't really fit in, I don't have any friends that I can talk to about really personal things.

Marie, age 14: Some friends turned on me and spread rumours about me at school, and that was awful, I went through alot then but it is getting better now, but sometimes I don't seem to fit in.

Barb, age 15: I think people either really like me or hate me, I don't know why. I don't fit in sometimes I guess, one group of girls couldn't stand me at school and I found out they were jealous of me, they used to call me names in the hall.

Linda, age 15: I don't get along with my friends, not very well anyway, I get into trouble at school because I have a big mouth and I guess my friends don't like that.

Shelley, age 17: Most of the reason I quit school was because of the other students, they act immature and bugged me all the time, I didn't seem to fit in with them.

The adolescents, with one exception did not attribute any of their peer problems to adoption issues. The one adoptee who did was engaged in a search for her biological mother and was extremely unhappy:

Female, age 15: It really bothers me cause I'm not like my friends in being with the crowd. All my friends drink and smoke and I don't do those things and that makes me feel more alone because if my friends were more like me maybe I wouldn't have such a feeling, maybe I'm trying to find somebody that is like me. I like to be alone most of the time because when I'm with people I feel alone anyway. I just don't feel like anybody else. I just feel that is probably half the reason I want to find my mother because I want to find someone who is like me, if not in personality, in the way we look.

It is clear from this girl's statements that her interest in finding a biological parent was linked to her unhappiness in her social sphere and her feelings of alienation and confusion. However it is impossible to determine cause and effect, more research is warranted here to determine if a feeling of aloneness and alienation triggers the interest in searching, or the concern over adoption triggers the peer relationship problems.

Parents' perceptions of childrens' peer relationships. When the parents were asked to describe any problems their children had experienced through the years, they reported minor school behavior problems, general behavior problems, some insecurity, anxiety, all relatively normal developmental problems. But almost half the parents (46%) also perceived that their children had experienced fair to serious peer problems. However, these parents did not relate their child's peer problems to the adoptive status:

Mother: She has a social problem, she likes to be the centre of attention and she says things to her friends that gets her into trouble with them. She isn't very popular with them.

Mother: She's had some peer problems, in grade 7 she didn't feel like she fit in and she didn't want to go back to school. Part of her problem is because she's not nice and if you aren't nice to the kids they won't like you.

Mother: She is not able to handle peers very well. Very early in life she started to complain about people bugging her and she'd come home from school upset. She used to tell me about the fights with kids at school and what they would do to her. She used to treat the adoption with her friends as something special, that she was a little bit better than they were, but as she has gotten older the adoption has gotten increasingly more difficult for her. I think though she would have had all these peer problems anyway.

Mother: She says that the kids at school always gave her a hard time, she says they were cruel to her. I'm sure her peer problem made her hate school, it wasn't until her latter years at school that she seemed to get any respect from the kids.

The parents' perceptions regarding their child's peer relationships matched the perception of their children. Those adoptees who felt that they had some peer relationship difficulties also had parents that confirmed their perceptions.

Qualitative Data Analysis SummaryFamily Communication

- A. Two clear patterns were discovered in the adoptees' recollections of the revelation experience. At ages 3 to 4 the first clear memory of being exposed to adoption was described, and again at ages 7 to 9 there is a period of intense questioning and curiosity.
- B. Both parents and adolescents agreed that there was no specific time when the revelation of adoption was remembered. The revelation occurred in a natural manner in all the families and the parents had no recollection that it upset their children.
- C. Parental anxiety occurred during the questioning period of ages 7-9. Fifty-four percent of the adoptive mothers mentioned feeling anxious, uncertain, inadequate and threatened by their child's questions.
- D. One hundred percent of the adolescents presented a fairly relaxed family communication pattern regarding general adoption topics. Eighty-six percent of the adolescents indicated that they initiated discussions about adoption in the home.
- E. One hundred percent of the parents agreed with the adolescents that adoption was an open topic at home, but 84% of the parents thought that they were the ones that initiated the discussions about adoption in the home. Parent-child discrepancies were noted regarding their perceptions of who generally initiated the family discussions regarding adoption.
- F. Adolescents had more difficulty discussing personal issues regarding adoption with the parents. Eighty percent of the adolescents were worried about upsetting their parents with questions about their backgrounds.

However, the adoptive parents perceived that they were open to discussing these issues, so discrepant perceptions were noted between parent and child regarding the communication about the adoptee's background.

G. Very limited sibling communication was noted between adopted siblings, and between non-adopted and adopted siblings.

Family Relationships

A. The adolescents generally described fairly, close, warm relationships with their mothers. Seventy-three percent of the adoptees felt close to their mothers, and also believed that they were similar in some respects to their mothers. Twenty-seven percent of the adoptees did not perceive that they had close relationships with their mothers, and also did not believe that they were similar to their mothers.

B. Ninety-three percent of the adoptive mothers perceived that they had fairly close, warm relationships with their children, however, only 31% of these mothers perceived any similarities with their children. Sixty-two percent of the mothers who said they had good relationships with their children did not perceive any similarities between mother and child. These results suggest that adoptees who had good relationships with their mothers also had a tendency to identify with them to some degree, while mothers who perceived good mother-child relationships did not have a tendency to identify with their children.

C. Sixty percent of the adoptees perceived that they had "okay" relationships with their adoptive fathers, while 40% of them indicated that they perceived poor relationships with their fathers. Seventy-seven percent of the adoptees perceived that they were different in temperament

and mannerism to their fathers, suggesting limited identification. The fathers had congruent perceptions regarding their relationships with their children. Seventy-seven percent of the fathers perceived no similarities between parent and child, and those fathers who perceived poor relationships with their children also had children who perceived poor relationships with them.

D. One hundred percent of the parents in only adoptive families did not perceive that any sibling problems existed. Sixty percent of the parents of mixed families did not perceive that any sibling problems existed. Forty percent of the parents of mixed families did perceive sibling relationship problems, and most frequently cited the problem of perceived sibling favoritism on the part of the adoptee. The adoptees in these families did perceive that the non-adopted siblings received preferential treatment, so the parents and children in these families did have congruent perceptions.

E. Sixty percent of the adopted children in the mixed families did not perceive any major sibling relationship problems, but they did mention that they felt different from their non-adopted siblings.

F. All of the adoptees from only adoptive families felt that they belonged in their families. Sixty-seven percent of the adoptees from the mixed families had difficulties in developing a strong sense of belonging in the home.

G. Sixty percent of the parents in the sample had family members who expressed opposition toward adoption. Half of these parents already had biological children and the other half were adopting for the first

time. Forty percent of the parents in the study had extended family members who held positive views toward their decision to adopt.

Parents' Adoption Experience

- A. All of the mothers of only adopted children did not perceive any major problems during the early period of adoptive parenthood. Sixty-three percent of the mothers who already had biological children experienced feelings of guilt, anxiety and ambivalence during the early period of adoptive parenthood.
- B. None of the fathers in the study perceived any problems during this period. Eighty-eight percent of them did not perceive that there were any differences between adopting and having children biologically. The theme of detachment was used to describe the adoptive father's role during the early period of adoption.
- C. Thirty-nine percent of the adoptive parents indicated that they were never really aware of the fact that they were adoptive parents, while 62% of the adoptive parents were. These parents were most keenly aware of their roles as adoptive parents when somebody mentioned the child's resemblance or non-resemblance to them. The theme of a sense of difference was used to describe this experience.
- D. Sixty percent of the only adoptive parents rejected the differences between natural and adoptive parenthood. Forty percent of the only adoptive parents acknowledged the differences between the two types of parenting experiences by citing the fact that only adoptive parents lack the opportunity to see their genes in their child.
- E. No discernible pattern could be determined for parents of mixed

families regarding their perceptions on the similarities or differences in adopting vs having your own children. These parents made a number of contradictory statements regarding the differences in the two types of parenting and it is possible that they misunderstood the question.

F. The theme Heredity vs Environment was used to describe the tendency of 80% of the adoptive parents to look to heredity to explain behavior or talents in their adopted children that appear to be out of sync with the rest of the family. Twenty percent of the parents with problem children also looked at heredity to try to make sense of their child's behavior.

G. Sixty-nine percent of the adoptive parents did not perceive that any of their children's problems were due to being adopted. Thirty-one percent of the adoptive parents did perceive that they had faced, or were facing problems with their children that were due to their adoptive status.

The Biological Parents

A. Thirty-three percent of the adoptees remembered ages 8 to 9 as being periods of intense curiosity about their biological parents, while 67% remembered the ages 12 to 13 as being the period when the real questioning began.

B. The themes of ambivalence and fear of rejection appear repeatedly in the adoptees' discussions of the biological parents.

C. The theme of genealogical bewilderment was used to describe the adoptees' interest and curiosity in their backgrounds. This theme included a physical identity component in that 86% of the adoptees mentioned that they had an interest in the biological parents' physical

appearance.

D. Eighty percent of the adolescents were not satisfied with the information they had on the biological parents, however, 80% of these parents did perceive that their children would like more information, but 20% of the parents who had children that wanted more information did not believe their children were interested in receiving more information. Parent-child discrepancies were apparent here in the family communication on this topic.

E. Eighty-seven percent of the adoptees indicated that they would like to search for biological relatives at some time in their lives. The themes of ambivalence, apprehension and rejection were noted in their responses.

F. All of the adoptive parents indicated that they would support their child's search, providing the child was at least 18 years of age. Parent-child discrepancies were noted between the parents expressed willingness to support the adoptee, and the adoptees' willingness to enlist the parents support. Sixty-six percent of the adoptees viewed searching as a personal issue that did not warrant parental involvement, despite the verbal support of the parents. Twenty percent of the adoptees were not aware that their parents were willing to help them in such a task, indicating that family communication on this issue had not taken place in these families.

G. Ninety-three percent of the male and female adoptees indicated that they never thought about the birth father. Forty-seven percent of the adoptees described feelings of pride when talking about the biological mother, 33% described feelings of rejection, and 20% described feelings

of indifference when talking about the biological mother. Those adoptees who felt indifferent towards the biological mother were also disinterested in searching for her, and adolescents who had positive views of the biological mother also had parents who held positive views towards the biological mother.

H. All of the adoptive fathers expressed no significant feelings towards the biological father. Eighty-five percent of the adoptive mothers thought about the biological mother on their child's birthday and special occasions, while 15% of the adoptive mothers thought of the biological mother when they viewed a particular trait in their adopted child that seemed different to them. None of the adoptive mothers had any significant feelings toward the biological fathers.

The Adolescents' Adoption Experience

A. Sixty-seven percent of the adolescents viewed their adoptive status as a fact of life, while 33% of them speculated on how a different outcome would have changed their lives.

B. For 53% of the adolescents, family get togethers reminded them that they were adopted, while for 47% of them remarks about their similarity or difference in appearance to their families reminded them of their adoptive status. Sixty-two percent of the adoptive parents also reported that this factor reminded them of their adoptive role.

C. Eighty percent of the adolescents mentioned the possibility that a person on the street might be their mother or father, this theme was labeled is there a parent in the crowd?

D. Sixty percent of the adolescents did not perceive that their adoptive status had caused them any problems. Thirteen percent believed

that they had used adoption against their parents, and 26% of the adolescents did believe that being adopted had been a problem for them. Congruent parent-child perceptions were obtained on this issue. Those adoptees who thought that adoption had been a problem for them also had parents who thought that their child's adoptive status had been a source of difficulty for them.

E. The adolescents' advice to other adopted children was described with four themes, feeling different, sense of belonging, gratitude, and searching. The adoptees' advice to other adoptive parents was described using three themes feeling different, searching, and early revelation.

F. Forty percent of the adolescents mentioned that they had had problems of not fitting in with their peers, however 83% of the adolescents did not attribute this problem to their adoptive status. Forty-six percent of the adoptive parents perceived peer problems in their children's social relationships. Parent-child perceptions were congruent on this issue as well, as those parents who perceived peer problems in their children, also had children who perceived that they had peer problems.

CHAPTER V

Conclusions and Recommendations

In this chapter conclusions that can be drawn on the basis of the data are discussed, areas that could be followed up with further research are outlined, and suggestions and recommendations are offered to counsellors who might work with adoptive families.

Conclusions

In conducting this type of descriptive research, the researcher must extract the relevant content units for examination. However, when reviewing the study's overall findings it is important to bear in mind that there are interrelationships amongst all the factors studied, and that their influence on one another cannot be wholly isolated due to the complex relationships that exist and the particular methodology of study. The general trends and tendencies that emerged in this descriptive research are discussed in the hopes that a further understanding of the adoption experience will be gained.

Family communication. A long-standing assumption in the field of adoption has been that the revelation, or telling the child about adoption is one of the central and critical tasks facing adoptive parents (Jaffee & Fanshel, 1970). The telling of the facts of adoption has been linked to the later life adjustment of the adoptee (Jaffee & Fanshel, 1970). However, in the present study the initial revelation experience was uncomplicated and untraumatic for all the adoptive families interviewed. The ease with which the initial revelation took place does not truly reflect the adoptees' lack of concern or interest with the issue because

most of the adolescents didn't cognitively grasp the concept of adoption until around the ages of 7-9. Most adoption workers recommend telling children that they are adopted before the age of five (Brodzinsky et al, 1981). But it appears from the results of Brodzinsky et al's (1981) research and the present research, that pre-school age children are not really capable of comprehending the meaning of their adoptive status. If parents falsely assume that their adopted children understand adoption after the initial revelation, they may prematurely terminate the disclosure process (Brodzinsky et al, 1981). In fact, the terms "telling" and "revelation" imply a one-shot incident, rather than an ongoing process that should become increasingly sophisticated as the child matures.

When the children in this study did start asking pertinent questions, many of the adoptive mothers experienced feelings of anxiety and confusion. They were unprepared for their child's repetitive, probing questions. Their anxiety was compounded when they believed that they had already explained the facts of adoption to the child. Given the children's cognitive ability, the repetitive nature of the questioning seems to be their way of sorting out the information received and assimilating it into their cognitive schema. (The children are not trying to challenge their parents as some of the mothers in the study thought). This is an area where adoptive parents, particularly the mothers, could benefit from parental education to help prepare them for this stage in their adopted child's life.

Jaffee & Fanshel (1970) reports that the frequency of discussion in the adoptive home regarding adoption has important implications for the adoptees' image of themselves, their sense of belonging, and their feelings about the adoptive parents. Continual reference to the child's adoptive

status or total avoidance of this fact can signal the presence of unresolved conflicts in the family regarding adoption. In the present study it was not the frequency of discussion that emerged as important, but rather the content and quality of the communication. The adoptive families presented a view that communication took place in a relaxed, open manner, and that whenever anyone wanted to talk about it, it was accepted. However, the degree of comfort and openness tended to rely on the content of the discussions. Many of the adolescents, although they may have felt compelled to ask questions, did not feel comfortable with discussion regarding the biological parents or their curiosity. Many of the adolescents indicated that they did not want to hurt or upset their parents, while many of the parents were cautious about what they said for fear of making the child feel rejected, or stirring up something they couldn't handle. The finding that parent and adoptee had discrepant perceptions regarding their beliefs about who usually initiated the discussions indicates that the individual messages are not being given or received in a very clear manner, at least regarding the more important adoption issues.

A possible explanation for some of the adoptive families' communication difficulties lies in what Virginia Satir (1972) refers to as double-level communication. Double-level responses appear in various forms, but frequently the words do not match the inner feelings, or a combination of words are incongruent with the context. Adoptive families may be more vulnerable to this type of communication pattern, because of the circumstances of adoptive family relations. The parents are told to communicate the facts of adoption to their child regardless of their personal feelings,

while adoptees feel curious about their backgrounds and ask questions, but frequently feel guilty and apprehensive about doing it. These kinds of situations would easily lend themselves to incongruent communications. Examples of incongruent or ambivalent messages were noted in some of the parent-child responses, particularly when the biological parents were discussed.

While both the parents and the children typically reported that they would like more information on the biological parents, 20% of the adoptive parents who had curious children did not perceive that their children were curious. This parent-child discrepancy suggests that in some adoptive families the adoptive parents are either unaware, or reluctant to acknowledge the adolescents' need for information concerning their origins, or the adolescents are unable or unwilling to express their feelings to their parents. Although many of the adolescents perceived that they could talk to their parents about their identity concerns, they were hesitant to do so. Much of the adoptees' reluctance to openly communicate their feelings to their parents may be due to their perception of the parents' reactions to their questions. The research finding that all the adoptive parents said they would be supportive if their child wanted to search for the biological parents, yet 66% of the adoptees said they would not enlist their help, tends to support this view. In some cases, the adoptees had difficulty believing that their parents' pledge of support in this matter was a sincere one, suggesting that some ambivalence was communicated in the parents' messages.

These research findings lend further support to the view that

adoptive families are vulnerable to double-level communication. However, in spite of the adoptive parent's best intentions in remaining open and willing to discuss these issues with their adopted child, they may find, as some of the parents did in this study, that the adoptee will just feel too uncomfortable talking about the biological parents with the adoptive parents. Adolescent adoptees can make it difficult for their parents to share information with them as they have a tendency to become preoccupied with themselves and seek privacy in their thoughts (Burgess, 1976).

Given the adolescent adoptees' curiosity in their backgrounds and their sensitivity in discussing it within the family, the adoptive parents have the responsibility to ensure that their adolescent understands that its okay to bring up these issues in the home. Parents who don't feel comfortable with the adoptee's curiosity or discussions about the biological parents will inadvertently be communicating this to their adopted child. Siblings' attitudes on these issues can also affect the family communication where adoption is concerned, and the research findings that both adopted and non-adopted siblings did not talk about adoption with each other further indicates that adoptive family communication is somewhat limited, at least during the adoptees' adolescence.

To summarize, in a general sense, the study families demonstrated good communication regarding global adoption issues, but the somewhat protective atmosphere in the families regarding the more volatile issues of biological parents, curiosity, and searching, tended to inhibit the open expression of feelings, and further, tended to promote double-level communication in the families.

Family relationships. Although individual family relationships were only examined in a very global sense, in virtually every aspect of parenting, the fathers took a back seat to the mothers. Comparative research would be indicated to determine whether this might be a typical pattern in families during the adolescent stage of the family life cycle. An alternate explanation is that the fathers were just not as adept as the mothers in expressing their thoughts and feelings and so therefore did not contribute equally to the study. It was not surprising given this pattern, that the fathers had much poorer relationships with their children than did the mothers.

In the present study a relationship emerged between the tendency of adoptees to perceive similarities between parent and child and the quality of the parent-child relationship. Adoptees who felt close to their parents also perceived similarities, while those adoptees who felt that their relationships were not close to the parents had a tendency to perceive differences in appearance and personality. Raynor (1980) reported that adoptive parents who viewed their adopted children as similar to them tended to feel more satisfied with the adoptive relationship, while those who viewed the children as different tended to be less satisfied with the adoptive relationship. These findings were not borne out in the present research. The majority of adoptive mothers indicated that they had warm, close relationships with their adopted children, but 62% of them still had a tendency to perceive their children as different from them in appearance and personality. The parent-child discrepancies noted here are difficult to assess.

Non-adopted individuals normally take the presence of others with similar physical characteristics for granted because they have grown up surrounded by relatives. Sants (1964) believes that differences in physical appearance can severely hamper a child's capacity to identify with the parents. A possible explanation for this parent-child discrepancy in perceived similarities is that the adopted adolescent may have a greater need to identify with a family member at this stage of development and so looks for similarities in the parent he or she is closest too (in the Raynor (1980) study likenesses were perceived on very slender evidence), while the parents can be more objective in their assessments of the degree of similarity to their adopted child. However, it is clear that more research is needed to elucidate the causal basis of the reported relationships in other research, and the contradictory results obtained in the present study.

While the parents and adoptees in "only adoptive" families perceived no significant sibling relationship problems, some of the "mixed" families did. Other researchers (Lawder et al, 1969; Raynor, 1980), have concluded that the presence or absence of non-adopted siblings is not related to outcome in adoptive families. However, the results of the present study clearly indicate that the presence of non-adopted siblings in the adoptive family may be a factor affecting the adoptee's adjustment. In some of the mixed families the presence of non-adopted siblings tended to accentuate the adoptee's sense of difference, and also affected their sense of belonging in the family; two factors that have previously been linked to adoptees' adjustment

(Jaffee & Fanshel, 1970; Raynor, 1980). In one mixed family it was quite apparent that a sibling's cruel remarks had seriously affected the adolescent adoptee's sense of belonging in the home.

The role of extended family members, primarily the grandparents, in adoptive families should also not be ignored as 60% of the study families reported that they had received opposition toward adoption from the grandparents. It is not clear whether the expressed opposition had any cumulative effects on the adoptees as they were growing up, but one adolescent did mention that she felt that her grandparents hadn't accepted her, and this had subsequently affected her sense of belonging in the family.

The finding that 100% of the adoptees in only adoptive families and only 33% of the adoptees in mixed families had developed a strong sense of belonging in the family indicates that the factors that differentiate the two types of adoptive families may be contributing to this gross difference in the development and maintenance of a sense of belonging in the family. A factor that clearly emerged in the present research was the adoptee's perception of being different from one or more family members, which was aggravated by the presence of non-adopted siblings and their attitudes towards the adoptee, and the attitudes of the grandparents.

These research findings suggest that the influence of siblings, particularly non-adopted siblings, and extended family members should not be underestimated when placing a child for adoption, and when looking for the cause of some adolescent adoptees' family difficulties. Further

investigation of sibling relationships and extended family relationships, particularly in mixed families is warranted to study the impact of family constellation on the adolescent adoptee's adjustment.

The biological parents. The manner in which the adoptive parents deal with the subject of the adoptee's biological parents is conceivably one of the most crucial aspects of their general approach to the entire adoption issue (Jaffee & Fanshel, 1970). Whether the parents state the facts of adoption clearly, or whether they project negative attitudes towards the biological parents, or tend to deny the existence of the biological parents, all can have implications for the adoptee's sense of identity, and for the nature of the parent-child relationship. How the adoptee copes with, and accepts the fact that another set of "parents" exists, also has implications for the parent-child relationship and the adoptee's sense of identity.

Although all the adolescents in this study admitted that they felt some curiosity about their backgrounds, the intensity of the curiosity varied considerably. However, the similarity and the consistency of their responses when discussing these issues suggests that the adolescent adoptee's genealogical bewilderment is not based on a neurotic, disturbed need, but rather is an effort to complete the developmental task of integrating two sets of parents into his or her identity. Their curiosity regarding the biological parents' physical appearance reflects their preoccupation with external factors, and also supports Tonkin's (1984) view that adolescent adoptees may experience anxieties regarding their physical normality and may want to explore their biological roots.

Further evidence that adopted adolescents may be trying to integrate two genealogies into their developing identities can be seen in the adoptees' interview statements regarding their biography sheets. There was an attempt to accommodate as much of this bare bones information as possible into their own identities. Identification is a normal, internal developmental process which facilitates the formation of an identity (Erikson, 1968). Mackie (1982) believes that the task of integrating two genealogies is complicated by the adolescent's distance from the ancestral history of the adoptive family, and from the biological parents whom the adoptee has never experienced as real people, and about whom information may be unavailable, withheld, or distorted. Adoptive parents can help their adopted children accomplish this task by providing as much background information as is available to the adoptee.

The research findings that many of the adolescents expressed feelings of ambivalence and rejection (either implicitly or explicitly), when discussing the biological parents, seems to reflect their confusion and uncertainty in sorting out the dual nature of their heritage. It was clear throughout the interviews that most of the adolescents experienced conflicted emotions when trying to express their feelings about the biological parents, their curiosity, and searching motivation. Much of the adoptees' expressed ambivalence seemed to centre around their desire to have more background information, while at the same time they felt anxious about upsetting their adoptive parents. Their sense of rejection seemed to be linked to their views on relinquishment and why they were

given up for adoption, and their imagined reunions with biological parents that may not want to see them.

Both Jaffee & Fanshel (1970) and Raynor (1980), have reported that adoptees who had a desire to contact biological parents were less happy in the adoptive home and less well adjusted. This was not wholly supported in the present study. Only one adoptee was interested in searching because she was extremely unhappy with herself and her home life. For the majority of adolescents in the study their interest in searching appeared to be unrelated to their satisfaction with their adoptive families. The adoptee's concern with searching was primarily to gather more information and to see what the biological parents looked like. These results tend to confirm those found by Sorosky et al (1978), that the searching motivation seems more related to innate personality characteristics than to adoptive family relationships.

There was also no evidence that the majority of adolescents were hoping to establish relationships with the biological parents after reunion. In fact, many of them desired one-sided reunions - they wanted to see the biological parents but didn't want the biological parents to see them. McWhinnie (1967) found this same result when she interviewed adolescent adoptees 18 years ago. The adolescent adoptee's feelings or desire to search may change as the adolescent matures, however this facet could only be systematically measured by completing a follow-up study on adolescent adoptees at different stages in their adult lives. It is also possible that the adolescents' fear of rejection may be the impetus behind the desire for a one-sided reunion but this could not be

substantiated in the present study.

It appears that adoptive parents are now being compelled to at least acknowledge the possibility that their adopted child may want to search someday. The parents in this study were certainly aware of this possibility, and while indicating their support of such a venture, they were also protective of their child's possible encounter with a biological relative. Their acknowledged support was tempered by expressions of ambivalence. This was undoubtedly noticed by their children and tends to account for the parent-child discrepancies on the searching issue that have already been discussed.

In the present study a surprising finding was that adoptees and parents alike, had little, if any interest in the biological father. The adoptees' and adoptive mothers' energies were almost entirely focused on the biological mother. In fact, some of the adoptees were surprised when the researcher queried them about the biological father as they hadn't really thought of him before. Possible explanations for this disinterest are; that ultimately it is the biological mother who makes the decision to relinquish the child, or the fact that some of the adolescents believed that the fathers had just abandoned the mothers, or perhaps this lack of interest just reflects our cultural values and the emphasis on the mother-child bond. The adoptive mothers seemed more inclined to acknowledge the mother-child bond when they talked about the biological mother and some viewed it as a kind of link between them. Although these research findings may be intrinsically interesting, the tendency for adoptive mothers and adoptees to identify more with the biological mother than the biological father did not appear to affect

adoptive family relations. What did emerge as a significant factor was the finding that when the adoptive mothers reported positive feelings and thoughts about the biological mother, there was also a tendency for their children to have positive feelings toward the biological mother. These findings reflect the importance of the adoptive parents' feelings about the biological parents, because how the adoptive parents deal with it may be similarly reflected in how the adoptee will come to view the biological parents. As mentioned previously, at some level, most adoptees do experience some sense of rejection and this was noted in some of the adoptees' responses regarding their biological parents. Adoptive parents may be able to help their adopted children reduce the impact of this experience by projecting a positive image of the biological parents and the circumstances surrounding the adoption process.

How well the adolescent adoptee reconciles the facts of his dual heritage seems to be related to how well the parent and child communicate, particularly on issues pertaining to the biological parents, on what the adolescent has been told about the biological parents as he was growing up, and how the adolescent feels about himself and his adoptive status. Adoptive parents may need to be reassured that their adolescent's preoccupation with his heritage and background does not reflect on them, and that how well they are able to reconcile their feelings about the biological parents may well determine how the adoptive family will survive the adolescent stage of the family life cycle.

The parents' adoption experience. While the early adoption experience was relatively problem free for mothers of adopted children only, it was more problematic for adopting mothers who already had biological children. Their difficulties seemed to be partially related to faulty expectations. These mothers seemed to believe that adoption would be the same as giving birth and they were unprepared when the adoption experience differed from that. The research findings that many of these mothers experienced anxiety, guilt, and ambivalence during the early stages of adoptive parenthood indicate that they may need help to understand the similarities, but also the differences between raising an adopted child and a biological child, and further, to recognize and acknowledge that the bonding process may be different for adopted and biological children. An interesting finding in regard to these particular mothers was that in spite of their admissions that they had had early adjustment difficulties, when they were asked to describe the similarities or differences in adoptive and biological parenthood, some of them denied that there was a difference between the two types of parenting. It is possible that these mothers didn't fully understand the nature of the question, but an equally plausible hypothesis is that parents of both adopted and biological children are hesitant to acknowledge the differences between the two types of parenting, or tend to block out, or deny the differences in order to feel that they are parenting the children equally, without any preferential treatment. Clearly, this aspect of adoptive parenting merits additional exploration. While Kirk's (1964) theory of adoptive relations applies

principally to adopters who were childless prior to adoption, an attempt was made to identify the study families' coping strategies. No conclusions can be drawn as to the real significance of the "reject the difference" or "acknowledge the difference" coping styles in the families studied. Sixty percent of the only adoptive parents had a tendency to reject the difference between the two types of parenting, but their responses were not consistent from question to question, and there was no evidence that these families were more problematic than any of the other study families. In the mixed families the contradictory responses made it impossible to determine any significant patterns. Systematic replication of Kirk's (1964) work is needed to further validate these coping styles, and to assess whether the theory and the coping styles he proposes are relevant when applied to families that have both adopted and biological children.

The finding that both parents and adolescents reported that they were reminded of their adoptive roles when family acquaintances made remarks about their physical resemblance to one another, seems to reflect our society's emphasis on biological ties. In many families new additions to the family are scrutinized by visiting relatives and friends to determine who the baby looks like. This is an accepted practice, as is the tendency for relatives and friends to comment as a child grows up on his or her appearance to other family members. In adoptive families, these kinds of comments serve to remind them of the lack of a biological tie. When acquaintances remarked on either the differences or the similarities between parent and child, both circumstances served to remind the parent and child of their adoptive

roles. Comments such as these appear to foster a sense of difference in both adoptive parents and adopted children. For adopted adolescents this can be particularly problematic because of their normal developmental concerns regarding their own physical appearance and body image.

The tendency of adoptive parents to look to heredity to explain their adopted children's behavior was supported in this study. However, this tendency was not only identified when the parents had problems with their adopted children, but also when the parents viewed special talents or behaviors that were different from the adoptive family. The heredity issue can be used by adoptive parents to alleviate guilt and blame when things go awry in a family. For any parent to feel that they had failed with their child would be unpleasant, and in adoptive families the parents have the option of using the heredity explanation when things go wrong. Raynor (1980) reported that adoptive parents who had a tendency to rely on heredity, more often had adopted children with behavior problems. The causal basis of this association is difficult to determine, but one adoptive parent's view was that heredity is the explanation an adoptive parent turns to when a child demonstrates serious or extreme behavior. In these situations the heredity explanation can be a rationalising experience for parents who are dealing with abnormal behavior. It appears from the results of this study that adoptive parents use the heredity explanation to make sense of their child's behavior when it's different, be it positive or negative. Where a biological family might look to extended family members to explain a child's behavior (i.e. he's just like his uncle, or she inherited her grandmother's talent), the adoptive family looks

to the biological parents' genes for the answers to their dilemmas. Further exploration of this unique feature of adoptive parenting is warranted to assess what effects, if any, this attitude may have on the adopted child.

Most of the adoptive parents in this research did not perceive that any of their adopted children's problems were attributable to adoption. They saw no direct relationship between their child's adjustment difficulties and the fact that they were adopted. These results are consistent with those results reported by Jaffee & Fanshel (1970), that adoptive parents perceived that adoptive status played a modest role in the etiology of their child's problems. However, in a small number of families where fairly serious adolescent problems existed, both parent and child perceived that adoption had accentuated their problems. This suggests that in families where serious adolescent problems exist, there is a tendency to look at adoption as an aggravating factor. Again, it appears that this is one way of making sense of a bad situation. An important implication of this perception is that in some adoptive families the fact of adoption may become a panacea for all family difficulties.

The adolescents' adoption experience. The research finding that the majority of adolescents viewed their adoptive status as a fact of life, and that most of them did not perceive that their adoptive status had caused them any significant problems suggests that, in general, adopted adolescents do not view adoption per se as a serious impediment to their life functioning or adjustment. However, an association between the adolescents' perceptions of themselves and their concern

over their adoptive status was apparent in the data. The adolescents' sense of self was related to their formation of an identity, which was in turn linked to their adoptive status. The whole process of integrating their two genealogies into one solid identity was a task that some adoptees in this study had accomplished better than others. Why some adoptees become upset about being adopted, while others don't is difficult to assess, but some researchers have speculated that such a perception is dependent on the adoptee's general image of himself or herself (Jaffee & Fanshel, 1970). If, as Erikson (1968) suggests, the essential task of adolescence is to develop a sense of identity, the adolescent adoptees' task will be that much harder due to the dual heritage or genealogy that must be integrated.

The adolescents that described themselves as alienated seemed to convey the feeling that their inability to get the background histories they wanted was preventing the development and integration of a true sense of identity. Erikson (1968) wrote that one needs to know the past in order to plan for the future. This statement was exemplified by one adoptee who believed that she couldn't get on with her life until she found her parents and had her questions answered. While some adolescent adoptees appear able to reconcile these identity issues quite well, others find the task of forming their identities aggravated by, or hampered by, the blank spots in their pasts.

The way the adoptees described themselves seemed to be unrelated to the number of problems they had experienced, or the way in which

their parents had described them. The way that the adoptees described themselves seemed to be their own picture of their personal sense of identity. More controlled research to measure the correlations among the variables affecting the adoptees' perceptions of themselves should be considered to further evaluate the relationship between the adolescent adoptees' identity formation and their adoptive status.

The ability to enter into relationships with others is largely dependent on the strength and quality of the individual's identity (Triseliotis, 1973). Almost half the adolescents in this study indicated that they had experienced social relationship problems. It is possible that the peer relationship problems the adoptees described are normal teenage relational problems, but the fact that the adoptive parents held congruent perceptions regarding this problem indicates that the problems were serious enough that the parents had noticed them and viewed it as a problem. These results suggest that adopted adolescents may be more vulnerable to peer relationship problems.

The need to belong and be accepted by peers is very important during adolescence. The peer group provides a feeling of acceptance and belonging which in turn increases self-worth and facilitates the individuation process (Mackie, 1982). Therefore, the possibility exists that adopted adolescents' difficulties in developing solid identities hampers the development of their social relationships. Or, the alternate hypothesis exists, that the adoptees' peer problems aggravate the successful completion of identity formation. The causal basis of this relationship should be explored further to determine what

effects, if any, adoption has on the development of social relationships in adolescence. With one adoptee in this study her inability to establish any real friendships had led her to try to find her biological mother. Her hope was that she'd finally find someone who was like her. In this instance, her feelings of not belonging and being accepted had seemingly triggered her identity concerns.

The research finding that the theme of feeling different turned up repeatedly in the adolescent interviews suggests that the adoptees feel somewhat sensitive about their adoptive status during adolescence. This is a time in their lives when they don't want to be different, they want to fit in, so perhaps they become somewhat hypersensitive about their differences. It was clear that family related issues could remind the adoptees that they were different. When family acquaintances made remarks about physical resemblances, or when non-adopted siblings made remarks about the adoptees' status, the adoptees felt this sense of difference. But a surprising finding was that many adoptees also perceived this sense of difference during special family get togethers. This is a time when the families should be enjoying each others' company, but for many of the adolescent adoptees this only served to remind them that they had another family somewhere. During early and middle adolescence the adopted child's cognitive development reaches the level where a relatively sophisticated and abstract appreciation of adoption emerges (Brodzinsky et al, 1981). It is possible that adopted adolescents, while dealing with the normal developmental concerns and identity issues, are also trying to assimilate

their new awareness of adoption. This new awareness might further accentuate a sense of being different as they become more knowledgeable about adoption and their "other set" of parents.

Other adoption researchers have discussed the extent of, and intensity of the adopted adolescents' fantasies about their origins (Burgess, 1976). The adolescents in this research talked very little about fantasies. While fantasies can be fueled by limited information it is possible the fact that most of the adoptees had biography sheets reduced their fantasies. What fantasies were expressed by the adolescents seemed to have a reality base to them. There was more of a flavour of wonder and speculation than true fantasy. The finding that most of the adoptees had speculated about strangers on the street being their parents typifies the type of reality based fantasies the adoptees discussed. This fantasy appears to be related in a general sense to their identity concerns, physical appearance concerns, and with their search, as tenuous as it may be, for knowledge of their origins.

Summary

It is hoped, aside from describing the adoption experience from the perspective of the adolescent adoptee and the adoptive parents, that these research findings have helped to clarify what factors might have a bearing upon the course of the adoption experience, and what factors seem to be relatively unrelated. The most salient conclusions that can be drawn from this research are summarized below:

1. Adoptive families appear to be vulnerable to problems during the adolescent stage because of the adoptees' emerging curiosity, and

the problems of openly communicating these concerns in the family.

2. Although generally speaking, the parents and children had fairly congruent perceptions regarding their family relationships and developmental issues, the discrepant perceptions regarding the biological parents, curiosity, and searching may have elevated family stress levels and added to the strain of adoptive family life.
3. The adolescent adoptees' curiosity seems to be a normal expression of their developmental stage and should be satisfied as much as possible so that the adolescent can complete the task of integrating his or her dual heritage.
4. Adolescent adoptees, while admitting they'd like to search for the biological parents, do not seem to be searching for relationships, but for information to satisfy their curiosity.
5. The search motivation is not necessarily related to the quality of the adoptive family relationships.
6. It may be common for adopted children to grapple with feelings of being different and rejected by their biological parents, and that these feelings can be accentuated by the family dynamics.
7. The differences between mixed and only adoptive families should be taken into account when examining adoptive family functioning.
8. The revelation process should be viewed as a task that unfolds in an increasingly sophisticated manner as the child matures. It is a long term process rather than a one-shot parental obligation.

Suggestions for Future Research

Descriptive research, while heuristic in nature, often generates more questions than it answers. Further exploration of the findings from this research are indicated to more fully validate the themes and trends that appeared in the data. The results from the present study suggest that further examination of the differences between mixed and only adoptive families is warranted. In addition, a study should be undertaken to study the effects of adoption in mixed families, particularly in the areas of family constellation and sibling relationships. How does the family structure affect the adoptee at different stages, and how do the parents cope with the roles of being both adoptive and biological parents? Further systematic exploration of Kirk's (1964; 1981) theory of adoptive relations is also indicated, as theoretically it appears sound, but empirically the supporting evidence is limited.

Due to the exploratory nature of the present research it was not possible to fully examine the interrelationships occurring among the variables. While the present study outlined the trends and tendencies in the data, a further study should build on this information by incorporating measures of adjustment to identify the correlates of good and poor adoptive family functioning during the adolescent stage. An attempt to assess the causal relationships between the identified themes and issues should be undertaken as well.

A fairly small sample was used in this study. Greater generalizability could be obtained through the procurement of a larger sample of adoptive

families and more rigorous sampling techniques, if possible. It is clear that questions regarding the development of the adopted child require more research, ideally using longitudinal designs. Future research in this vein could incorporate a longitudinal design strategy to determine if the trends and tendencies the adolescent discussed in this research are unique to their developmental stage, or tend to typify what adoptees in general experience. How might the adolescent adoptee's views change as he or she matures?

While a greater number of females than males participated in this research, no judgements could be made regarding the implications of this. It has been suggested that more females are sensitive to genetic heritage issues and so female adoptees may have more identity concerns than male adoptees (Kadushin, 1970). Future research should look at the sex differences in adopted adolescents' experiences to assess the significance of this variable in adoptive family functioning.

Comparative research between adopted and non-adopted families may be indicated at some point, but the benefits of this pursuit may be negligible due to the inherent difficulties of matching sample families, and finding an equal number of willing participants.

The last section of this paper will offer recommendations to individuals working with families who have adopted adolescents.

Recommendations

Several of the findings from this study point to the need for adopting couples to receive education regarding the role of adoptive parenthood. David Kirk (1981) has also stressed that adoptive parents need education for their special tasks. He believes that there is a genuine problem in being the real parent, and at the same time accepting the biological parents.

Although the adoption agencies screen prospective adopting couples for their suitability as parents, little attention is paid to educating the couple regarding what to expect as an adoptive parent or how to deal with developmental issues as they arise. Adoptive parenthood presents unique challenges to parents, and the need for all parents to be well informed regarding child rearing is becoming well recognized. Pre-adoption counselling, or adoptive parent education programs would allow the adopting couple to express their anxieties and apprehensions in a supportive environment, and also help them to adjust to the changing characteristics of the family unit. Adoptive parent education programs while functioning like other parenting groups, would include training in communication skills, teaching problem solving skills, building positive relationships, etc., but would also focus on the issues pertinent to adoptive parenting. The research findings from the present study indicate that adoptive parent education programs would be a positive step in alleviating some of the stress inherent in becoming adoptive parents, and in parenting the children through adolescence. The following recommendations are based on the

results from the present research:

1. Adoptive parents should be oriented to the view that adoption is a lifelong process; it doesn't end when the legal papers are signed. It will come up again and again during the child's life.
2. Adoptive parents should be oriented to the fact that telling a child about his/her adoptive status is a process that should become increasingly sophisticated as the child matures. If couples are educated as to the child's cognitive development and the stages of the child's interest in adoption, they will be more prepared for their child's repetitive questions and be less likely to overreact or feel threatened by the situation.
3. The research finding that most of the adoptive parents indicated that they were dissatisfied with the information they had received on the biological parents, and, at the time they were too excited to assimilate it, suggests that parents should get written information from the agencies as soon as they adopt. This would prevent memory failures and misperceptions of verbal information from occurring. Most importantly though, is that the parents would have the information when the child asked for it and this might prevent any unnecessary parent-child conflicts.
4. Adopting couples who already have biological children should be educated regarding the impact of family constellation and the issues that may arise for an adopted child with non-adopted siblings. Parents with mixed families should also learn that the attachment process may

feel different with an adopted child, and that this is a normal experience that requires a period of adjustment. This might alleviate some of the guilt and anxiety that was described by some of the adopting mothers in this study.

5. Adopting couples should realize that in the future there may no longer be a guarantee that the identity of the biological parents will remain confidential. They should explore their feelings regarding the searching issue because, as adoptive parents they will be faced with it sooner or later.

6. Some of the adoptive parents in this study were very upset by the remarks of others, and felt defensive about their status as adoptive parents. Because this society's cultural values emphasize the biological tie, adoptive parents should be prepared for other people's remarks regarding their role as parents. They should realize that it reflects a cultural bias and not an individual slur.

7. Some of the adoptive parents in this study felt that there was a lack of support after their adoption had been finalized. The need of adoptive parents to receive continuous support if required should be recognized. It is plausible that many adoptive parents would be hesitant to solicit help in a crisis from the adoption worker that placed their child. After all, the parents were selected by the agency to be parents and the adoptive parents might feel humiliated, or even threatened to return to the agency for help. It is this researcher's view that ongoing counselling services should be made available to

adoptive families, but these services should remain separate from the adoption agency.

If adoptive parents are educated as to the similarities and differences in adoptive parenthood, and the number of unique situations they may be faced with, they will be in a better position to deal with problems before they escalate. An informed parent who can foresee potential problems will be more effective at dealing with an issue before it reaches a crisis point and requires professional intervention. A preventative approach is usually more expedient and preferable to crisis intervention. However, during the family life cycle, the adoptive parents may feel the need to consult a trained counsellor to discuss their adopted child's needs. Recommendations for counsellors treating adopting families are outlined next.

Counselling implications. While biological and adoptive families in general, face the same developmental tasks, the findings and conclusions of this study indicate that the factor of adoption can increase the stress in an adoptive family, particularly during the adolescent stage of the family life cycle. Many adoptive families would benefit from family counselling during this time. In order to be helpful to these families, it is this researcher's opinion that counsellors must understand the various factors uniquely inherent in adoption, and recognize the similarities, but also the differences in adoptive and biological parenthood. Counsellors who work with adoptive families must be aware of the possible effects of adoption, but also must be able to evaluate the individual personality patterns

of the family members to determine what adoption means to them (Blum, 1976). Counsellors who are presented with a troubled adoptive family needn't view the symptoms of the family as always reflecting adoption issues, but they should be able to determine how the factors of the adoption experience are influencing the presenting problem and the family dynamics. This ability can be learned through knowledge of how the adoption experience can affect families.

Counselling parents during their adopted child's adolescence should focus on the needs of adopted adolescents and what their emerging curiosity means. Adoptive parents should be reassured that they will continue to be the real parents and that the adoptee's curiosity reflects a developmental need for background information. Helping the adoptive parents detach themselves emotionally from their children's interest in their origins should be a primary goal for the counsellor (Sokoloff, 1979). Adoptive parents must come to realize that the adoptee's preoccupation with the biological parents does not usually reflect a need to find new parents, but reflects a need for information to satisfy the curiosity. Detaching themselves from this process will allow the parents to be more accepting of the adoptee, and enable them to be more supportive. Adoptive parents have often been counselled that adoptees need a positive identification with their origins, but they are rarely helped to work through their own negative attitudes or feelings towards the biological parents (Sorosky et al, 1978). Counsellors may need to spend some time with the parents to educate them about the adolescent's need to know, and to

help them deal with some of the issues that the adolescent's questions have stirred up.

While family counselling should be the ultimate goal for therapists treating adopted adolescents and their families, the therapist must also recognize the need of the adolescent to meet without the presence of the parents. As noted in this research, many of the adoptees felt uncomfortable talking to their parents about their identity concerns. Because of their reluctance to discuss some of these issues, initially the adoptee should be allowed to express his/her curiosity and concerns privately. Many of the adolescents in this study had never talked to anyone about their feelings regarding adoption. After the interview they typically remarked on how nice it had been to have somebody just listen to them. They were however, equally concerned that what they had discussed would not be repeated to their parents. It was the researcher's opinion that most of the adolescents had benefited from the interviews because they could talk to an outsider openly about their feelings and could use the meeting as a forum in which to explore their ideas. Adopted adolescents need to be reassured that their curiosity and their feelings are normal. Most of the adoptees in the study were surprised to find out that someone else felt like they did.

Counsellors who work with adopted adolescents must not view their concerns over the biological parents as being an attempt to satisfy neurotic needs. The adolescent adoptee needs a very supportive, non-judgemental environment in which he or she can explore these very intense feelings. Counsellors should be able to help the adopted

adolescent achieve identity integration by exploring the facets of the biological parents and the searching motivation with the adoptee (Blum, 1976).

The findings of the present study also indicate that adolescent adoptees appear to be vulnerable to feelings of rejection and feeling different. Meeting with other adolescent adoptees in a group experience might help to mitigate the adolescents' feelings of being different. The group atmosphere might help to alleviate the adoptees' anxiety about being adopted, and offer a supportive environment in which to discuss personal issues related to their adoptive status. During adolescence, the adoptee may need to reaffirm his/her sense of belonging in the family. When families choose to deny the facts of adoption, this inhibits the possibility of the adoptee becoming a real member of the family (Gurman, 1982). The counsellor can facilitate the adoptee's need to belong by conducting family sessions where the details of the adoption are explored. Reducing the tension and conflict in the family will also help the adoptee reaffirm a sense of belonging.

When the counsellor judges that the adoptive family is ready for exploration of the adoption issue, the problems of poor communication should be dealt with directly. Both parents and adoptee must learn to communicate openly and congruently regarding the biological parents and the accompanying feelings. Family therapists recognize that family secrets, myths, and physical and emotional cut-offs, can contribute to individual dysfunction, so the facts of adoption must be openly communicated in adoptive families (Blum, 1976). The

therapist must be able to facilitate this process. The counsellor should also be aware of when family structure can be a contributing variable to the adoptee's functioning. Whether an adoptee is from a mixed family or only adoptive family may bear some relationship to the nature of his/her difficulty.

Counselling an adoptive family should be no more difficult for the counsellor if the counsellor has an understanding of adoptive family functioning. Lois Blum (1976) has succinctly summed up the role of the counsellor in working with adoptive families, she writes:

helping families feel comfortable with the curiosity, the difference, the sameness, and the need for their adopted child to come to terms with his own dual identity should be the aim of all counsellors dealing with adoptive families (p. 248).

How efficiently a counsellor will accomplish these tasks or goals will depend on the extent of his/her understanding of the adoption experience within the family.

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APPENDIX A

Letter of Introduction

APPENDIX B

Family Consent Form

APPENDIX BFamily Consent Form

Department of Counselling Psychology

Faculty of Education

University of British Columbia

We, the _____ family members, agree to volunteer to participate in the research as outlined in the accompanying letter as undertaken by Sandra Gamlin, a student in the Master of Arts program in the above named department. We understand that any information we provide will be kept strictly confidential, and that any of us may refuse to answer any question, or may withdraw from this study at anytime without prejudice.

As a participating family member in this study, I am willing to complete the required questionnaires, the Family Environment Scale and the Parents' Questionnaire, and participate in an interview with the researcher. I agree to allow the interview to be audiotaped understanding the confidentiality of these tapes and the measures being taken to ensure same.

Date

Signed,

(adoptee) _____

Parental Consent for children under the age of 16:

I consent to my child's participation in this study _____

I do not consent to my child's participation in this study _____

APPENDIX C

Adoptees' Interview Guide

APPENDIX CAdoptee's Interview Guide

Introduction: As you know I am doing a study to further understand the experience of adoption and what it means to both the parents and the adoptee. I would like you to tell me about your experiences as an adoptee in as much detail as you can, as though you were telling me a story with a beginning, a middle, and an end. I'd like to remind you that this interview is private and your parents won't hear anything that is said between us.

I'd like to start this interview by learning a little about you and the other members of your family, what your interests are, what you do in your spare time and things like that.

(Interviewer should lead client into a general discussion on school, family constellation, peer and sibling relationships, until rapport is established and the client is feeling comfortable with the interviewer).

Area 1 - Revelation Experiences

- ... Can you remember the first time that you found out that you were adopted? Tell me about this experience.
- ... How old were you?
- ... If other children in the family do you ever talk to them about adoption? (Explore with the client)
- ... How often is adoption discussed in your family? Who initiates these discussions? When?

Area 2 - The Biological Parents

- ... Have your parents given you any information about the biological parents, how do you feel about this? Are you satisfied with it?
- ... It seems that many adopted kids have a natural curiosity about their origins - how do you feel about this? Have you had this experience?
- ... Do you find that as you get older you get more curious or less curious?

- ... Have you ever talked to your parents about this curiosity?
When? What happened?
- ... How do you feel about the woman that gave birth to you?
Do you have any feelings about the biological father?
- ... Sometimes counsellors talk about a feeling of belonging
somewhere, usually it's to one's family. I was wondering
how you might experience this, can you describe your feeling
of belonging to your family?

Area 3 - Relationship Dimensions

- ... Sometimes adopted kids have a special place in the family, I
was wondering what it's like in your family, do you sometimes
feel special, when, or I wonder if you feel as if you
get away with more because you are adopted?
- ... Have you ever had any problems that you think were caused
because you were adopted? (Describe)
- ... What are some of the feelings you experience when you think
about adoption?
- ... What are the good things about being adopted?
- ... Describe your relationship with your Mom? Dad? Siblings? :
- ... What is your current view of your Mom? Dad? Siblings?
- ... Are you similar or different to your mom and dad in your
temperment? How are you similar or different?
- ... If you had the chance what advice might you give to other
adopted children? What advice might you give to other
adoptive parents?
- ... At what times and in what circumstances are you most keenly
aware of the fact that you are adopted?
- ... How do you view yourself at this time in your life?
- ... How do you view your adoptive status at this time in your life?
- ... What motivated you to participate in this research?
- ... What do you think about all the things we've discussed tonight?
- ... Do you think any of the discussion we've had tonight has helped
you? How?

APPENDIX D

Parents' Interview Guide

APPENDIX DParents' Interview Guide

Introduction: I am doing a study to further understand the experience of adoption, and what it means to the parents and the child. I would like both of you to tell me about your experiences as an adoptive parent in as much detail as you can. I recognize that each of you may have experienced some events differently and as I am interested in your personal experiences it's okay if you don't always agree with one another. I have some particular areas I would like to explore with you, but for the most part I would like to just be listening to your story, is this clear?

To start things off I would like for each of you to tell me about your early experience - how and why you become adoptive parents.

Area 1 - Early Adoption Experience

- ... What circumstances led to your decision to adopt?
- ... Did you have a preference for a boy, girl, or age of race of child?
- ... How well prepared did you feel (emotionally, physically, socially) when notified that a child was available?
- ... What was your experience like when you first received your child - is that what you expected?
- ... After your child came home with you can you remember how long it was before you began to feel that this child was yours - describe this experience.
- ... Did you experience any problems during this period - describe.
- ... Overall, how satisfied were you with the early adoption experience, were your expectations met - how, describe.

Area 2 - The Revelation Experience

One aspect of adoptive parenthood that seems to be difficult for some parents is telling their child that he/she is adopted. How was this experienced in your family. Tell me how it happened.

- ... Was it planned, or did some crisis precipitate it?
- ... How old was your child, what did you say to him/her?

Area 2 - The Revelation Experience Cont'd

- ... How did you experience this moment with your child, how did you feel about this?
- ... How did you tell other children in the family, what did they do?
- ... Think back now, what was your child's response to this revelation?
- ... Try to recall what happened in the family after this revelation, did you notice any change in your child's behavior?
- ... How often has adoption been discussed in your family since this time? What kinds of events precipitate these discussions - describe.

Area 3 - The Biological Parents

When you adopted your child I suppose the agency made available to you some information on the biological parents. Was this information sufficient, how did you feel upon receiving it?

- ... How often would you say you think about the biological parents? What are your feelings and fantasies about the biological parents?
- ... In your opinion does your child seem curious or interested in his/her biological parents. If so, when did you begin to notice this curiosity, how do you respond to it, how do you feel when he questions you. How do you perceive him?
- ... Some adopted youngsters reach a stage in their lives when they become preoccupied with their origins and curious about biological parents. If at some time your child wanted to have more information re biological parents and maybe decided to search for them, how would you handle this, how would you feel - describe.
- ... How satisfied do you think your child is with the information he/she has received from you re the biological parents?

Area 4 - Developmental & Relationship Issues

In looking retrospectively at your child's development thus far, have there been any stages that you have found particularly difficult or special, or for some reason stands out in your mind? Describe.

- ... Describe your relationship with this child, how do you think your child views this relationship, is this child similar to, or different from you in temperament and mannerisms?

- ... Some adoptive parents experience greater difficulties than others, have you as adoptive parents been faced with any problems you attribute to the adoption situation? Describe.
- ... Do you think other parents have satisfactions that you don't and vice versa, do you think adoptive parents have satisfactions that other parents don't. Describe.
- ... In your opinion, do you think that your child may have faced special problems due to his/her adoptive status? Describe.
- ... At what times and in what circumstances are you most keenly aware of the fact that you are an adoptive parent?
- ... How has being an adoptive parent affected you, what have you experienced that you could share with others, what advice might you offer to prospective adoptive parents?
- ... What motivated you to participate in this research?

APPENDIX E

Parents Questionnaire

APPENDIX EParents Questionnaire

1. Age _____ Sex _____
2. Number of years you have been married _____
3. Number of years of marriage before child was adopted _____
4. Age of child when adopted _____
5. Type of adoption (i.e. private, government, etc.) _____

6. General Educational Level:

- | | |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------|
| some high school | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| graduated from high school | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| some college of technical school | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Bachelor's degree | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Graduate school | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Graduate degree | <input type="checkbox"/> |

7. Combined Family Income:

- | | |
|------------------|--------------------------|
| under 10,000 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 10,000 to 20,000 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 20,000 to 30,000 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 30,000 to 40,000 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| over 40,000 | <input type="checkbox"/> |

8. If any other children in the family please list their birthdate & sex:

- | | |
|-----------------|-----------|
| birthdate _____ | sex _____ |
| birthdate _____ | sex _____ |
| birthdate _____ | sex _____ |
| birthdate _____ | sex _____ |

9. How would you currently rate your relationship with your (adopted) child:

very close

☐

somewhat close

☐

neither close nor distant

☐

somewhat distant

☐

very distant

☐

- 9A. If you have other children as well, please rate your relationship with them in the blank space below.

10. This is a checklist of children's behavior problems. Please check any of the items that your family has had any particular difficulty with in the past concerning your adopted child:

a. academic problems

☐

g. aggressive behavior

☐

b. fearful reactions

☐

h. jealousy

☐

c. sleeping difficulties

☐

i. disobedient behavior

☐

d. temper tantrums

☐

j. dependency problems

☐

e. mood swings

☐

k. withdrawn behavior

☐

f. peer relationship problems

☐

11. Have you or any member of your family sought help through counselling services or physicians regarding family difficulties?

YES

NO

If yes BRIEFLY outline the nature of the problem:

12. Overall, how would you rate your (adopted) child's adjustment:

Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent
------	------	------	-----------

13. How often would you say the subject of adoption is discussed in your home:

Never	Very Infrequently	Relatively Infrequently	Somewhat Frequently	Very Frequently
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14. How motivated did you feel to adopt a child:

Not Motivated At All	Slightly Motivated	Quite Motivated	Highly Motivated
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15. Please rate the extent to which you feel your child's mannerisms and temperament are similar to your own:

Not At All Similar	Somewhat Similar	Very Similar
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That's all, thank you for taking the time to answer these questions.

APPENDIX F.

The Family Environment Scale and Instructions

APPENDIX FThe Family Environment Scale & Instructions

As part of this project on the Adoption Experience, we would like you to complete the following questionnaire. Some of the questions are designed to obtain demographic information from you (only parents will complete this form) and the Family Environment Scale is a questionnaire designed to assess each individual's perception of their family lifestyle. Completion of these questionnaires will take about 15-20 minutes to complete. Your name is not to be entered on any questionnaire, and after you have completed the questionnaire please seal it in the accompanying confidential envelope.

PLEASE NOTE: As a voluntary participant in this study, you have the right to discontinue responding and to withdraw at any time, and for any reason. Your responses to these questions will not be revealed to any other member of your family, and in order to protect the integrity of the study, please do not compare answers or discuss your responses to the questions with other members of your family until you have completed the material and sealed it in the envelope. All research material collected will be completely confidential. If these questionnaires are completed, it will be assumed that consent has been given.

1. T F Family members really help and support one another.
2. T F Family members often keep their feelings to themselves.
3. T F We fight alot in our family.
4. T F We don't do things on our own very often in our family.
5. T F We feel it is important to be the best at whatever you do.
6. T F We often talk about political and social problems.
7. T F We spend most weekends and evenings at home.
8. T F Family members attend church, synagogue, or Sunday School fairly often.
9. T F Activities in our family are pretty carefully planned.
10. T F Family members are rarely ordered around.
11. T F We often seem to be killing time at home.
12. T F We say anything we want to around home.
13. T F Family members rarely become openly angry.
14. T F In our family, we are strongly encouraged to be independent.
15. T F Getting ahead in life is very important in our family.
16. T F We rarely go to lectures, plays or concerts.
17. T F Friends often come over for dinner or to visit.
18. T F We don't say prayers in our family.
19. T F We are generally very neat and orderly.
20. T F There are very few rules to follow in our family.
21. T F We put a lot of energy into what we do at home.
22. T F It's hard to "blow off steam" at home without upsetting somebody.
23. T F Family members sometimes get so angry they throw things.
24. T F We think things out for ourselves in our family.
25. T F How much money a person makes is not very important to us.
26. T F Learning about new and different things is very important in our family.
27. T F Nobody in our family is active in sports, little league, bowling, etc.
28. T F We often talk about the religious meaning of Christmas, Passover, or other holidays.
29. T F It's often hard to find things when you need them in our household.
30. T F There is one family member who makes most of the decisions.
31. T F There is a feeling of togetherness in our family.
32. T F We tell each other about our personal problems.
33. T F Family members hardly ever lose their tempers.
34. T F We come and go as we want to in our family.
35. T F We believe in competition and "may the best man win".
36. T F We are not that interested in cultural activities.
37. T F We often go to movies, sports events, camping, etc.
38. T F We don't believe in heaven or hell
39. T F Being on time is very important in our family.
40. T F There are set ways of doing things at home.
41. T F We rarely volunteer when something has to be done at home.
42. T F If we feel like doing something on the spur of the moment, we often just pick up and go.
43. T F Family members often criticize each other.
44. T F There is very little privacy in our family.
45. T F We always strive to do things just a little better the next time.
46. T F We rarely have intellectual discussions.
47. T F Everyone in our family has a hobby or two.

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43. T F Family members have strict ideas about what is right and wrong.
 49. T F People change their minds often in our family.
 50. T F There is a strong emphasis on following rules in our family.
 51. T F Family members really back each other up.
 52. T F Someone usually gets upset if you complain in our family.
 53. T F Family members sometimes hit each other.
 54. T F Family members almost always rely on themselves when a problem comes up.
 55. T F Family members rarely worry about job promotions, school grades, etc.
 56. T F Someone in our family plays a musical instrument.
 57. T F Family members are not very involved in recreational activities outside work or school.
 58. T F We believe there are some things you just have to take on faith.
 59. T F Family members make sure their rooms are neat.
 60. T F Everyone has an equal say in family decisions.
 61. T F There is very little group spirit in our family.
 62. T F Money and paying bills is openly talked about in our family.
 63. T F If there's a disagreement in our family, we try hard to smooth things over and keep the peace.
 64. T F Family members strongly encourage each other to stand up for their rights.
 65. T F In our family, we don't try that hard to succeed.
 66. T F Family members often go to the library.
 67. T F Family members sometimes attend courses or take lessons for some hobby or interest (outside of school).
 68. T F In our family each person has different ideas about what is right and wrong.
 69. T F Each person's duties are clearly defined in our family.
 70. T F We can do whatever we want to in our family.
 71. T F We really get along well with each other.
 72. T F We are usually careful about what we say to each other.
 73. T F Family members often try to one-up or out-do each other.
 74. T F It's hard to be by yourself without hurting someone's feelings in our house.
 75. T F "Work before play" is the rule in our family.
 76. T F Watching T.V. is more important than reading in our family.
 77. T F Family members go out a lot.
 78. T F The Bible is a very important book in our home.
 79. T F Money is not handled very carefully in our family.
 80. T F Rules are pretty inflexible in our household.
 81. T F There is plenty of time and attention for everyone in our family.
 82. T F There are a lot of spontaneous discussions in our family.
 83. T F In our family, we believe you don't ever get anywhere by raising your voice.
 84. T F We are not really encouraged to speak up for ourselves in our family.
 85. T F Family members are often compared with others as to how well they are doing at school or work.
 86. T F Family members really like music, art, and literature.
 87. T F Our main form of entertainment is watching T.V. or listening to the radio.
 88. T F Family members believe that if you sin you will be punished.
 89. T F Dishes are usually done immediately after eating.
 90. T F You can't get away with much in our family.

APPENDIX G

Letter of Appreciation