THE PSYCHOSOCIAL FACTORS WHICH MAY INTENSIFY
THE ADOLESCENT FOSTER CHILD'S CONCERN ABOUT
HIS UNKNOWN NATURAL PARENTS

An Exploratory Study of Seven Adolescent
Wards of The Vancouver Children's Aid Society.

by

DONALD JOSEPH LUOTIG

Thesis submitted in Partial Fulfilment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
MASTER OF SOCIAL WORK
in the School of Social Work

Accepted as conforming to the standard
required for the degree of
Master of Social Work

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School of Social Work

1956

The University of British Columbia.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter 1. The Permanently Separated Foster Child and His Concern about His Own Natural Parents. A Social and Psychological Perspective.


Chapter 2. Factors which may Intensify the Adolescent Foster Child's Concern - A Review of the Literature.

Introduction. Basic Causative Factors. Immediate precipitating factors. An Analysis of the Factors.......................................................... 28

Chapter 3. A Description and Identification of the Factors in Seven Case Records.

Method of Selecting Case Records. Definition of Factors. The Incidence of Factors. Description of the Factors Suggested in Each Case Record. Summary of Findings........................................... 49

Chapter 4. Conclusions and Implications for Research and Social Work Help.

Restatement of the Focus. A Critique of the Research. Implications of the Findings for Research. The Social Worker's Role in Diagnosis and Treatment............. 82

Appendices:

Bibliography............................................................... 97

CHARTS IN THE TEXT

Figure 1 Relationships and Desirable Psychosocial Results for Child Development when the Family is considered as a Psychological Unit.

Figure II The Incidence of Contributing and Precipitating Factors which seem to Intensify the Adolescent Foster Child's Concern about his Unknown Natural Parents.
ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis is to make an exploratory study of the basic and immediate psychosocial factors which may intensify the concern which some adolescent foster children show about the natural parents from which they were permanently separated at an early age.

The study includes:

1. A brief description of how the child's concern may be intensified (a) by broad social factors which vary according to the cultural definition of the importance to the child of being reared by "biological" parents (b) by the problems of adolescence in this culture's family life.

2. A description of the intensifying factors derived from a review of relevant literature in the fields of social work, social psychology and psychiatry.

3. An identification and description of the factors in the cases of seven adolescent foster children who, according to two experienced social workers, showed intense concern about their unknown natural parents.

The review of the literature provided a tentative frame of reference for use in exploring the case records. Some factors which were described seemed related to the foster child's early developmental years, others seemed more related to the particular psychosocial problems of adolescence. Suggestions for further research and social work diagnosis were drawn from the study.

The concern of the adolescent foster child about his unknown natural parents seems related to his own particular life experiences. Careful study of the individual child should be made before the matter of telling the child about the parents is approached by the social worker. Further orientation of foster parents with regard to this problem seems indicated. Special treatment for certain children with pathological life experiences of which their concern about parents seems to be symptomatic is also suggested.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to express my sincere appreciation to Mrs. Helen Exner
and Mr. Adrian Marriage, members of the School of Social Work, The University
of British Columbia, for their invaluable guidance and encouragement in the
development of this thesis.

To Miss Hazel Miles and Mr. John Sanders of the Vancouver
Children's Aid Society goes my gratitude for their selection of the cases
studied and for valuable supplemental information. I also wish to thank
Miss Dorothy Coombe, Director of the Children's Aid Society for the
privilege of using case material and staff help. It is my hope that this
thesis will be a small contribution to the very valuable service which the
Children's Aid Society is giving to foster children, foster parents, and
natural parents.
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Chapter 1

The Permanently Separated Foster Child and His Concern about His Unknown Natural Parents - A Social and Psychological Perspective.

Introduction

Social workers in the field of child placement have long been aware of the problems of the foster child who in adolescence becomes concerned about the natural parents from whom he was separated at an early age. Some children seem only mildly curious about the facts of their origin and background; others are deeply interested and become so concerned about the subject that they start an intense search for their parents. Others appear so preoccupied about fantasies of their parents that they suffer from inability to function adequately in their social environment. To date little study has been done in this area of social work with foster children. This study proposes to explore the question: Why are some foster children more concerned about their unknown natural parents than others?

Definitions

In order to gain a broad perspective for the study certain basic definitions seem required. The "foster" child is a person who is not living with his biological parents. In most cases he is living with adults who are acting in a parental role although they are not related to him by kinship ties. Generally speaking, the foster child may be living with "institutional" parents, "boarding" parents, or "adoptive" parents. Institutional parents are generally those adults working in an institution who are in a position of authority in relation to the child. "Boarding" parents are generally those adults who care for a child (usually unrelated to them) in a family setting which is supervised by a public or private child placement
agency. In most cases the care of the child is subsidized by the agency, although in some the child works for his care or obtains his care free from the "boarding" parents. Agency supervision to ensure that the family setting meets the physical, emotional, and social needs of the growing child is the distinguishing feature of "boarding" home care. These parents are selected by the agency upon the basis of careful study predicated upon certain criteria of what good boarding parents should be like. "Adoption is the legal process by which the child of one pair of parents becomes the child of other parents." 1 "Adoptive" parents are those parents who act in a parental role to a child not theirs by birth when the responsibility for the child by his natural parents has been terminated permanently by court action and the adoptive parents and adopted child acquire all the responsibilities and privileges of the natural parent-child relationship through legal adoption. 2 The adoptive parents are responsible for maintenance of the child until he reaches legal maturity. The child usually takes the adoptive parents' surname. These adults are selected on the basis of their mutual desire for a child, and their physical, emotional, and economic readiness to give him love and opportunities for growth and development. 3

The child placement agency usually supervises the adoption home, to protect the welfare of the child and to ensure the feasibility of the adoption, during the "adoption probation" period. This is before the adoption has been finally legalized by the court, and usually amounts to a year. Supervision is terminated after the legal adoption takes place.

3 Loc. cit.
For the purposes of this study, the "foster" child will be considered as a person who has spent most of his childhood life with "boarding" parents under the supervision of a child placement agency. He may have resided for a time in an institution. He may also have been placed upon adoption probation. However, his main experience with parental persons has been with those who from day to day were in a parental position in a family setting but who were not his own in a biological or legal sense.

The Changing Philosophy of Foster Care

"Foster care denotes the type of care that is given to children who must be separated from their natural families. Social agencies provide it by placing children in institutions and in family homes at the request of parents or other responsible adults."¹

The reasons for separation of natural parents and child are many. They include: death of one or both parents, temporary or permanent incapability of the parents to rear the child by reasons of physical, intellectual, emotional, or social problems, unwillingness of the parents to rear the child, and a number of others. Sometimes the natural parents voluntarily decide that separation is necessary; sometimes the community through court action forces the parent-child separation in the interests of the child's welfare. Many separations take place privately without agency help. However, the trend is toward use of the social agency in these circumstances. "Agency-sponsored foster care is now considered essential for any child regardless of social and economic status, whose parents cannot provide an adequate home."²

This statement seems to have acceptance not only in the profession of social

² Ibid. p. 226
work itself, but in many other areas in the community.

Within the profession of social work the philosophy for using foster care as a means of social treatment has changed over the years. Social workers in the foster care fields are continuously rethinking its social usefulness in terms of the needs of children who cannot live with their own parents. Much of this thinking has centered around the specific usefulness of various types of foster care. It has been influenced by the accumulation and analysis of experience in the field of child placement in particular, and the broader field of professional social work as well. The contributions of students and workers in other disciplines in the human relations field (sociology, anthropology, psychology, law and psychiatry) has also had much influence, not only upon the broad field of social work, but the specific field of child placement.

The Problem of Permanent Parent-Child Separation

No problem faced by child welfare social workers seems to be fraught with so many complications as that of permanent parent-child separation. When is permanent parent-child separation indicated? What is the best approach to providing care for the permanently separated child? Many permanent separations are already accomplished facts through the parent's desertion or abandonment of the child. In those cases it is usually the second question which assumes major importance for the child welfare worker. However, in some instances the social worker must "appraise the capacity for parenthood" in order to decide whether it is in the best interests of the child to be permanently separated from his natural parents.

When is permanent parent-child separation indicated? This is no easy question to answer. Today it is answered by careful psychosocial diagnosis of the family situation. This was not always the case. In the
early days of social work in the child placement and protection field, many social workers answered the question on "moral" grounds. Some parents were not considered fit to rear their children on the sole basis that their behavior toward their children, or their behavior in general, was not considered suitable for the proper development of the child. Poor standards of physical and personal hygiene were often other factors in the light of which the social workers made such judgments. Economic factors loomed large. If the family was not thought able to support its children, or the parents did not think so themselves, separation was often effected. Often after separation was effected parents were discouraged from maintaining contact with their children in foster care and permanent separation resulted.¹

The whole question of parent child separation has been continuously evaluated by social workers over the years. One of the first principles which social workers formulated in regard to this problem was: "That a child shall be not separated from his parents for reasons of poverty alone."² In spite of this declaration of principle by the first gathering of social workers in the child welfare field in 1909, a little over two decades later in a similar conference, it was observed "large numbers of children still suffer, unrelieved in their own homes, or are separated from their homes because of poverty."³ The question of parental fitness or ability has likewise come in for revision in thinking on the part of social workers in this field. The matter of parental neglect of children has lost some of its "moral" judgment implications as social workers have refined their

philosophy and methods. Neglect is now considered to be caused by a matrix of social and psychological factors which impinge upon the particular parent-child relationship. Sometimes causes of neglect lie within the immediate social pressures of the environment. Other times these causes lie within the personalities of the parents themselves. More often than not, neglect is caused by an interaction of these factors.

Broad social welfare programs such as Mother's Allowance and Family Allowance in Canada and Aid to Dependent Children and Survivors Insurance in the United States, along with a network of other public assistance and insurance schemes, have tended to strengthen families economically and have worked to prevent parent-child separation for economic reasons alone. Likewise foster day care and children's nurseries have made it possible for many women who have lost their husbands to support their families by working, and this has made it possible for them to rear the children within the family circle.

Public Health programs, along with the advance of medical science, have increased human longevity and have made it possible for more children to grow up without losing their parents by reason of death. At the same time, the accelerated study of family living on the part of social workers with the new frame of reference provided by psychoanalytic theory has made it possible for social workers to understand better the dynamics of personality development and thereby to develop new techniques for diagnosing and treating family problems, and thus help prevent family breakdown, neglect situations, and parent-child separation. Although the problems of family breakdown are complex, social workers, practicing on the principle that the family is the primary societal institution and that it must be preserved, are using the skills of case work, group work and community
organisation to buttress and strengthen family living. In recent years
the social work principle of supporting family strengths and preventing
family breakdowns is having greater application in the child protection and
placement field. John Dula has stated this application clearly: "We
recognize that the best place for meeting a child's individual and emotional
needs is in the child's own home. A child's own home and family are the
natural medium in which normal social and personality development can be
best assured. We believe that a child's family should be assisted in every
way possible to meet his individual emotional and mental needs in his own
home."¹

Permanent Separation of the "Older Child"

Separation of the natural parent and the child has come to be seen
as a necessity when other methods of assistance to the child and parent in
their home have not proved fruitful. But must such separation be permanent
for the child who has lived for some years with one or both of his parents?
Social workers have observed: "the foster child old enough to have developed
strongly etched images of his own parents takes these with him to the foster
home where they continue to plague him, his foster parents and the worker."²
In other words as Henrietta Gordon has observed, physical separation does not
necessarily mean psychological separation. Where possible, a foster home is
now seen as a temporary form of care within a social treatment plan which has
as its goal the reunion of such children with their parents in their own
home. In such cases "the only way for such a child to turn to them (foster

Welfare Association of America, New York, April 1948, p. 130.
² Dorothy Hutchinson "The Placement Worker and the Child's Own Parents",
parents and worker), is for him to see that they like his parents, that they
think well of his parents, and that they act kindly about his parent's
mistakes.\(^1\) Visits of the natural parents to the child in the boarding home
are encouraged as part of the social treatment plan.

In other cases, however, permanent separation is indicated after
a skillful psychosocial diagnostic appraisal of the "capacity for parenthood"
has been made. Social workers have come to realise, according to Henrietta
Gordon, that the child can retain idealisations of "bad" parents which prevent
him from becoming attached to the foster parents emotionally. Such children
need casework help to separate themselves psychologically from their past
parent images so that they can form new ones. Often this involves allowing
the child to express the hidden hostility toward the parents which lies
underneath the idealisation of them and the acceptance of this hostility by
the worker.\(^2\) Furthermore the child needs to express his guilt over the
separation and have it receive acceptance. Recent studies of the effects
of separation upon the child have supplemented the worker's knowledge in this
area by establishing the fact that separation is often viewed by the child
as having been caused by him, regardless of the actual "facts" of the case.
In addition the child needs the acceptance of his regression, his temporary
"testing" of the new parents' love and acceptance of his guilt which he often
expresses by "bad behavior".

The philosophy of the use of various forms of foster care has also
been refined for the "permanently" separated child. Again the principle of
the child living with his "own parents and family group" is central. As

\(^1\) Dorothy Hutchinson "The Placement Worker and the Child's Own Parents",
Social Casework, July 1954, p. 295

\(^2\) Ibid., p. 296
Dorothy Hutchinson says:

"Adoption and foster care (boarding) supplement each other like twin hand maidens in a single program. They are like twin hand maidens designed to meet more completely the needs of all children to remain at home. Both assume that for a child to have parents of his own is his first right, if this is possible and wise... the more social workers can appraise the capacity for parenthood, the more they will know when there is no parenthood possible or desired, and the more foster care will assume a temporary nature with the expectation of speedier return of the child to his own home on the one hand, or adoption on the other. In either case, the child is taken off the psychological hook of insecurity. He can then grow up with parents of his or those made his own by adoption."

Permanent Separation for the Child too Young to have Parental Images

The aforementioned refinement of philosophy and practice in regard to permanent separation of the older child has relevancy in assessing the capacity for parenthood of those parents who come to the agency's attention before the child's birth or when the child is very young. It becomes of paramount importance in terms of the child's future life to assist those parents who do not have the capacity for parenthood to separate themselves physically and psychologically from the child in order to free him to form relationships with permanent parental figures. This philosophy has developed as it has been established that these basic ingredients are essential for the child's development in terms of his emotional health, parental love and acceptance of the child, continuity of parental figures in the child's life, and consistency in the parent-child relationship. Bowlby has observed that the lack of these ingredients for emotional health in the child's life often leads to the development of the delinquent and affectionless child.

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1 Dorothy Hutchinson, op. cit. p. 296.

a child moves frequently from one foster home to another he fails to receive these basic ingredients. Often the frequency of these moves is occasioned by unhealthy parental influence in a direct or indirect manner. Sometimes the neurotic parent moves the child from one home to another as an expression of his own insecurity. Sometimes the parent gives up the child "permanently" but retains hopes of reconciliation, thereby making the child's adoption into a permanent family impossible.

This new philosophy and knowledge has had special import in work with unmarried mothers. In the past efforts were made when possible to help the mother and child retain their ties. Often efforts were made to help the unmarried mother rear her child. Refinement of psychological understanding on the part of social workers has illuminated this problem. It is now held that many unmarried mothers do not have the capacity for parenthood. It has further been observed that the social problem involved in the mother's rearing her child are often so great that it is difficult for the mother to exercise the capacity for parenthood which exists. Thus efforts in many cases are made on the part of social workers to help the unmarried mother release her child so that it may grow up under more "normal" family conditions. This factor is of particular relevance since over half of all adopted children are illegitimate, as are many foster children.

In the past children permanently separated from their parents during infancy were placed often in foster boarding care on a permanent basis. It is now recognized that legal adoption provides a more secure family life for the child. Part of the increase in adoptions over the past ten years can be attributed to this changing philosophy. Refinement in social work skills of assessing the potentiality of prospective adoptive parents, liberalization of adoption laws, and increased public aid to adoption services have
gone together to give the child the security of adoption.

It is a matter directly related to the problem of this study that it has been assumed by many workers in the field that sound adoption practice makes it unnecessary for the child to be seriously concerned about the natural parents from whom he has been permanently separated. An application of this study to children who were adopted would hopefully tend to validate or invalidate this assumption.

This study concerns itself, however, with the very real problem of the child who is in permanent boarding foster care. In spite of the fact that adoption is considered the best way to meet the particular needs of the child permanently separated from infancy, many children for a variety of reasons cannot be given this service under existing conditions. Among the many reasons for this are scarcity of adoption homes for children of mixed racial background, scarcity of homes for children with serious physical handicaps and others. Permanent boarding care is usually considered the best form of foster care for these children. However, the fact that the agency supervises and pays for the child's care and the fact that the child usually has a different name from his foster parents tend, it would seem, to remind the child that the foster parents are not his "own" parents. These factors may tend to make him wonder about his natural parents.

Telling the adopted child about his natural parents and his adoption throughout his developmental years in terms that he can understand, has been formulated as the best means for helping the adopted child with any curiosity he may have about his natural parents. The philosophy regarding helping the permanent foster child with problems in this area has been spelled out to a far

less degree. Many children come to the workers in adolescence with intense concern about their natural parents. Some spend a great deal of time engaged in fantasy about their parents. Some children apparently are not concerned at all about their natural parents, except for mild curiosity about their background.

Literature on this subject is scarce. Apparently practice in helping the child and the foster parents with this concern varies a great deal. Questions of what to tell the child, when to tell him, and how to tell him about his natural parents are probably often not carefully thought out.

This study focuses on the psychosocial needs of the individual foster child as he faces this problem. It attempts to explore a way of formulating principles for psychosocial understanding and explanation which can be related to the individual foster child who is concerned about his natural parent from whom he has been separated at an age which precluded the possibilities of his forming etched images of them in his mind.

Why are some adolescent foster children intensely concerned about their natural parents?

In a broad sense, studies in cultural anthropology seem to indicate that the child's concern about his natural parents may vary in intensity according to the particular culture in which the child lives.

The Importance to the Child of being Reared by his Biological Parents may be a "Socially Defined Need".

The basic principle of child protection and placement work is that the family is the most beneficial environment for the growing child. Other factors being equal, the child's natural family is considered the most desirable

1 "Repression" must be taken into account here, as many children may be concerned but afraid to express it.
form of family life for him. If this is not possible, the next best substitute is family life by legal adoption. Foster boarding home care and institutional home care are not considered as completely desirable as the adoptive family because they do not give the child, as a general rule, the sense of "belonging" that the adoptive family does. In spite of the value of these forms of substitute family life for a particular child, in theory they would not be considered as beneficial as the child's biological family, if this were available for him.

Being reared by parents of one's own by birth may be what Margaret Mead calls a "socially defined need". "By a socially defined need, I mean the presence in the society of a special pattern of human relationships which the child can learn about and which he can feel is wanting (lacking) in his own case."¹

"These (needs) may be of different sorts, the society may teach the child that everyone should have a father and mother, or a nurse, or a governess, or a school teacher, or a sweetheart or a God. The dictated needs may be of the most diverse nature, but whatever they are, some children will respond to their presence by the building of imaginative structures. The invisible playmate, the fabulous parent, the imagined love experience are all familiar enough to us. But what is not always clearly recognised is that none of these are basic human needs."

If Mead's hypotheses of "socially defined needs" is followed out logically, the child's concern about his unknown natural parents is influenced by the following variables: (1) the cultural definition of the importance of biological parenthood, (2) the specific psychosocial factors in the child's environment which make him feel the lack of having lived with

biological parents.

Variations in Cultural Definition of the Importance of Being Reared by Biological Parents.

How important is it to the child to live with his natural parents? Does the importance vary from one culture to another? There is strong evidence that the significance of biological parenthood both to adults and children is a variable according to the cultural climate one lives in. This perhaps can be seen best by examining cultural attitudes toward adoption.

In his study of adoption practices among the Eskimos on Southampton Island, Morton Teicher has noted that the practice of adoption has yielded least to the white man's influence. Adopted children have the same rights and responsibilities as natural children. They are subject to the same incest taboos. They obtain full inheritance and in fact an older adopted child has precedence in inheritance over a younger natural child. The child knows from the beginning that he is adopted. A special suffix is added to his name to signify this. Yet he is considered a full member of the family. "As the child grows up his status as an adopted child has little effect upon his personality development. His treatment is the same as is the natural child's. He may or may not know his natural parents. He may or may not have anything to do with them. He certainly bears no resentment to his natural parents for giving him up for adoption."¹ Teicher states that over half the families on the island have adopted children in them. In fact nearly twenty-five per cent of the people on the island are adopted.

In her study of the Manus, Margaret Mead notes that adoption is accepted as rather commonplace. "The adopted child is considered to be far:

more his foster father's than his true father's. Does he not belong to his foster father's spirits? Many marry pregnant women who are widowed or separated from their husbands and when the children are born, welcome them as their own. The real father makes no claim upon his child born to a runaway wife. Although the whole village may know the true father of a child, they will never mention it unless pressed, and never to the child unless the child remembers his adoption. In the Manus, Mead points out, the child's relationship with its father is the strongest. The loneliest boys in one village were the ones whose fathers had died, and it was too late for their reabsorption into some other household. The fact that little emphasis was placed upon the "biological" parent is most interesting. As long as a child had a father it did not seem to matter whether it was his own by birth.

"In some cases it was possible to see a child's personality change under adoption. Yesa, Kapamalae's older brother was a quiet, abashed child of twelve when I came to the village. Like his younger brother he took his colour (personality) from his mild, unremarkable father. Shortly afterwards he was adopted by his father's younger brother, Paleao, one of the most interprising men in the village. Paleao had a small foster son Popoli, whom he had adopted as a baby from another tribe, and who showed a great resemblance now to him in every gesture. Yesa, the quiet, immediately took colour from the decisiveness of his new father; his real father became grandfather, relegated to unimportance, and his shoulders squared beneath his new prestige. But the correspondence was less marked always than if he had been adopted in babyhood."

In Oceania (The Andaman Islands) the exchange of children is considered fashionable.

"It is said to be of rare occurrence to find any child above six or seven years of age residing with its

1 Margaret Mead, Growing Up in New Guinea, p. 53
2 Ibid. p. 72
3 Ibid. p. 86.
parents, and this is because it is considered a compliment and also a mark of friendship for a married man, after paying a visit, to ask his hosts to allow him to adopt one of their children. The request is usually complied with, and thenceforth the child's home is with his (or her) foster father. Though the parents in their turn adopt the children of other friends, they nevertheless pay continual visits to their own child, and occasionally ask permission to take him (or her) away with them for a few days. A man is at liberty to please himself in the number of children he adopts, but he must treat them with kindness and consideration, and in every respect as his own sons and daughters, and they on their part render him filial affection and obedience. It not infrequently happens that in due course permission is asked to adopt a foster child by a friend of the foster father, and it is at once granted, without even the formality of a reference to the actual parents, who are merely informed of the change, in order that they may be enabled to pay their periodical visits."¹

Society defines adoption in the Banks Islands not so much as an obligatory courtesy but more in the nature of a compulsion.

"On the island of Mota, the child becomes the child of the man who pays the chief helper or midwife at birth. The father has protection in the fact that his sister chooses the midwife and that he is on the spot, but if he is absent or has not the necessary money, another may step in before him, and become the father of the child. The real father has the right to redeem the child but the adoptive family and its relatives make this difficult by assigning property to it, making gifts to it, and giving feasts for it, and the value of these must be paid also. Another payment is paid called 'name concealment' which obliges the father never to reveal the state of affairs to his son. This payment should properly be made when the child is grown up, but is sometimes made when the child is quite young to prevent the father from revealing the facts. Sometimes the parentage is revealed by some third party, usually in a quarrel, and it is said that no Nota man is ever wholly free from doubt as to his real parentage."²

From the child's point of view, a major factor contributing to this concern about natural parenthood in a given culture may be whether it is

² Ibid., p. 111
"the central tendency" (to use Mead's term) for the biological parents to rear their children. Mead estimates that twenty-five per cent of the children are adopted in the Hanus society. Teicher indicates that the same is true for the Eskimos on Southampton Island. The ratio of foster and adopted children in this culture to those living with their own parents if considerably less than that. All sociologists studying the modern Northern American middle class family point to the central tendency of the mother-father-child type of family which has its base in the procreation function. While parenthood is not a mere biological fact, as Malinowski says "social and cultural influences always endorse and emphasize the original individuality of the biological fact... (and) statistically speaking, the biological ties are almost invariably reinforced, redetermined, and remolded by the cultural ones, and thus the essence of human parenthood is that through building of strong emotional attitudes on biological foundations, it endures and it leads to the establishment of lifelong social relationships of mutual obligation and service." The biological ties do seem to be more emphasized where the central tendency is that natural parents in most circumstances rear their own children, as in this culture.

Evidence of this exists in the social worker's experience with prospective adoptive parents. Ruth Michaels has observed: "The inability to produce a normal/for whatever reasons is a tremendous blow to anyone, however stable and mature. Infertility in the male threatens his sense of potency, and in the female disturbs her sense of adequacy as a woman." Other social

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workers in the field of adoption also have observed this concern about biological parenthood in prospective adoptive applicants.

The Family in North American Culture

In its broadest outline the family may be defined as "some set of permanent arrangements by which males assist females in caring for children while they are young."1 Relationships within the family vary widely from culture to culture with varying effects on the personalities of both parents and children. The functions of the family are also variables according to the particular cultural milieu. "In traditional China the role and scope of the individual was defined almost exclusively by the family, while in some tribal groups the influence of the immediate blood kin appears scarcely greater than that of other individuals in the community."2


Redfield defines the modern American family thus: "The American family - parents and children - appears on the surface as a simple conjugal type (father, mother, children - structure) with no important or formal connections with remoter kin... and no intricate economic ties. It is a small compact group of two generations, bound together by ties of affection and functioning to care for the young until they reach the years of maturity and can repeat for themselves the process of family rearing."3 Burgess finds the modern type of family which permits freedom to the individual is

1 Margaret Mead, Male and Female, The New American Library of World Literature, Inc., New York, 1955, p. 188.
"dynamic, adaptable, and creative - characteristics suited for survival and growth in a society in process of rapid social change.

The Psychological Significance of Individual Family Members to the Particular Child.

According to Josselyn the significance of the members of the family in the child's maturation process can be described as follows:

The newborn baby through his physio-emotional symbiosis with the mother, experiences a sense of well being and/or frustration which determines how sage he feels in starting on the long road to adaptation to the external world. In the framework of this early security, firm or as precarious as it may be, he gradually learns to master his external world as well as his own internal impulses. He learns to deal with his ambivalent feelings toward the primary members of the family, and in so doing experiences all the gratifications and dangers inherent in his ambivalent responses. He experiences the conflicts of the Oedipal period and finds a solution that does not completely destroy the significance of his primary relationships. He gradually finds gratification for his emotional needs in his relationship with persons outside the family, but hopefully he preserves a feeling of basic security in the interpersonal relationships of the broader family group. He struggles with his adolescent conflicts and he attempts to establish himself as an independent adult. He rebels against the bonds that hold him to his primary infantile love objects (parents), hopefully with the knowledge that while those bonds are weakened, they cannot be broken. He reaches adulthood to find that those bonds are no longer something to struggle against, but are part of his cultural heritage and will determine to some extent his own ability to become the nucleus of a new family."

Specific requirements and their desirable outcomes have been listed from Josselyn's exposition.

### Figure 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age-Period</th>
<th>Family Person(s)</th>
<th>Required Relationship</th>
<th>Psychosocial Outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Infancy</td>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>Meeting physical needs and love</td>
<td>Safety for relinquishments of dependence on mother to more mature dependence on family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training period</td>
<td>Mother (others)</td>
<td>Same as above but giving some approval of independence of self within family framework of patterns of behavior</td>
<td>Child learns independence comes by accepting basic parental patterns of behavior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oedipal</td>
<td>Mother (Father)</td>
<td>Love and acceptance underpinning reality of sexual roles in family</td>
<td>Child's acceptance of sexual role of parent of same sex socially but repression of sexual rivalry with that person for parent of opposite sex</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Siblings</td>
<td></td>
<td>Some rivalry but basic love</td>
<td>Child learns that he has limits as well as possibilities for relationship with peers. Later transferred to peer group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Unit as a whole</td>
<td>Asexual family love</td>
<td>Desexualization of primary relationship with parents by giving the child a sense that he will become the nucleus of a future family</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latency</td>
<td>One-to-one</td>
<td>Continued social patterns</td>
<td>Adaptation to social group outside family unit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Family unit</td>
<td>Total family security</td>
<td>Haven in time of stress or difficulty - recharges his ability to get along in outside world</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 Josselyn, Ibid. p. 340-41

Relationships and Desirable Psychosocial Results for Child Development when the Family is considered as a Psychological Unit.
The Psychological Role of the Father in the Family

According to Dr. Spurgeon O. English the variants of the father's role in the development of the child are as follows:

1. Companion and inspiration for mother.
2. Awakener of the emotional potentialities for the child.
3. Beloved friend and teacher of the child.
4. Ego ideal for masculine love, ethics, and morality.
5. Model for social and vocational behavior.
7. Protector, mentor and hero of the grade school child.
8. Counsellor and friend for the adolescent.

The Psychological Role of the Mother in the Family

Much has been written about the importance of the mother's role in the physical and emotional development of the child -- her role in the gratification of the child's need for love and affection, and of good physical care during the first year of life; of patience and guidance and continued loving care, especially throughout the first five years of life. The mother is actually the center of American family life inasmuch as she spends the greatest amount of time in the home and carried on the greatest number of immediate family functions. Her personality forms a pattern for the ego ideal of feminine love with which the daughter can identify and with which the son can choose as a basis for his future choice of a feminine mate. In a broader sense the mother forms the symbolic basis for family life. "The family thus retains throughout life the symbolic meanings of the mother; it becomes a token of security but free of the limiting bonds of the intimate mother-child relationship."^2

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^2 Josselyn, op. cit., p. 339
Roles of Family Members in a Changing Society

Benedek has described the change that is occurring in relationship to the man's economic and authoritative role in family life in this culture. In the past the father was the acknowledged head of the household as well as its economic center. Today he is absent from the home during most of its waking hours. Increasing importance is being placed in the mother-child relationship in the child's ideal development, particularly in the early years of life. These factors seem to place the father in a position of secondary importance. As Josselyn says, he is in danger of becoming the "forgotten man". Furthermore, the father's economic role is becoming less well-defined as many jobs take on an abstract character. This must be particularly difficult for the sons in the family who in the past derived from the father a pattern of economic functioning.

The mother's role in the family activity has been changed by a world of gadgets, by increased day nursery facilities, by the removal of her educational role to that of the public school, and by increased emphasis on her capability of functioning economically, and politically as readily as a man. While these factors seem to work toward removing many of the traditional family activities from the mother, increased emphasis has been laid in popularized versions of scientific studies on the importance of the mother-child relationship to child development. Mead, among other students, has pointed out these factors make for confusion to the growing child who is trying to obtain patterns for adult living from his mother and father.

The Importance of Family Membership.

Josselyn emphasizes the importance of family membership to the

child. She says: "the child appears not only to want the love of the person toward whom his ambivalent feelings are directed, but also acceptance in the family unit."¹ This seems to correspond to the need for "belonging" which is something most persons understand but find hard to define.

Redfield points out that family life "derives its strength from a sense of standing together as a group struggling against difficulties, of standing for something. More fundamental than mutual participation is the need for sharing a common goal."² It would appear that the feeling of membership in the family as far as the child is concerned not only pertains to acceptance within the family group but an identification with the family group as a unit of importance in relation to other families in the community, and to the community as a whole.

The participation of family members in mutually important projects such as economic maintenance is disappearing from the family scene, with the gradual change of centers of economic activity from the family itself to the broader community - brought about by industrial development. The mutual goals of family life also seem less defined than formerly. It has always been the function of the older generation to transmit basic principles of conduct to the younger generation. This used to be one of the important goals of family life. Today, however, many students have noted that parents are often unsure of just what they do stand for and just what they do want from life. Rapid social change in a democracy, and industrial and technological changes, seem to be the mainsprings in this confusion. Values and goals seem to be in flux as is living itself.

¹ Irene M. Josselyn, "The Family as a Psychological Unit", Social Casework, October, 1953, p. 339
² Redfield, "The American Family: Consensus and Freedom", Sourcebook of Marriage and the Family, p. 19
The Problems of the Adolescent and his Parents in this Culture

Adolescence in this culture is a confusing period of life in which, along with a resurgence of sexual urges, largely dormant during the latency period, and changes in physical appearance, the adolescent faces the confusion of finding his place in the world outside the family and defining future social roles. In primitive societies the problems of adolescence are not so complex. The relatively well defined functions of male and female adult roles help the adolescent face adult life with certainty. Furthermore the period of adolescence is not so long in primitive society as in this culture. Puberty rites mark the beginning of adulthood for the child with considerable clarity. In this culture, however, as has already been indicated, the problem of defining present and future roles is somewhat more complex. The adolescent does not know what to expect in planning for adulthood because the adult female and male roles are less well defined. However, the adolescent is pushed to adulthood by the resurgence of his sexual drives and the strong cultural pressure which makes marriage and parenthood incumbent upon him.

The result of this confusion is that the adolescent is torn between wanting to be a child and wanting to be a grown-up. Adulthood is pressed upon him and yet it is too frightening because of its confusion. He regresses to more childish forms of dependent behavior. At times he seeks to be almost totally dependent upon his parents. At other times parents are afraid of his emancipation, and he wants to be almost totally independent from them. This conflict produces insecurity which often leads to the expression of the conflict in hostility toward the parents on the one hand, or withdrawal into fantasy worlds on the other. At times the adolescent may wish that he had a different set of parents, a more "giving" set as in
infancy, or ones who will "give" only admiration and complete freedom.

Students in the fields of psychiatry and psychology, since the
time of Freud, have observed that a child living with his natural parents
often has at various stages of development two pairs of parents in his
mind. In a short article "Family Romances" (1909) Freud describes a
special type of fantasy occurring with most children of preadolescent age.
In these daydreams they try to get rid of their own parents, whom they have
learned to criticize, and substitute for them, as a rule, other parents on
a much higher social level, dukes, kings and queens, heroes or millionaires-
depending upon what the children have read or heard. Freud explains how
aggressive criticism and feelings of revenge develop in children toward
parents who have punished them for mistakes and sexual behavior but who turn
out to be far from perfect, and who indulge in sexual pleasure themselves.
The fantasy figures show more or less distinctly traits of the real parents-
and it becomes clear that the children do not eliminate their own parents in
their fantasies but rather exalt them. These daydreams, Freud concludes,
are the expression of the children's longing for the lost happy period of
their lives when father appeared as the most powerful of all men and mother
as the most beautiful and lovable of all women. The overestimation of
parents at a very early age is reproduced in the children's fantasies.

Harry Stack Sullivan has also observed this and from his remarks
it seems that the dichotomy may go back to infancy in the child's person-
ality development. He says:

"Thanks in no small part to the incredible power
which verbal behavior seems to exercise in interpersonal
situations, and to the great energy devoted by nature
people around the very young child to equip him with the
most important of all human tools, language, it becomes
quite impossible for the child to carry forward any
striking surviving evidence of his earliest impressions
of two mothers - one which gives tenderness and co-operation
in the satisfaction of needs and one who carries anxiety and interferes with the satisfaction of needs. Although this dichotomy pertaining to one real person can go on at the lower strata, you might say, of personality, it can scarcely survive very long the high-pressure acculturation which makes one person "mamma" and the other person, sister... Thus no matter how thoroughly organized the two separate personifications of the good mother and the bad mother were, their individuality is lost or fused in a later personification, in the process of learning language. But this fusion is not to be taken as comprehensive. In other words, all attributes organized in infancy in their personification in the bad mother are not necessarily or probably present in the personification of mother as it begins to be conspicuous in childhood. And it can scarcely be possible under any circumstances that all the attributes of the good mother can be fused into the childhood personifications of mother. Under certain circumstances we see evidence which makes this statement practically beyond doubt; that is, in later life the person seeks, and can quite clearly be proved to be seeking, someone who will fit fairly closely to the personification of good mother, in aspects which are not shown in the personification of the real mother."1

Dr. Florence Clothier has observed that this is a special problem for the separated child. She says that all children tend to fantasy about having other parents who would treat them better than the ones with whom they live. For the natural child this can be a game, but for the adopted child, the fact that he has had other parents is a reality. He has been forsaken by his real parents about whom he knows nothing. He finds an easy escape from the frustrations inherent in his home education by assuming the attitude that these, his foster parents are bad and wicked. His own parents (or possibly previous foster parents) from whom he was "stolen" are represented in fantasy as good parents to whom he owes love and allegiance.2 Kohlsaat and Johnson make the same point.3

Assumptions, Objectives and Methods of the Study

It has been postulated in this study that the concern about the natural parents is not something which can be explained in biological terms. There probably is no mysterious biological connection between natural parents and their children. Rather, as Mead points out, concern about the natural parents may be seen from the child's point of view in a broad sense as resulting from a need defined by the culture in which the child lives. Studies of adoption practices among primitive peoples support this view by indicating that children are separated from their parents moved from one set of adoptive parents to another with no apparent feeling of loss. In North American Family life where the goal in life is parenthood within the confines of marriage and where the predominant practice is for biological parents to rear their children, it would seem that the need from the child's point of view for being reared by the natural parents may be greater than in other cultures. Conversely, the child who does not have the experience of being reared by natural parents may have, under certain circumstances, a feeling of great personal loss on account of this circumstance. What factors seem to define a child's feeling of loss or concern for not having been reared by his natural parents? An attempt to answer this question is the central focus of the study.

In order to answer this question it is necessary to formulate a conceptual framework for studying those factors in the permanently separated foster child's immediate environment which seem to define his concern about his natural parents. It is assumed that the adolescent foster child looks out at the world generally in much the same way as other adolescents in a general sense. He is torn between the need to be dependent upon adult figures and the need to establish his own independence of
psychosocial functioning. Occasionally, like all children, he may fantasy about ideal parents in his anger and disappointment at the people who function in the real parental role. Certain adolescent foster children seem intensely preoccupied with a set of parents whom they do not know. What particular combination of factors intensifies this interest in "unreal" parents?

The first phase of the research will attempt to draw from a study of pertinent literature in the fields of social psychology, psychiatry, and social work, those factors which seem to intensify the adolescent foster child's concern about his unknown natural parents. These factors will be listed in a schedule which will provide a conceptual framework for a study of the incidence of the factors in selected case records of adolescents, who show intense concern about their unknown natural parents.

The second phase of the research will be an application of the framework to the case records. If the factors in the schedule can be identified in the case records it will be assumed that the purpose of the study will have been accomplished, namely, the formulation of a conceptual framework with which to view the factors which seem to intensify the adolescent foster child's concern about his natural parents.
Chapter 2.

Factors which may intensify The Adolescent Foster Child's Concern - A Review of the Literature.

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to review relevant literature from the fields of social work, psychiatry and social psychology which has dealt with the separated foster child's concern about his unknown parent. Although the literature is sparse on the subject, it can be divided into the following rough categories: (1) expository material based on general field experience (2) expository material based upon clinical study of specific cases. It is possible that some of the literature has been overlooked by the writer inasmuch as no library study in this area appears to have been printed, and for that matter, no bibliography appears to have been collected.

The literature was reviewed with the object of selecting: (1) basic causative factors in the child's concern about his unknown parents (2) precipitating factors in the child's concern. Many of the factors had to be inferred from the literature inasmuch as it was found in many cases to be too vague and generalized.

Basic Causative Factors.

For purposes of the study, the writer decided that a basic contributing factor could be viewed from the standpoint of historical causation. In other words, the writer looked for those factors previous to adolescence which might have a relationship to the child's concern about his natural parents. Precipitating factors on the other hand would be those in the immediate daily environment which would lead to the adolescent's being concerned about his own parents.
1. Separation Trauma in Infancy as a causative Factor.

One student of the subject, in an analysis of the concern of a six year old adopted child for his unknown parents advanced the theory that the main cause of the child's concern was "archaic trauma" i.e., a hurtful separation experience in the first six months of life.¹

The case presented was that of Carl, a German war refugee who had been kidnapped from his parents by the Nazis during the first few months of his life, near the end of World War II. He was placed in an institution where he and the other children received extremely poor care. Many of the infants died. After the war, at the age of a year and a half, Carl was placed in a United Nation's Children's Center. After a stay in the children's center of about a year, when Carl was two and a half, he was sent to the United States for adoption. The adoptive parents were carefully chosen and seemed to be sensitive to the child's needs. At the age of three he was told he was adopted and ostensibly accepted this quite well. However, as time went on, he became more and more concerned about who his natural parents were, why they could not keep him, and so on. Although Carl was aided through close psychiatric consultation in working out his concern about his own parents, after a year and a half of intensive work of this kind by both the psychiatric consultant and the adoptive mother, much of Carl's concern remained. He refused to believe that his parents were dead and expressed this concern in many ways, in fantasy and in anti-social behaviour. Although well-adjusted in school and apparently happy in most areas of living, Carl still could not accept the facts of his separation. Dr. Rene Spitz in commenting on the case advanced the following theory:

¹ Rene Spitz "Discussion of the Working Through Process in Dealing with Anxiety around Adoption" by Marion Barnes, Journal of Orthopsychiatry, July, 1953, pp. 605–620.
"I believe that the symptoms described by Miss Barnes (concern about natural parents) should be viewed as a secondary elaboration built upon the original trauma which had as a basic pattern the kidnapping from home. As the result of this basic pattern any kind of change in situation repeats the signal of insecurity, provokes the expectation that terrible things are going to happen. The change is situational one and can refer indiscriminately to persons, objects, houses and localities. Any change in Carl's physical environment or in his emotional environment will act as a trigger to produce symptoms that reenact the feeling of disorientation which he experienced on the occasion of the first trauma. It will produce something analogous to the 'catastrophe reaction' described by Kurt Goldstein in the brain injured. But according to his more advanced age, Carl now refers his anxiety to the person who left him or who is leaving him, or whom he is leaving, to the house to which he moves, to the locality to which he changes. Security for Carl has come to mean an unchanging static, total environment."

Spitz' theory is that if an infant is separated from the mothering-one in infancy (the first six months) before the ego is differentiated, the infant organism experiences "total" conditioned shock which is devastating because conditioning is the basic way of life at this time. This produces a situation of complete disorientation for the child. The fear of such an experience recurring is so great that the child cannot stand change lest the shock reoccur. The concern about the natural parents is a symbolic expression of the original hurtful experience.

Solomon has said, in explaining the dynamics of this kind of experience, that it is analogous to what happens in the personality when an adult falls off a horse or is hurt in an aeroplane. If the person does not go back up in an aeroplane, for example, he may build up too many fantasies of the incident. "Similarly, the child who has been exposed to traumatic situations in his real life builds up fantasies more terrifying than the original trauma because of the condensation of previous trauma and

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1 Loc. cit. p 620.
the elaborations which take place as characteristic of the child. This may be an attempt upon the part of the organism to repair the damage of the trauma, but often it serves to intensify or amplify the trauma. Whether fantasy about the parent is an attempt to repair the damage of trauma of separation, or whether it is a reaction triggered by situations similar to the trauma is an interesting point for speculation. The major point is that fantasy about the natural parents, according to these writers, is directly connected with the original hurtful experience in infancy. The assumption would be that a child, moved directly from the hospital where he was born, shortly after birth to an adoptive or boarding mother where he received love and care necessary for healthy emotional growth, would not have as much occasion to fantasy about his natural parents as the child who was taken from its mother and placed in circumstances where its psychological life was in danger. In contrast, Carl remained in physical danger for a year and a half, and without any individual adult relationship for two and a half years, with only a few months of individual care.

Lack of Continuity in Parental Figures.

In essence this factor is closely related to the previous one. It may be defined as lack of experience on the part of the child in having consistent relationships with the same adult figures and in having a reasonable semblance of order and continuity in those relationships. In a study of forty adolescent foster children who were concerned about their own parents but who had no ties in reality with them, Stone found "that almost all the children had been in some kind of placement before they became known to the agency and many of them had a number of placements after service

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by the agency was initiated. Such a child is definitely an anxious child. We see in him the child who cannot relate to and make constructive use of the social treatment offered by the agency. Thus he moves from foster-home to foster-home and thereby increases and deepens the vicious cycle by which his life is already characterized.¹

Levy describes these persons in later life as ones

"Whose social life represents a series of relationships with older people, every one of whom is a substitute mother. They may be single, or in combination, the point being that the patient must, throughout life, be in contact with a person from whom the same demands are made as those that were thwarted in the original experience with the mother. The life pattern then becomes dependent upon making such relationships."²

This is the person similar to the one Sullivan describes as seeking after the good mother. (See Chapter 1). As Anna Freud says, "repeated rejection by separation intensifies the process of deterioration (of ability to form relationships) and produces persons who are dissatisfied, shallow, and worst of all, promiscuous in their relationships."³ Here again the concern about the natural parents may be interpreted not as concern about the specific parents per se, but as symbol of the basic anxiety in the individual.

Continuity in Parental Figures but Basic Rejection by Them.

It would appear that even though the child has had continuity in parental relationships, he might be concerned about his natural parents by reason of the foster parents' rejection of him. Rejection may be viewed as

a form of psychological separation which has similar effects upon the personality as physical separation. Every child experiences a certain amount of rejection in his life, as when a new child comes into the home. What is referred to here is basic lack of acceptance of the child upon the part of the foster parent even when he continues to keep the child in the home. According to Anna Freud, rejection is experienced by the child when there is a basic lack of willingness upon the part of the parents to take care of the child, by physical separation of parents and child, by abnormality of the mother (refusal to let the child grow - overprotectiveness) and by inconstancy of feeling (alternation of rejection and acceptance of the child on the part of the parent-ambivalence).1

That this may be a factor in the child's concern about his unknown parents is inferred from Grace Hutchinson's observations which she made after several children who were concerned about their natural parents were interviewed. She observed that the interest in the parents was not so intense in those children who seemed to have made a good foster parent-child relationship adjustment.2 However, the literature is not very clear on actual evidence of this point. In a study made by Eppich and Jenkins of the experience of 38 sets of adoptive parents in telling the adopted children about their background, it was found that very few of these adopted children asked any questions about their natural parents. In many instances the adoptive parents did not fully accept the adoptive child. However, in one case cited in the study, that of an eight and a half year old boy who asked persistent questions about his adoption, the writers raised the question of rejection in connection with a child's concern about his own parents. They

1 Anna Freud, loc. cit.
commented: "I think that Mr. Gray would like Jim to feel grateful to the family for adopting him. He will not introduce even the slightest bit of history to ease any of the inferiority Jim may be feeling, although the history is good. Mr. Gray is a rather insecure person himself and has a great need to be dominant. Jim seems a threat to him and I think that Mr. Gray feels as long as Jim is insecure about his background he will not be more of a threat."

Stone observes that in a good adoptive home where there is a good relationship between parents and children "the knowledge about his (the child's) natural background in later years can be assimilated with a minimum of anxiety or trauma." Kohlsaat and Johnson make the point that poor parent-child relationships may be a factor in the child's concern about his own parents. "Most children, when momentarily angry wish they had a different set of parents. Adopted children, likewise, remain bound to fantasies of how wonderful their own parents might have been only when the adoptive parents neurotically drive them to such a pitch."

Florence Clothier has said: "If a child's identification with his adoptive parents is complete he will have no need to search for his own true parents. If his identification with his family is incomplete, he will repeatedly return to fantasy about his natural parents."

It would seem a logical inference that if separation trauma and repeated separation experiences (forms of rejection) tend to increase the foster child's concern about his natural parents, then other forms of

2 Stone, op. cit. p. 144.
rejection might also do this.

Negative Attitudes on the Part of Foster Parents Toward the Child's Own Parents.

This factor is closely related to the previous one. It is probable that the "rejecting" foster parent would also have negative attitudes toward the child's real parents. Kohlsaat and Johnson uphold the view that: "because of the possibility of neurotic character traits in the adoptive parents, they and the child must be protected by keeping them from any knowledge about the child's background which they can use as a cudgel."¹

One example of this fact was cited which serves to describe the basis for their thinking:

"As we know, some people who cannot produce children, whether or not demonstrable organic disease is present, have deep neurotic feelings of inferiority about femininity and masculinity. Such people, therefore, may be hostilely envious of those who can bear children. It is not surprising then that an adoptive mother may be hostilely envious of the baby's natural mother, whether the natural mother was married or not. This conclusion seems elementary to anyone who spends a moment thinking about it. It is not difficult to anticipate that the adoptive mother's hostile envy would come easily to the surface on provocation by the child and, with it, a wish to depreciate the woman who could bear a child. Ten year old Anne, say, becomes angry over some issue and says to the adoptive mother, "You are mean to me. My own mother would have loved me more. I wish I had my own mother." Here is a tailor-made opportunity for the envious woman, in word or tone, to depreciate the child's natural mother."²

Another mainspring of the parent's negative attitudes toward the child's own parents may be through social disapproval of the parent's behaviour, such as illegitimate parenthood. Johnson and Kohlsaat cite the

¹ Kohlsaat and Johnson, op. cit. p. 92.
adoptive mother who tells of her fantasy that the child may get into sexual trouble because of heredity. Stone also points out this possibility.

It is interesting to note in connection with the attitudes of the foster parents toward the behavior of the real parents that none of the thirty-eight pairs of parents in Eppich's and Jenkins' study felt comfortable about the child's illegitimacy and about telling the child about it. Yet apparently none of them depreciated the child's background. On the other hand, "those who were glad their child was a foundling were usually the most insecure." This seems to imply that the persons who accepted the child's parents least, by not wanting to know about the child's natural parents, were also the people who had the most personality problems. This would seem to indicate that the foster parents' attitude toward the natural parents is closely related to their own ability to accept the child fully.

Concealment of Information about the Natural Parents from the Child.

Jalowics has pointed out that strong feelings of conflict may be present in the child and that "the strength and influence of these feelings are increased by their concealment." The theory here would be that concealment of information may intensify fantasy around the subject. A comparable thing takes place often when the facts about sex are concealed from the child. His lack of information tends to make him wonder and

1. Ibid.
3. Eppich and Jenkins, op. cit. p. 128.
fantasy more about sex.

The mainsprings of concealment might lie in the foster parents' rejection of the child and his natural parents. It might lie more in the area of the foster parent's feelings about sex as observed by Eppich and Jenkins: "The adoptive parents who were able to give the most history to their children were also the families who discussed sex information with them most fully."

Another factor may be the fact that the adoptive parents actually come to feel that the children are their own: "Almost all adoptive parents are threatened by the idea of including the natural parents in their own thoughts and in the child's life. To them the life of their child actually begins at the time of placement into their family. Emotionally, they have given birth to the child they have wanted and waited for. As time goes by and acceptance of his intensifies, this emotional birth may also seem to them a physical one, to fulfill their inner wishes that he be a product of them." That this factor is not as operative in the boarding parents' situation is obvious. While many of them may want to make the child their own, the worker and the agency are too much in the picture to ever allow them to feel the same as an adoptive parent.

Whether or not concealment by itself makes for greater concern on the part of the child about his natural parents does not seem to be indicated in the study by Appich and Jenkins. The Attitudes toward telling the children ranged from almost complete history telling from the beginning on the one extreme to complete concealment on the other hand. These students found that: "In general the adopted children reported on in this study did not

2. Ibid, p. 125.
spontaneously seek out information about their backgrounds or the details of their adoptions. There was not, contrary to expectations, much natural questioning on the part of the child. There was no series of question which the parent, the worker, or anyone could anticipate as the child grew in perception and understanding. There were no set age levels at which certain children asked certain questions. Very few of these adopted children asked any questions about their backgrounds...they did not take advantage of the situations that a few adoptive parents created to enable them to ask for information. One boy was told that he could look at the adoption papers but refused to take advantage of the opportunity.¹

Concealment of information about the natural parents may have more intensifying effects on the foster child's concern inasmuch as the worker frequently visits the child and the child's surname is usually different from that of the foster parents. The adopted child conceivably could never know of his adoption if he lived in a community where no one knew of his adoption and his adoptive parents failed to tell him about it. The foster child, because of the factors mentioned above probably knows in a general sense during his early years that he is not the natural child of his foster parents. Failure on the part of the foster parents to tell him about his status may, therefore, lead him to wonder about his "difference" in status. As in the case of sexual fantasy, mentioned earlier, he would then be apt to build up a structure of fantasy around this difference. As Symonds has noted, the child tends to elaborate in fantasy ideas and feelings which he does not have the opportunity to face in reality. Concealment, therefore, is devastating because there can be only partial concealment at best. Usually in adolescence the foster or adopted child will learn of his "difference" and

¹  Eppich and Jenkins, ibid, pp. 122-125.
the degree to which this is disturbing to him often varies with the degree of concealment of information about his natural parents and difference in status which he experienced in early years. This will be discussed more fully under precipitating factors.

**Extreme of "Colour Difference" Between Foster Parents and Foster Child.**

Eppich and Jenkins have pointed out: "If a good matching job is done (between adoptive parents and adopted child) the child will not need to feel either inferior or superior to the family group in which he is placed." By inference, the writer understands that this means that a child should be as similar as possible in terms of physical appearance, and general intelligence to the adoptive parents. The grossest "difference" would be an extreme variation in racial background. As yet little is known as to how this variation affects the foster child. Very rarely do adoptions take place between parents and children of different racial backgrounds. In foster care programs, because of the scarcity of adoption homes for children of particular racial groups, it is often necessary to place children in foster families' homes where the racial background of the child is different from that of the foster parents. These placements are still in the stage of experimentation and little is known as to the effects they have on the personality of the children. Probably the effects vary as to the degree of racial prejudice which exists in different communities.

None of the writers studied have brought this subject into the open. It might be true that, if the child's physical appearance differs significantly from that of the foster parents that he would tend to wonder about his background and need reassurance and acceptance on the part of the adults in regard

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1. Eppich and Jenkins, ibid. p. 127.
to his origin. This writer feels that this may be a significant intensifying factor in the child's concern about his natural parents and should be included as a causative factor.

Precipitating Factors in the Child's Concern about his Unknown Parents.

A precipitating factor in the child's concern about his unknown biological parents may be defined as any factor in the child's inner or outer world which seemed to be the immediate reason for his asking about his unknown parents.

1. Separation Experience as Precipitating Factor.

The fact that a child's concern about his parents might be intensified by a separation experience in the child's outer world has been noted by Barnes. Returning to the case of Carl mentioned earlier it is recalled that this factor seemed to be a trigger which recalled to Carl the original hurtful experience. According to Barnes, "There has not been a single instance, when one or both of the parents have gone out for the evening, that has not been accompanied by expressions of anxiety, although Carl has been prepared in advance and assured of their return. His fear of their possible loss has been interpreted to him many times, but the original traumata have been of such painful nature that his anxiety is still in the process of being worked through."¹ According to Barnes, Carl was not only anxious about separation from people, but from familiar places: "Each year, when the family move from their winter home to their summer home, Carl is most uneasy, although he knows that the parents and their dogs all go together and return together."² This separation experience has been interpreted by

² Ibid.
Spitz as a "signal of insecurity which provokes the expectation that terrible things are going to happen."\(^1\)

It is likely that a certain amount of separation anxiety exists in the inner world of all adolescents. This may be directly referred to the need for the adolescent to emancipate himself from his parents. In an analysis of the fantasies of forty "normal" adolescent boys and girls through the use of the picture-story projection test, Symmonds discovered that relatively few themes occur with high frequency in adolescent fantasy. Among them are themes related to family, aggression, punishment, economic concern, separation and love, in that order.\(^2\) This writer does not know how valid the methods of testing and correlation of themes were in this study; however, it is of note that separation themes correlated most positively with themes of parent figures and family. Several of the children in the study, however, had been separated from their parents at an early age: therefore, it is not known, in this writer's opinion how much fear of separation exists in the "Normal" adolescent. It would seem safe to assume, however, the adolescent is torn by the desire to separate from the parental figures on the one hand and to be more dependent upon them on the other hand. A separation experience may then intensify a fear of separation which as a common denominator in the adolescent's personality and in relation to the specific adolescent foster child may reactivate the child's earlier separation fears which could be referred in a secondary way to his parents who abandoned him. On the other hand the separation fear in the adolescent's personality might be a causative factor in leading to reactivation of an earlier, repressed fear, and thus lead to behaviour which would result in separation from foster parents. Kurt Lewin has hypothesized that such inner conflict might lead to

\(^1\) Spitz, op. cit., p. 619.

\(^2\) Symonds, Percival, Adolescent Fantasy, Columbia University Press, New York, 1949
"on the one hand, increased uncertainty of behaviour and conflicts, and on the other hand, to the aggressiveness of some of the adolescent reactions."\(^1\)

2. **Prior Concealment of Knowledge about Natural Parents and Sudden Revelation in Adolescence.**

Eda Houwink cites a case which illustrates this factor. A boy had been adopted from birth. In most ways the writer felt that his adjustment had been normal. However, he did have some conflict about separation from the adoptive parents and going out on his own. The adoptive parents on the other hand were in conflict about whether to tell him about his adoption. When the child was eighteen, they went to a local clergyman to ask his advice about when to tell the child and he advised them to wait until the boy was about to be married. In an argument with the adoptive family, the boy was told that he was adopted. This seemed to shatter his world and he spent the next three years hunting down information about his biological mother. Finally he found her and met her. The result of this search and discovery was that the boy developed "a stronger, more realistic tie with his adoptive parents."\(^2\)

The dynamics of the effects of concealment and sudden revelation have been explained by Kurt Lewin on a theoretical basis. He says that this situation is analogous to that of a Negro girl brought up in the Northern United States with the expectation and belief the Negroes and White people are equal in status. Suddenly she finds herself, in adolescence, in a situation in which she is discriminated against. She has a complete breakdown in adaptation.

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"The histories of foster children reveal (similar) tragic developments. A child adopted very young grows up believing his foster parents to be his true parents. They do not tell the child the truth, wishing him to regard them as his true parents. It is not unusual, however, that around the age of fifteen or seventeen he is told by someone that he is 'merely' a foster child. The result is frequently devastating beyond all expectation. There are cases where the child who was a good student at school loses his high rank, stops taking any work seriously and turns into a vagabond. Such reactions have been observed where the foster-parents continue to give the child every proof of their undiminishing love and loyalty and nothing has changed in the 'objective' relations of the family. In such cases the deplorable effect seems to be excessively out of proportion, for nothing else than the child's feeling of belonging to the parents has been changed."1

A partial dynamic explanation of this effect is that "the group to which an individual belongs is the ground on which he stands, which gives or denies him help and security. The firmness or weakness of this ground might not be consciously perceived, just as the firmness of the physical ground is not always thought of. Dynamically, however, the firmness and clearness of this ground determines what the individual wishes to do, and how he will do it. This is true equally of the social ground as well as the physical ground."2 The sudden knowledge, especially when received during adolescence, weakens the social ground in the social structure of the child's psychological world and "his own position (as far as the child's perceptions are concerned) has changed, and therefore a change of the relation to the totality of the facts existing in his world has taken place...He too has seen a world built up for years break down in a moment...and his faith in the stability of the ground on which he stands.

2. Ibid. p. 174.
and hence his willingness to make plans for the future is lost."1

Such a sudden change in social ground is particularly devastating to the adolescent because his world is fraught with insecurity and conflict. The sudden shift in social ground imposes further strain and pressure on a personality which is already under the severe pressure of facing other sudden changes, both physiological and psychological, and social. Thus the new strain pushes the adolescent's shaky personality to the point of disintegration. In earlier years, particularly in latency when the child is relatively certain about himself and world around him, such a new burden would not be as devastating because the child's personality at that time is secure and well-integrated enough to cope with additional pressure.

Psychosexual Conflicts and Confusion Around Future Social Sexual Role.

One way psychosexual conflicts and confusion about social-sexual role could be a precipitating factor in the adolescent foster child's concern about his natural parents might lie in the area of a sense of shame with the natural parents' sexual behaviour in such instances as when the child learns about his illegitimacy.

Adolescence is a period when the child has to cope with resurgence of sexual drives, repressed during latency, and to integrate them with culturally acceptable forms of sexual behaviour. The primary form of adult socially acceptable sexual behaviour in this culture is sexual behaviour within the confines of legal marriage. John Sirjamaki, in formulating "Cultural Configurations of the American Family" has observed: "Marriage is the dominating goal for men and women. It is felt that married life is the normal, desired condition for all adults, that it brings the greatest

1. Ibid. p. 175.
personal happiness and fulfillment, and that it permits the proper exercise of sex for the procreation of children and for individual satisfaction.\textsuperscript{1}

Conflicts about sexual behaviour which is socially acceptable are particularly strong in adolescence. Part of the conflict seems to lie in the realm of morals (what a person ought to do). Symonds, among others, has noted that adolescents have rather rigid moral standards.

Eppich and Jenkins have noted the close affinity between the child's questions about sex and about his unknown biological parents.\textsuperscript{2} Barnes has noted that Carl's concern about his own parents was precipitated in part by his concern about sexual information and sexual-social role.\textsuperscript{3}

Kohlsaat and Johnson have noted this area as a factor in the child's concern about his unknown parents. "Adolescent boys and girls have a need to believe that their natural father or mother have never acted out antisocially. Adolescent boys and girls are more likely to hold themselves in line sexually when they sense in their parents mutual esteem and protective respect toward each other. Through identification with such parents adolescents come to treat persons of the opposite sex with similar generosity and kindness. If they hear of serious disrespect or antisocial acting out on the part of the parents, their own sense of security is shaken: they hostilely identify with such parents and may set out similarly, their sexuality fused with sadomasochism (punishment of self through punishment of others). In other words, the girl feels, I am so ashamed of my mother's affairs, and therefore so angry, that I don't care what I do. The boy feels, Women are not to be

\textsuperscript{2} Eppich and Jenkins, "Telling Adopted Children", Studies of Children, p. 122.
\textsuperscript{3} Barnes, op. cit. pp. 608-610.
trusted, I hate them all and will use them as I wish. This applies to children with adoptive parents as well as to children with own parents. What they will do hostilely if they hear of antisocial sexual behaviour in their parents is highly predictable.\textsuperscript{1} This "identification" with the sexual misconduct of unknown natural parents has also been observed in a case studied by Jalowicz.\textsuperscript{2}

An Analysis of the Factors.

Many of the factors are closely interrelated. Severe separation trauma might make it impossible for a child to adjust in a "normal" foster family. In such a case the child might be re-placed, not because of the foster family's rejection of him in a psychological sense, but because of their knowledge that they could not give him emotional security. Such a child without receiving psychological treatment might live in several family environments, but be part of none of them. Therefore, he would experience not only separation trauma, but also lack of continuity in parental figures.

On the other hand, the child might have been able to settle in a foster family even though he was traumatized: however, partial rejection by the foster parents might be too much for the child to take and it would result in another placement for the child. Thus the chain reaction of lack of continuity in parental figures and frequent separation experiences would then start over again.

Sometimes the child might not be traumatized in infancy but would experience rejection which might lead to further separation experiences.


\textsuperscript{2} Alameda R. Jalowicz, "A Foster Child Needs His Own Parents", The Child, August, 1947, p. 22.
On the other hand, a child might be traumatized, but remain in one foster home because of a neurotic attachment to the foster parents. In this case, the child might have continuous parental figures in his life but lack the basic love needed for growth because of the foster parent’s psychological rejection of him.

It is not unknown for a child to have experienced trauma in infancy, frequent separation experiences in early childhood, and yet to have finally found foster parents who accepted him to such an extent that his previous problems were alleviated and their effects on his personality modified.

The interrelation between concealment of information about the natural parents and rejection of the child by the foster parents has already been discussed. None of the basic causative factors would be clear-cut entities, although the impact of one factor might be greater upon the child’s concern than others.

Neither can a precise distinction be made between basic causative factors and immediate precipitating factors. Sudden revelation of information to the child about his natural parents in adolescence might not be so devastating if virtual concealment of this information had not preceded it in the child’s earlier years. Negative attitudes toward the natural parents and/or rejection might also be closely related to the precipitating factor of revelation of information in adolescence. The impact of information given by a "rejecting" foster parent might have much more disturbing effects on the child than the impact of such information if given by "accepting" foster parents, even if the information was previously concealed by both.

The distinction between causative factors and immediate precipitating factors was made for convenience of exposition. It was also thought that certain factors such as social-sexual conflicts would be a more immediate precipitating
factor in adolescence than it would have been previously: thus the dis-
tinction might serve the purpose of focussing on the more long-range factors,
as distinguished from the short-range factors.

With the close connection between these factors in mind, the writer
will use them as an outline for study of seven cases of adolescent foster
children, wards of the Vancouver Children's Aid Society, who showed intense
concern about their natural parents from whom they were permanently separated
at an early age. An attempt will be made in Chapter 3 to identify and
describe these factors as they appear in the case records.
Chapter 3

A Description and an Identification of the Factors in Seven Case Records.

The conceptual framework developed from the review of the literature in Chapter 2 was used to study the case records of seven adolescent foster children who showed intense concern about the natural parents from whom they had been separated during the first three years of life. Each of the factors as they appeared in the records are identified and discussed in this chapter in the light of each child's case history. No attempt was made to establish definitely that one factor had more impact upon the child's concern than another, although the case descriptions are suggestive of which factors seem most significant. The purpose of the research is exploratory rather than definitive. Therefore, it was thought sufficient as an objective of the research to identify the factors and describe them in the light of each case history. More definitive research would hopefully be able to determine which factors were most significant in a given child's concern.

Method of Selecting Case Records

In order to select the cases for study, the writer asked two social workers, experienced in working with adolescent foster children, the following question: "Of all the foster children in adolescence with whom you have worked, which children seemed most concerned about their natural parents?" A condition of selection was that the children must have been separated from their natural parents during the first three years of their life in order to rule out the possibility of their being able to remember their parents consciously. The hypothesis was that a child who does not
know or who cannot recall his natural parents would have little concern about parental persons who were not in his present reality world (except for mild curiosity) unless some special factors in his environment or in his personality were causing this concern.

Concern was roughly defined as: (a) persistency in request for information about the natural parents over an extended period of time even though the child had been given all the positive pertinent information available about them, (b) persistency in trying to find the parents in reality, (c) an elaboration of fantasy about the natural parents as to their good or bad qualities, physical appearance, reasons for abandonment of the child, or their moral behavior - which seemed to the social workers to occupy a great proportion of their thinking time.

The method of selection was justified upon the basis of expediency inasmuch as it would be beyond the limits of time to study all the cases of adolescent foster children in this group to determine which ones were greatly concerned, some concerned, or little concerned. This would be properly the job of another study.

Upon the basis of this question and these criteria seven records were selected by the workers. Such a limited sample would be within the realm of the time available for study. The cases were thought to be suggestive rather than representative of all the cases in this group. Representativeness was considered relatively unimportant in this exploratory study; however, it was recognized that other cases might reveal other factors upon study.

**Definition of the Factors**

For the purpose of study it was decided that some effort should be made to define in a general sense how each factor could be recognized.
Separation Trauma was defined as a hurtful experience for the child which occurred as the result of his separation from the mother—once during the first three years of life. If the child was placed in an institution during this period this was taken as an experience which would tend to intensify the trauma. If the child moved from one mother figure to another during these years of life this was considered as evidence of trauma having taken place. Symptoms such as psychosomatic feeding problems or disturbances of the digestive system were also seen as evidences of separation trauma. Lack of spontaneity in the child's behavior may also have been symptomatic of the trauma, although not always.

1. **Lack of Continuity in Parental Figures** was roughly defined as having taken place when a child moved from one family to another three or more times during childhood. It was recognized that separation experiences and their subsequent result in this factor being present would have varying impact upon the child according to the length of stay which a child had in a particular home, the degree of his acceptance or rejection by the substitute parents, and his age. Generally speaking, separation experiences are most devastating to the child's personality during the first five years of life. Some effort was made to select as being most significant those moves made during the first five years of life and those moves occasioned by the parents' rejection of the child.

2. **Continuity of Parental Figures but Rejection of the Child by them** was identified upon the basis of the writer's clinical experience and judgment. From his experience the writer has found that foster parents usually show rejection of a child when (a) they expect to make the child over into a "good" child, (b) when they ask for the child's removal from the home for
seemingly minor reasons such as a mild illness in the family or a holiday.

3. **Negative Attitudes Expressed by the Foster Parents toward the Child's Natural Parents.** This factor was thought to be identifiable when the foster parent verbalized that they considered the child was "bad" on account of his natural parents' behavior or by the expression of some other disparaging criticism of the natural parents. Also it was thought to be identifiable if either the social worker or the psychiatrist noticed that the negative attitude was expressed by direct statement or implication.

4. **Extreme Color Differences** were thought to be identifiable when there was evidence in the record that the child perceived a noticeable difference between his foster parents' skin color and his own.

5. **Concealment of Information about the Natural Parents from the Child** was identified by the absence of any information in the record that the child was told that he was a foster child and had natural parents with whom he was not living. It was thought that if the child used the surname of the foster parents this might heighten the effect of concealment as it would tend to lead the child to think that his foster parents were his own by birth. It was recognized that in many instances the child may have been told by the foster parents about his status and his natural parents although this information did not appear in the record.

6. **A Separation Experience** was thought to be a precipitating factor in the child's concern if he asked about his natural parents during, or immediately following the separation experience (defined as a move from one family environment to another during adolescence).
7. **Revelation of Information about the Natural Parents** was thought to be significant in the adolescent's concern when (a) he knew relatively little about the parents before he reached the age of adolescence, (b) he was told information which he may have associated as being "bad", (c) he was told information during a critical stage in his life, such as during a separation experience.

8. **Social-Sexual Conflicts** were thought to be precipitating factors in the child's concern when the child implied a relationship between his concern about his natural parents and his concern about social-sexual role functioning. Such an example might occur when a child showed concern about his natural parents about the time when he was getting married.

The incidence of factors identified in each child's case are listed in Figure 1.
The Incidence of Contributing and Precipitating Factors which seem to Intensify the Adolescent Foster Child's Concern about his Unknown Natural Parents.

**Figure II.**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Marjorie</th>
<th>Jane</th>
<th>Jerry</th>
<th>Jim</th>
<th>Harold</th>
<th>Larry</th>
<th>Bill</th>
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Case I.

Marjorie was one of the children studied who seemed most concerned in adolescence about her natural parents. Examined by a psychiatrist at the Child Guidance Clinic when she was seventeen, Marjorie was described as a girl "whose restlessness is activated by a constant and fruitless search for her mother figure, conjuring up someone who might answer her ideal. She is at the same time attracted and repelled by a desire to see her mother's photograph. She scans the faces of people in the street and buses for someone whom she might acknowledge as her mother". Many of the factors both causative and precipitating seemed to be intensifying Marjorie's concern.

This child was born out of wedlock to a young mother who while a member of an apparently stable family, seemed to be a misfit within the family group. She was promiscuous in her later adolescent years and had two illegitimate children prior to Marilyn's birth. The natural mother never kept the child and abandoned it in an infant's home. At the age of five months Marjorie was placed with a foster mother who was described in the record as "nervous" and unsure of herself. For nearly a year Marjorie was moved back and forth between this family and an infant's hospital because she presented severe feeding problems, which the attending doctor described as being of "nervous" origin. Undoubtedly maternal deprivation in the infant's hospital and separation trauma were basic causes of Marjorie's restless and nervous behavior and physical symptomology. At the age of twenty-one months Marjorie was placed from the infant's hospital into a foster environment where strong elements of rejection were present. This factor was inferred by the writer from the scarce material in the records because of the foster mother's almost constant complaints to the worker about
the child's "bad" behavior.

Marjorie's physical and mental development seemed to be within the normal range; however, her behavior was described as "demanding, restlessness, self-centered, and unco-operative". The foster mother tried using physical punishment to curb the child's impulsive behavior, but this produced no results. She finally tried isolating the child from the family group. Marjorie's poor behavior continued, however, and two years after the placement began the foster mother asked to have the child moved temporarily on the pretext that she was going away for a holiday. The worker thought that this would be a good time to move the child because she considered the foster mother to be "incompetent and lacking in discipline". It is doubtful that Marjorie's problem lay in the realm of discipline alone. Her demanding behavior suggests that she may not have received the basic affection she needed from the mothering person.

Marjorie's third foster home placement lasted for five years (from the ages of five to eight). On the surface these appeared to be more accepting foster parents. Physical standards appeared to be high, the parents well-educated and well-mated. However, they had four young foster children in the home and in this environment it was doubtful whether a child, as deprived as Marjorie was, could obtain satisfaction for her strong affectional needs. Always a frail child, Marjorie was physically sick with one illness after another. She became involved in antisocial behavior in the community because she could not relate to other children. Although of average intelligence she could not pass in school because of her apparent isolation from the teacher, her classmates, and the subject material. It is likely that the disturbances which Marjorie brought with her into the home brought out many of the unfavorable elements in the
foster parent's personality. It is also likely that the foster mother partially rejected her inasmuch as she, to use the worker's phrase, "expected too much" of the child. Little is recorded in detail about the parent-child relationships. However, Marjorie's behavior became progressively worse, and at the age of eight the foster mother began pressing for the child's removal from the home. During this later period, the worker commented: The foster mother constantly asks to have Marjorie psychoanalyzed. It is perhaps unfortunate that the foster mother is aware of the instability of the child's natural mother inasmuch as she constantly refers to inheritance in the possibility of Marjorie seeing a psychiatrist. At this time both the foster mother and the child saw the psychiatrist at the Child Guidance Clinic who recommended: The foster mother knows of the child's family history and therefore it is felt that if Marjorie is removed to a community away from that of the foster mother, there will be no conflicts. The child was placed in another foster home shortly thereafter.

Here the negative attitudes on the part of the foster mother toward the child's natural mother and their close connection with rejection of the child seem strongly inter-related. Previous to adolescence Marjorie apparently was told nothing about her natural parents (concealment); however, because of the foster mother's rejection and strong negative attitude toward the natural parents, Marjorie may have learned directly or indirectly to associate her bad behavior with that of her nebulous natural mother. From the time she was eight until the time she was fifteen, Marjorie was moved fifteen times. She never seemed to find acceptance in any family environment. Usually bad behavior led to her removal from the foster homes. The behavior symptoms included: lack of emotion, isolationism, cruelty to babies and animals, marked interest in sex (exhibiting herself), and frequent
stealing of food. She also ran away from the foster homes frequently.

Marjorie's interest in her natural parents began when she was fourteen. At this time she was about to be placed from one foster home to another because the foster parents could no longer cope with her behavior. The record reads: "Recently Marjorie has been brooding over the disappointments she experienced from the agency. Foster mother feels that she is very deep and has a lot of fear toward the agency which she feels has been the cause of many disappointments to her. Foster mother has encouraged her to write the story of her life as Marjorie is interested in writing and has expressed an interest in her life history." After the placement was made the worker brought up the subject with Marjorie. "She wanted to know where her parents were now and the conditions of her coming into the agency's care."

Two years later Marjorie's interest in her natural mother was still persisting. During this time she was having a great deal of trouble because of petty stealing and damaging of property. Furthermore, it was suspected that she was having sexual conflicts inasmuch as she frequently ran away with boys. Marjorie's conflicts, particularly in regard to her natural parents, may have had a connection with her social sexual conflicts.

"In recent months Marjorie has been interested in her family background. Marjorie first began to ask worker two years ago. At this time, worker told her as much as she could of her background history and her early history in care. Unfortunately there is little information on the family file and not enough to satisfy her curiosity. Worker has noticed that Marjorie seems to feel deeply about her family and has expressed a desire to know what her mother looked like. At first the worker did not tell Marjorie of her illegitimacy, but as this question has come up on various occasions in the past two years, worker told Marjorie of this last spring when discussion regarding her family background led to
her question; Was she illegitimate? Worker gave Marjorie a great deal of interpretation regarding this subject trying to help her feel that it was not for her to be ashamed of and that she should not concern herself about it. It was also suggested that this was Marjorie's own private information and there was no need for her discussing it with anyone. However, if she would like to discuss it with her foster mother, worker felt it would be all right. She did discuss this with foster mother after the interview and worker was pleased to learn that foster mother had continued worker's interpretation around illegitimacy. This subject was referred to in subsequent interviews as it appeared that Marjorie was somewhat confused about her role as she felt that it made her different from other children.

While no direct relationship between social-sexual conflicts and Marjorie's concern about her mother can be established, her behavior and her conflict around illegitimacy suggest that this was the case. She continued to be promiscuous in her sexual relationships and became an unmarried mother at nineteen. She remarked about the similarity between her predicament and that of her natural mother's. She also identified herself with the expected baby, "She was most interested in the questions about the putative father and insisted upon writing them out for herself. She also went on to request further information about herself as a baby and was quite insistent that she see her own file. I told her that I would be glad to let her have pertinent information but could not let her see the file. She told me that she has 'seen' her mother and that she loves her and wants the baby named after her mother, if it is a little girl. When I questioned when she could have seen her mother she said quickly, 'I don't think it is anything I can explain. I don't suppose you would understand.' I gathered from the way she said this that she had seen her mother in a dream or had imagined her very vividly. Marjorie insisted that the baby be given a good adoption home and not move around the way she herself did."

Today Marjorie is slowly developing a relationship with the worker whom she has had for several years and gets pleasure out of calling her 'mother' occasionally. She remains concerned about her natural parents,
fluctuating between the desire to go by her father’s name and her mother’s. She burns candles in the church for the natural mother she has never known.

It is difficult to assess in Marilyn’s case whether concealment of information about her natural parents and revelation of this information in adolescence had an effect on her concern. It can only be surmised that this may have been a factor as shown by her concern over a period of two years about whether she was illegitimate. Although Marjorie had never been told this previously by the worker or foster parents, as far as is recorded, she surmised this. It may be true that if her feelings about this had been brought out earlier that she would have had less concern. However, her concern seems related to so many other factors such as rejection, separation traumas, lack of continuity in parental figures, and frequent separation experiences in adolescence as well as social-sexual conflicts that it is difficult to assess whether concealment had precise influence except as related to the other factors.

Case 2.

Jane is another child who was exposed to separation traumas in infancy. The illegitimate daughter of an agency ward who was described as being emotionally unstable and engaged in prostitution, Jane lived with her maternal grandmother during the first three months of her life. The grandmother was herself a promiscuous woman who was also considered maladjusted. After three months, she placed Jane in an infants hospital where she lived until the age of eleven months. One can only infer from these shreds of evidence that Jane had been traumatised. She was placed in a foster home at the age of eleven months and remained with the same continuous parental figures until she was twelve years old. She was described as an apathetic child who was slow to walk and talk (possible indications of early
deprivation). For the first twelve months in the foster home she was
plagued by stomach illnesses which seemed to have no purely physical origin.

Little is recorded of Jane's first four years of life in this
foster home. There was some indication that the child craved attention
and was jealous of an older foster sister. The foster mother's rejecting
attitude toward the child began to appear when Jane was about five years
old. She was afraid that Jane was "too restless" to go to public school
and seemed to need discipline.

She said: "I have been having quite a bit of trouble
with her. She is very disobedient and getting quite
sly. She never seems to be ashamed of anything, but
is very resentful when punished....I never knew a child
with such conflicting characteristics. My one ambition
is that she grow into being a useful citizen. She is
quite clever. I think that cleverness can be directed
into useful channels. She ought to be a great success,
if that fails, I am afraid she will make plenty of
trouble."

This in itself might not be an indication of rejection. However,
after six months the foster mother called the worker because Jane had been
stealing food from the neighbours for no apparent reason. Evidently this
had been going on for some time but the foster parents had kept it hidden.
The foster mother's overprotectiveness (a form of rejection) is indicated
by the fact that she said she always picked Jane's friends since she was a
child "who was easily influenced by other spoiled children". Jane, upon
closer study by the worker, was found to be an excessively demanding child
who always wanted the center of attention, was exceedingly jealous of
other children, and somewhat isolated from the family. She seemed to lack
affection for other people.

Concealment of information about the natural parents did not seem
operative so much in Jane's case. The foster mother told her when she was
four years old that she was not the child's natural mother. It was unfor-
tunate, however, that the second explanation took place when the foster mother brought up the stealing problem a year later. "Jane asked what business was it of ours that she was bad. Foster mother explained to her that we (the worker) looking after her had asked the foster mother to be her mother." Evidently Jane showed little interest in her natural parents during the period previous to adolescence in spite of the fact that the foster mother had given her some information. At the age of twelve Jane told the worker that she never really knew before this that the foster mother was not her natural mother. She may have meant that she did not understand it very well.

Jane's behavior in the foster home became progressively worse during the years between five and nine. The foster mother's attitude became more openly "rejecting." When Jane was eight, she became ill with scarlet fever. The foster mother severely criticized the agency because they did not remove the child from the home temporarily so that the rest of the family would not get the illness. A year later, the foster mother went into hospital for a minor operation and asked for a temporary re-placement of Jane. This was done. Then the foster mother debated whether she would have the child back in the home because of her bad behavior. However she finally "relented" and let Jane come back into the home. It is difficult to get a clear picture of Jane in the years between nine and twelve. At times the foster mother seemed most accepting of her and at other times seemed to be rejecting. Jane seemed loud and boisterous and had little relationship capacity.

When Jane was nearly twelve the foster mother admitted that Jane was getting on her nerves. She felt that she could not trust her. The foster mother again mentioned the child's natural parents to her: Foster
mother tried to explain to her that she had been particularly wanted in this home, that there were several children in the district who are not living with their parents, and there is no disgrace attached to it." This information seemed to be in the context of the foster mother's rejection of the child, however, inasmuch as she mentioned this while she was implying that she wanted Jane removed from the home.

A study of Jane's case at the Child Guidance Clinic at this time indicated that "this home is not fully accepting of her and that difficulties are bound to arise during her adolescence when the foster mother will not be able to cope with them. The fact that the foster mother took a foster child as a mission in life would prove a difficulty as she would have a great sense of failure should Jane get into difficulties." It was recommended, therefore, that the child should be moved to another home.

While concealment of information about the natural parents did not wholly occur in Jane's case the impact of telling the child at a critical time in her life can be seen. The worker persuaded the foster mother to tell the child more about her background just at the time the child was being rejected by the foster mother. While Jane apparently ignored this "telling", she later showed great concern about her natural parents, after she had moved from the foster home. The impact of telling the child about her natural parents at this critical time, the rejection by the foster mother, and the separation experience itself may have all played a part in intensifying Jane's concern.

A few days after she was moved from the home, Jane visited the worker. "When the worker appeared, Jane was in tears. The only thing she could ask was, "where is my mother?" Worker took her to the office where we were able to be alone and Jane had quite a crying spell. She
wanted to know where her mother was and why she was not with her."

Three months later Jane still persisted in inquiring more about her natural mother. "She told worker that she had tried hard to think, but the only thing that kept coming to her mind was the time she came to clinic with her foster mother. Some worker had met her on the stairs and said she looked just like her natural mother. It would seem from that time onward Jane has been wondering about her natural mother, and it is possible that perhaps foster mother's manner of explaining about her natural mother was not entirely tactful." This picture seems to support the viewpoint that the foster mother, in spite of the fact that she had told the child about her natural parents, may have expressed to the child a negative attitude toward her parents. Up to this point all the factors: separation trauma, continuity but rejection, and negative attitudes toward the natural parents are suggested in the record. Concealment of information in this case would appear to have been absent. The separation experience and sudden revelation of information seemed to have been important precipitating factors for the child's immediate concern about her natural parents.

Since this separation Jane's social adjustment has steadily deteriorated. She has been in numerous foster homes and in a convent. None of these homes has been able to give her the security and affection she has needed. She has been committed to the industrial school on charges of sexual immorality and is now a drug addict. Her unhealthy bond with her original foster mother seems never to have been completely severed. For three years the contact between the two was fairly regular, although it was evident that the rejection on the foster mother's part became more clearly defined. Jane is still confused about the reasons for her separation from her foster mother. At the same time she is quite persistent about her concern about her natural mother. Since she has become a drug addict,
she has come into the office in a semi-conscious state and while lying on
the floor in a state of stupor, says over and over again, "If only I could
find my own mother". Unlike Marjorie, Jane had continuity of parental
figures in her life. However, the basic rejection by her foster mother
seems to have been the mainspring of her concern about her natural mother.

Case 3.

Little is known of Jerry's early life. Another child born out of
wedlock, Jerry lived with his mother for the first two and one half years
of his life. She was described as nervous and erratic. Jerry and his
half brother, a year younger than Jerry, were apprehended by the agency
because the mother apparently was unable to look after the children.
Jerry's first placement in a foster family abruptly ended after four months
because the foster mother had a heart attack. The child showed his reaction
to the two close separation experiences and their resultant trauma by
frequent masturbations, soiling and bed-wetting.

Jerry's second placement lasted for three years (he was placed
with his brother). It was noted throughout this placement that the foster
mother was inconsistent in her attitude toward the children, treating one
with favoritism one time and the other, another time. Also, accommodation
and dietary standards were poor. During this time, Jerry's behavior
fluctuated between hostility, aggressiveness and withdrawal from those
around him. The foster mother thought he was difficult to control.
Toward the end of the placement, Jerry became more affable and affectionate,
but at this time, placement was terminated by the agency because it was
thought that the home was unsuitable. Jerry probably was partially
rejected in this home. This rejection may have increased his separation
anxiety. One incident serves to illustrate this. Jerry was slow in
getting ready for a trip. The foster parents left him alone in the house. When they returned ten minutes later they found him crying on the steps, stating that he did not want to stay home again.

Jerry's third placement lasted for three years. At first he was an obedient and well-mannered youngster who responded immediately to a word of reprimand. His rejection in the previous home was indicated by the unusual way in which he cringed when reprimanded. The record is sparse during this period, but here again Jerry was apparently rejected. Suddenly (Jerry was nine) the foster mother complained that the boy was becoming more and more rude and disobedient and asked for his removal along with his brother's. The worker agreed to the move. When the worker called she observed: "The foster mother seemed to feel that the children were being deceitful and naughty, rather than being mischievous. She did not seem to feel any warmth for them but enjoyed seeing their sad expressions when a move was mentioned." When the worker called for the boys she observed, "Foster mother was annoyed that worker had kept her waiting for half an hour. Foster mother had an appointment and was anxious to rush the boys off."

The next placement lasted only two more years. It is not possible to get a picture of the home as few interviews were recorded. The foster mother decided to keep Jerry's brother but not Jerry. She asked for his removal on the grounds that he was an "angel" one moment and a completely "obnoxious" child the next. The writer checked the brother's file and found that he too had been rejected by the foster parents at the age of fifteen. Jerry was eleven at the time of this move. Since that time he has lived in numerous foster homes, never staying more than a few months at a time. His behavior pattern was one of constantly running away. His early life
was characterized by lack of continuity of parental figures, rejection by parental figures, and separation trauma. In adolescence Jerry became intensely concerned about his natural parents.

This concern first started after a "running away incident" when Jerry was fourteen (separation experience). The record reads: "Jerry asked about his parents and visitor explained that they had been unable to look after him". Previous to this time, Jerry had apparently known nothing about his natural parents. Concealment of information along with the other factors mentioned above seems to have played a part in intensifying his concern. No further mention of Jerry's concern was made until a year and a half later. There is some indication that revelation of information in adolescence may have had an intensifying effect upon Jerry's concern.

"He was told her story and that she had died. He cried a little but accepted the history quite well. Her death was a great disappointment to him because he had hoped that some day he would go to live with his mother like some other agency children he knew". This was apparently quite a shock to Jerry on top of the other experiences he had previously. He pressed for more information a few months later.

"Then there was a dead silence and Jerry came out with a question and asked what year his mother had died. Worker indicated that she had died a few years after he was born. Worker went on to say that when his mother had gone to hospital, Jerry had been under the care of the agency. He said he knew his mother had died in mental hospital and had been buried close by there. He then wondered about his father, who he was and what kind of a person he was. He wondered whether he could find out from the court papers. Worker pointed out that it had been rather difficult for apparently the man who had been called his father had not been with his mother very long. As far as worker knew, this man had never married Jerry's mother. Jerry said he wouldn't do a thing like that. Worker remarked that Jerry knew the consequences of this for himself as he knew how unhappy he had been. Jerry then wondered whether he ran away from the various homes because his father had run away from his mother."
Undoubtedly the worker's intentions in this case were good. Yet apparently the information Jerry received about his natural parents seemed to imply that his bad behavior was the result of his natural parents' behavior. This revelation of information along with the previous rejection and separation experiences seemed to intensify Jerry's concern to a pathological degree. He began looking for his father saying he had heard that he was in an eastern city. When Jerry was twenty years old, he came to the agency requesting more information about his background. At that time he was "hanging around" the fringes of the underworld. Apparently Jerry had located the man whom he thought was his father. The worker says: "Jerry exhibited a desperate need to find his father and talk with him. It appeared that he had a punitive attitude toward him and was desirous of seeking some form of legal action against him in order to obtain funds."

A month later Jerry returned to the worker and said that he had found his father's address and was going to visit him immediately. When it was pointed out that this might not be his natural father, Jerry threatened to sue the agency for giving him incorrect information. He wanted the case completely investigated to find out who his real father was. Later he went to see the man who he thought was his father and was satisfied that this was not the man. He persisted however with his quest to establish his father's identity until the agency's lawyer told him that this was impossible to do. At one point he threatened to take the case to the provincial legislature.

Case 4.

Jim, like Marjorie and Jane, lived in a baby home in infancy. He was abandoned by his mother at birth and remained in the institution for thirteen months. Apparently this was not a traumatic experience or as
depriving an experience for him as it was for the other children. When he came into care, he seemed to be able to relate well to people, was well physically and happy. His first foster placement lasted thirteen months and seemed exceptionally good for him. He was cheerful and spontaneous. His physical and mental development appeared normal. Unfortunately, as it turned out, Jim was removed from this home and placed on adoption probation in another one. Initially he seemed slow in responding to these new foster parents. He was plagued by constipation, related to a severe appendix infection which almost claimed his life. Even after he recovered he had constipation and the attending doctor felt that these were caused by psychological problems. It was felt that the foster mother was "nervous" and excessively worried about the child. This partial rejection led to the child's removal from the home at the age of five.

Jim's new foster placement lasted not quite a year. He reacted to the home by wetting himself in the daytime. His constipation continued. The foster mother thought this was "wilful" and punished him by keeping him in bed all day. Another time she punished him by dressing him in girl's clothing. Jim also frequently lied about seemingly insignificant things. The foster mother admitted that he had lost some of his affectionate disposition and said that she was not the demonstrative kind in that she seldom fondled the child. Apparently the foster mother had threatened him with a policeman's visit and this led Jim to be anxious about being placed in another home. Jim's behavior improved and seemed mainly on account of his fear of being moved. At this time (at the age of six) he started asking about his natural mother and the foster mother found these questions difficult to answer. "He wants to know why he cannot stay with one mamma like other boys do." At this time Jim was still calling himself by his previous
foster parents' surname. No effort apparently was made at explaining his status to him and this concealment seemed to be connected with his questions about his natural parents.

Jim lived in his next foster home for a period of nine years (until the age of fifteen). In this home Jim seemed truly accepted by the foster parents. There were none of the old behavior problems and Jim gradually regained his former affectionate disposition and spontaneity. He was a bright boy intellectually and did well in school. He was well liked by the other children in the neighborhood and in school. However, he remained very sensitive and somewhat shy. While these foster parents seemed to be accepting of Jim, there is some indication that there was some negative attitude expressed toward his natural parents on the part of the foster father.

"Jim went on to say that as a child he was addicted to swearing and quite without meaning, one day called a boy a bastard. Foster father had immediately picked it up and flung it back at Jim, saying that he was in no position to call anyone else a bastard because he was one himself. This hurt Jim deeply."

It is impossible to determine what impact this attitude had upon the boy's concern about his natural parents, or whether this statement was related to the foster father's possible rejection of the boy.

Although the foster parents seemed to accept Jim, he begged to leave home early in adolescence. This was postponed for a year. However, when Jim finally did leave, he did not retain the ties with his foster parents very closely for a long time. Possibly the new feelings of adolescence and its confusion reactivated his earlier separation anxiety. At any rate Jim moved from one foster home to another for the next three years. At one point he wanted a family, whom he had known only a few days, to adopt him.
Jim's original questions about his own parents seemed to be precipitated at the time when his engagement to marry had been broken by his fiancée. He was very sorrowful over this unfortunate love affair. At about this time he asked for information on the grounds that a couple was interested in adopting him. This proved to be based very little upon fact, however. At this time Jim was in the Navy and at last seemed to have settled down. He was eighteen. The worker handled this "telling" very well and Jim responded to the information about his illegitimacy by saying: "Well, it depends upon myself alone, what I am." At this time Jim revealed that some of the various foster parents had been "badgering him about who he was and why he was in care and so on". This along with the statement about his former foster father's attitude points to the fact that negative attitudes on the part of the foster parents to the child's natural parents may have been one of the basic causes of his concern in addition to the precipitating factor about his conflict about social-sexual role. Jim's concern persisted over the next two years. Once he wrote: "The main object of my interest is the whereabouts of my mother. I have always felt that the agency had known more about her than they have told me. However, now that I am of age, I have every right to know anything that may throw some light on this case. I quite realize the circumstances of my birth. That, I have lived down myself. Now I would like to find out if I do have any next of kin in the shape of parents or relatives." Jim gave up the search, however, after accepting the fact that nothing more was known. He is now happily married and has an excellent relationship with the agency, although he apparently still has little contact with his long-time foster parents.

The factors in Jim's concern seem to be partially separation trauma.
partially rejection by foster parents, and partially negative attitudes of foster parents toward the natural parents. The major precipitating factor seemed in this case to be concern with social-sexual role as the questioning occurred when Jim was having heterosexual problems and seemed to have been sensitive to the fact of his illegitimacy.

Case 5.

Little is known of Harold's early life. Apparently he lived with his mother for the first two years of life and then she deserted him. There is some indication that Harold suffered from separation trauma inasmuch as he reacted with apparent psychosomatic stomach complaints immediately after being placed in his first foster home. Harold remained in his first foster home until the age of five. His adjustment was apparently good, although little information was recorded. At this time he was placed on adoption probation in another family. There were no contacts with the family or child (they lived in the interior of British Columbia) for six years. At this time the foster parents decided to give Harold up because he had been stealing. He seemed on the whole well-adjusted and was doing good work in school and was getting along well in the community. The foster parents, however, seemed to be partially rejecting him. He was temporarily removed from the home for an examination at the Vancouver Child Guidance Clinic. During the short time he was away, the foster parents wrote to the agency requesting that he not return. Their rejecting attitude and their negative attitude toward the child's background appeared in the letter they wrote. Both factors seem inter-related in this case.

"It is with great regret that we have to tell you that we have decided we cannot have Harold back
here with us again. Since he left here we have had different instances of his untrustworthiness brought to our attention. It is perfectly evident that he has a hereditary stealing and lying instinct. I intend to get another young boy, and believe me, I will make certain that there is no foreign strain in him. Harold's case has been a bitter lesson."

One can only speculate what the impact of this attitude was on Harold's concern about his unknown parents.

When Harold moved to his new foster home at the age of eleven he took his own surname and seemed to enjoy this. Harold remained in this home for about five years. In general this seemed to have been a good foster home experience for him. While initially he had certain behavior problems such as stealing and masturbation, these became a problem with him no longer as he settled in the foster family environment. It is doubtful, however, if he was able really to feel that he "belonged" in this home in the sense that he thought it was his "own". As he proceeded on into middle adolescence old anxieties seemed to be reactivated inasmuch as Harold's former behavior reappeared. One stealing incident followed another. Several times he got into difficulty by having sex play with neighborhood girls. Superficially the foster parents seemed to be helping Harold cope with his problems. Yet there was always the question raised by them that he would have to be moved from the home if his behavior did not improve. Harold seemed to be "testing" their feelings out in this area and a stealing incident finally led to his replacement at the age of fifteen.

In the next foster home which lasted for about a year, Harold's behavior was about the same. He seemed unsettled and ran away frequently. He seemed confused about surnames and refused to use his own name, choosing instead, the foster parents'. This writer does not get the impression that Harold was a deeply disturbed boy, but rather that he was confused

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1 This letter was written in the 1930's when C.A.S. adoption practice was in its initial stages.
about his status and perhaps felt that no family environment represented the security he needed to work through his adolescent problems. His attitude showed that he felt guilt about his behavior and was consciously trying to make an effort to behave better. Yet he had not achieved a balance with the stronger drives and anxieties within him. At about this time it was implied that Harold was seeking information about his background and his parents. The worker contacted his mother who had maintained some contact with the agency on account of some younger children who were in care. The worker mentioned to the mother (who thought Harold had been adopted at an early age) that he had been inquiring about his parents and "one of these days he was going to look them up."

About the time he was eighteen, while in the Navy, Harold started being concerned more about his natural parents. By this time he was apparently adjusting quite well. He said that since he had time to think he started wondering about his parents. A year later after he returned from overseas duty Harold returned to the worker with whom he had kept frequent contact during the war and requested further information about his parents. Some of this concern seems to have been precipitated by social-sexual conflicts: "Harold said at this time that he was planning to get married and for this reason wanted to know something about his background."

About a month later he returned for more information.

"Harold was given information regarding his background. He was disturbed at the thought of his mother wanting to place him for adoption but after discussing the whole situation he seemed to accept the fact that because of her youth and the position she was in, his mother had no alternative other than to place him for adoption. He was told that his mother is apparently happily married and he was also told of his step-brothers and step-sisters who are in the care of the agency. After some thought Harold decided that he did not wish to contact her as he felt that this might jeopardize his marriage, and he didn't wish to do this."
Several months later, after receiving his discharge from the Navy, Harold came to the office, stating that he had given the matter more thought and wondered whether it would be possible to arrange a meeting with his mother.

"Harold has been in the office several times arranging for his marriage. He has been most anxious to meet his mother. On the morning of the meeting worker met Harold first and discussed with him this situation. The lad was pretty nervous and asked many times what he was to do. His mother also seemed to be in a nervous state. She did not know just what to do. However, after a brief introduction of 'Harold, this is your mother', worker left as the emotional strain was pretty hard. The lad was with his mother alone for about an hour and then worker went in as the mother had to sign her consent for the marriage... the meeting seemed quite successful. Later the mother and step-father attended the wedding."

Harold's concern seemed to be precipitated in the main by his conflicts in the social-sexual area. While there had been some rejection in his growing years from parental figures, this did not seem to damage his personality to the extent that he could not grow and mature emotionally. Harold's concern seemed to be anchored more in reality than that of the other children, as he was able to see his mother's side of the story fairly objectively. He accepted her early behavior quite philosophically by saying, as he smiled: "She did get around, didn't she?" The continuity of parental figures in Harold's life, particularly during the first five years and his apparent acceptance by parental figures during that time seemed to have been a factor in giving him the strength to mature in spite of later difficulties. Also it is likely that he received a fair amount of acceptance in the third foster home environment although it was not able to help him directly when his adolescent problems became too great.
Bill apparently lived with his mother, an Indian, during the first year of his life. Nothing is recorded in the history. She placed him in a baby's home when he was about a year old and he remained there for over a year. There is no evidence in the record to point to definite separation trauma in Bill's case, although it is possible that there probably is some inasmuch as he moved from his mother to the probably less-close mothering of someone in the institution.

In his first foster home, where he was placed at the age of twenty-seven months, Bill seemed to have adjusted fairly well, although he was described as shy and retiring. The foster parents seemed to have accepted him as there were no particular problems as far as Bill was concerned. Yet they asked for his removal two years later on the grounds that they were taking a trip. Not enough is known as to whether this request for separation constituted a psychological rejection of the child.

In his third foster home Bill showed some signs of poor personality adjustment. His shy and retarded behavior continued and he seemed unable to relate well to people. Little is recorded about the family relationships. At about age eight Bill's "acting out" behavior became more severe. He had regressed to bed-wetting, and at the same time had been exposing his genitals to neighborhood children. In addition he was involved in several stealing and property destroying incidents. Bill's physical appearance was markedly different from the foster parents inasmuch as he was a swarthy child with Indian facial features. He had tight curly hair and the foster mother noticed that he fondled this a good deal of the time. Bill took other children's caps frequently and this may have been related to his sensitivity about his difference in color and racial features from other
children, which the curly hair symbolized. When Bill was nine, his foster father died suddenly and Bill grieved a long time over this loss. His behavior became worse and finally the child was removed from the home at the age of ten.

Bill was placed with foster parents who had adopted a child about the same age as his own. Whether Bill was told about his status as a foster child is not known. There is some indication that other children in the neighborhood teased him about not being adopted. Bill was sensitive about this teasing. Yet the fact that the children knew of Bill's status and of the other boy's adoption indicates that the foster parents may have been fairly open about this in the community and perhaps to the children themselves. Bill, however, used the foster parent's surname and this may have heightened his feeling of "difference" which was accentuated by his Indian features. This foster home seemed really to be a place where Bill felt that he belonged. He had no particular problems in adolescence and, although information is scarce, Bill remained living with his foster parents after "board" was terminated by the agency. The worker commented on this saying that she relied a great deal on foster mother's ability to give Bill proper supervision. "She takes a motherly interest in this boy and treats him as her own." Bill still retained a bond with the former foster mother and visited her occasionally; so therefore, it does not appear that he felt "rejected" by her.

At the age of nineteen, Bill returned from the Navy intensely concerned about his natural parents. His concern seemed related to the sensitivity with regard to his racial background which was noted earlier in his life.

"He went on to ask a rather pointed question. "Just
who am I? And what nationality am I? Worker was taken aback as he did not know the background of this lad; however, as soon as the files were called for, he realized that this lad had a right to know about his past. As it was a rather sordid one, worker felt that he could only tell Bill so much. It was rather awkward to tell him that, although we had records on his mother we had none on his father. Bill did not know anything of his past whatsoever. He stated how awkward it was when with a group of fellows, if anyone started discussing nationality he was never quite sure what he was. Worker assured him that he was of good British stock and had nothing to be ashamed of. However, he still looked dissatisfied with the results of this conversation. Worker felt there was something behind his attitude and questioned him about this. Bill asked this question: "What would happen if you got married and you had children and one was of different color than you?" Worker then gave him information from the files that his mother had Indian blood in her. Bill was very relieved. He stated that he was always worried that he had Negro blood on account of his curly black hair. Bill seemed very pleased with the interview and worker felt that the shock, although bad at first, was now fading away. One was inclined to feel that the problem of Negro blood was really worrying the lad. He left with good spirits and promised to call again the next time he was in Vancouver."

In this case it would appear that concealment, conflicts around differences in color, and the social stigma attached, were the mainsprings of Bill's concern. It is noteworthy, however, that Bill brought this up in connection with marriage and it is possible that social-sexual conflicts were also involved as immediate precipitating factors. Although Bill had been exposed probably to some separation trauma which seemed to have been intensified by his foster father's death, he received enough acceptance from his foster parents to indicate that probably neither negative attitudes toward the natural parents or psychological rejection were present in this child's concern.
In comparing Bill's history with that of his half-brother Larry, it would seem to the writer that the color difference as a causative factor in intensifying a child's concern is further substantiated. Larry's early history is meager. He was taken into care from a baby home where he had lived about a year. There is some evidence that separation trauma may have been caused by four foster placements during Larry's second year of life. These placements were occasioned by illness on the part of the foster parents and did not seem to constitute rejection. Larry remained with the fourth set of foster parents all during his youth and in adulthood considered them as his parents. Although he was always somewhat shy, he seems to have been accepted and loved in this foster home. Of average intelligence, he did fair work in school and became self-supporting after reaching grade nine. Larry always went by his own name in contrast to Bill. Whether he was told much about his natural parents is not recorded.

Revelation in adolescence may have been a factor intensifying Larry's concern. Although he had not known his brother during his early years, in some way he met him at the age of fourteen. "According to Larry's foster mother, Bill saw his natural mother before he left town (unsubstantiated by record - he had not yet discussed this problem with the worker) and was inclined to be very friendly with her." Bill came to the foster home and saw Larry, and while there evidently told Bill something of his mother as foster mother noticed that Larry had been quite upset for a few days after the visit."

About a year later, Larry came to the office with a belligerent attitude and demanded to know about his parents. "He stated that he got fed-up with people asking him what nationality he was and when he said
Canadian they always laughed". The worker noted that Larry did not seem nearly as concerned about his illegitimacy as Bill had been. Although Larry seemed satisfied with the information, he came back in a month still upset. He felt the agency was not giving him the correct information. He wanted to find his mother, and proceeded to initiate a search. His mother was finally located in jail. The worker felt that he was mature enough to see her.

"Worker met Larry and took him to Oakalla. He was extremely nervous, chain smoking and drying his hands. Worker made no attempt to introduce them, merely greeting Mrs. A. and saying: "Larry has asked me to come up with him and visit you. Mother and son shook hands and just gazed for approximately forty seconds and then embraced. The controlled their emotions very well and Larry said: "Gee whiz, my own Mom. I finally found you." Larry and his mother discussed family happenings, work, likes, dislikes, clothing and plans for the future. The interview lasted for approximately half an hour and worker agreed in every way to help establish normal relationship after mother's discharge. Upon getting outside Oakalla's gates, Larry's bottled tension demanded relief and he said "Gee, let's run." Worker obliged for two blocks and then both agreed on a cup of coffee. Larry was full of plans for his mother and promised to keep worker informed on all details."

However, Larry never did follow up with his plans to keep the worker informed. In this case, difference in color and sudden revelation in adolescence of information about the natural parents seemed to have been the main causative and precipitating factors in Larry's concern.

An Additional Factor

In both the case of Jerry, Larry and Bill there is some evidence to suggest that if the child knows that he has siblings or has lived with siblings, his concern may be intensified. During the time Jerry was concerned about his father he was also concerned about reuniting with his brother. He had lived with his brother continuously until he was eight
years of age. On the other hand, Larry and Bill did not live with each other but apparently knew about each other. This apparently led Bill to seek out Larry. While they were together they discussed their unknown natural parents. It would seem only natural that knowing about a "semblance of family" would tend to lead the child to inquire further about his and his sibling's parents.

Summary of Findings

All of the factors, both causative and precipitating, have been identified descriptively in the case records upon the basis of the writer's clinical judgment in analyzing the data in the case records. While the writer did not attempt to establish precisely that the factors directly intensified the child's concern, the presence of these factors in these seven cases suggests that they may have some relevance to an intensification of the child's concern.

Generally speaking, in the cases studied, the children with the most traumatic and rejecting experiences seem to be more pathologically concerned than the children who have not been subjected to such severe experiences. Also, their concern seems less connected with the normal adolescent conflicts around social-sexual role. The more disturbed children (Jane, Marjorie, and Jerry) seemed to be preoccupied about their parents to a far greater degree in terms of time-span over a period of years and in terms of fantasy than the other children.

Negative attitudes on the part of the foster parents toward the natural parents seemed to be connected with the foster parent's rejection of the child in most cases. Concealment of information was present in most cases as it appeared that the children knew very little about their parents before adolescence. If they did know (as in the case of Marjorie and
possibly Jim and Harold) the information given was probably negative. While difference in name may have caused conflict because it tended to conceal information about the child which he may have suspected, the less concerned children were concerned perhaps for other reasons such as color difference, social-sexual conflict, or a separation experience. None of the intensely concerned children had used a different name. Sudden revelation of information in adolescence appeared to be present in three cases in a way that might have impact on the child's concern (Jane, Jerry, Larry). However, this factor may have had more influence than is apparent inasmuch as none of the children knew much about their foster child status or their natural parents before reaching adolescence. The concern seemed related to relatively normal social-sexual conflicts in the less pathologically concerned children. Marriage and possible inferiority feelings regarding that role seemed to be the main concern as related to the natural parents. In Marjorie's case the social-sexual conflict seemed to have a relation to her own maladjustment in a psychosexual sense. It is doubtful in the writer's opinion whether Marjorie became like her mother because she identified with her as much as she did because of her own basic personality disturbance. The factor of separation experience, which seemed closely connected with rejection, seemed to be a precipitating factor in the child's concern. Semblance of family also seemed to have some bearing on the child's concern although other factors were operative (see contrast between Jerry's case and Larry's and Bill's). Noticeable color difference seemed to be the mainspring of the concern in two cases, although other factors seemed to have relevance in these cases also. These findings are speculative and suggestive rather than conclusive. In Chapter 4, their implications in terms of further research and social work practice will be discussed.
Chapter 4

Conclusions and Implications for Research and Social Work

This study was an attempt to explore the general problem of the intense concern which some adolescent foster children show about their biological parents, from whom they were separated permanently during the first three years of life. It was assumed by the writer that being reared by natural parents is a socially defined need which children in this culture may feel more strongly than children in other cultures. Furthermore, it was assumed that the adolescent foster child, like other adolescents, has strong conflicts with parental figures which may at times precipitate a natural fantasy about an "ideal" set of parents who are different in personality and physical appearance from the parents with whom they are living. In the adolescent foster child's case, the content of this fantasy might be expressed in terms of concern about the natural parents whom the child has not known since his early years of life. However, some adolescent foster children are much more concerned about their natural parents than might be expected if the above factors were the major causative ones in their concern. That creates this intense concern on the part of some of these children?

This was the focal question of the study. The writer hoped that study of a group of intensely concerned adolescent foster children might reveal factors which may contribute to this intensification of concern.

In order to examine the case records for the purpose of identifying these factors, the writer decided that a series of inter-related hypotheses would have to be made to form a frame of reference. This frame of reference was derived by the writer from a review of relevant literature on this subject from the fields of social work, social psychology, and
psychiatry. The series of inter-related hypotheses (factors) were grouped arbitrarily into basic causative factors and immediate precipitating factors, and described under these groupings in Chapter Two. In Chapter Three the writer described the factors which he identified in seven case records on the basis of clinical judgment. Elements of all the factors were found to be present in the cases of these adolescent foster children, wards of the Vancouver Children's Aid Society who, in the clinical judgment of two experienced workers, were considered to be intensely concerned about their unknown natural parents. No attempt to weigh the significance of the factors in a particular child's concern was made, as it was thought that this would properly be the job of more definitive research.

A Critique of the Research

While the study admittedly was an exploratory one, it raises certain questions of methodology which have implications for further research. One of the crucial areas of the study lay in conceptualizing and defining the factors. One might well ask the question: were any of the factors actually located in the cases studied? Certainly descriptive definition lacks precision. What are the components of separation trauma? How can they be identified with precision that would lend itself to further verification? It would seem that such a question as this is of critical import. Clinical judgments by themselves do not necessarily form a solid base for research. Yet with the material at hand, what is open for the researcher? At the time these children were taken into care (in the late 1920's and early 1930's) the clinical judgments of workers may not have been refined enough to identify evidence suggestive of separation trauma, for example, or else there may have been insufficient consideration of this
problem by the workers. Thence the records may not reflect the clinical observations which social workers could make today in the actual case situations. This student was forced therefore on the basis of the paucity of the material to superimpose certain general descriptions of the factors upon the material at hand. The result is that only indications of the factors are presented. The limitations of such research are obvious. In order to *establish* rather than *suggest* that certain factors may be present in such cases, more complete case material and more definitive criteria would have to be set up. This study merely provides a suggested conceptual framework with which to further study the factors which may contribute to the adolescent foster child's concern about his natural parents from whom he was separated at an early age.

**Implications of the Findings in Terms of Future Research**

The limitations of the study point up the need for further research in this area. This research should be directed toward further definition of the problem for social treatment purposes. Admittedly the concern about the natural parents is only one phase of the adolescent foster child's problems. But if, as the study suggests, the concern for the natural parents is symptomatic of disorganizing factors in the child's environment, this seems to indicate that any dealing with this concern isolated from the adolescent's own psychosocial problems would be without helpful purpose. The problem then is to set the concern within the framework of a particular adolescent's inner and outer world. This can be accomplished by sound psychosocial diagnosis based on definitive research. What influence does a factor such as separation trauma have on the adolescent's concern? Does separation trauma have a different degree of influence than concealment during
childhood, and revelation of the knowledge about natural parents in adolescence? Which factors can be dealt with most effectively by social workers? which factors can be dealt with most effectively by psychiatrists?

The writer believes that within its limitations such a framework as suggested in this study may provide a start in answering some of these questions.

The first step in research would appear to be an amplification of this frame of reference with more refined criteria. One could study the foster child who is not concerned about his natural parents. Has he been subjected to separation trauma in infancy? Has he had lack of continuity in parental figures? Has he had continuity in parental figures, but basic rejection by them? Are his foster parents' attitudes toward his natural parents negative or positive? If the adolescent foster child who shows little concern about his natural parents has these negative factors present in his environment, then a new dimension will have to be added to the conceptual framework. Other factors will have to be ferreted out and examined. On the other hand the conceptual framework might be validated as it stands.

The study might serve as a basis for illuminating our understanding of the concern some adopted children show about their unknown natural parents. If the child was adopted during the first months of infancy and remained with his adopting parents for the rest of his childhood, factors other than continuity in parental figures might be highlighted for further study.

This study also provides a tentative framework for examination and weighing of these factors in individual cases upon a quantitative basis. The relative degrees of the presence of each factor could be compared with the relative intensity of the child’s concern. Probably generalizations would be hard to draw as each child defines a cultural need in his peculiar
idiomatic fashion. If the basic social work principle of understanding where the individual client is, is to be applied, then this research seems indicated.

Also the question of whether this is a peculiar problem of the adolescent foster child should be answered. If this is a special problem for adolescent foster children, then the efforts on the part of social workers in the child placement field should be focused more on the problem. How many adolescent foster children in this group are concerned? Is the overall concern great enough, as compared with adopted children, to warrant specialized attention? A comparative study of the concern quantitatively as between the two groups would seem to be indicated.

The Social Worker's Role in Diagnosis and Treatment

Jean Charnley in her book "The Art of Child Placement" has said the social worker in child placement is the link between the child, his natural parents, and his foster parents. The worker's role is that of keeping balance among these persons in the triangle. Although the worker's role in helping the adolescent foster child's concern about his natural parents was not studied specifically it was evident that the children in this study saw the worker as a bridge between them and the parents whom they did not know. What should the worker tell the child about his own parents? When should he tell them? How should he tell them? These are questions to which no definite answers seem available. This thesis points up some provocative areas for further study in regard to these questions.

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One of the assumptions many workers have had is that a child who is afforded love and security of permanent parental figures in a family setting will have very little concern about his natural parents. The study of the literature reveals this may not always be the case. Spitz has diagnosed the concern of one child as being symptomatic of the child's anxiety over a basic traumatic experience of separation. If the diagnosis of the case consultant and the psychiatrist in this instance is correct, it would appear that Carl had both love and continuity of parental figures in his adopted home. In addition he seemed to be well adjusted in other areas of his life, school and peer relationships. Yet time and time again Carl returned to the question of his own parents whom he could not believe were dead. In spite of two years of intensive psychiatric treatment, Carl's concern persisted. He showed his concern by stealing and by a great deal of fantasy. It is interesting to know that in this study five children would seem to have had early traumatic separation experiences. While in each case other factors seem related to the child's concern about his unknown natural parents, this writer wonders how influential was the repetitive pattern of the basic separation experience in relation to the concern these children showed. If the concern is related to a deep-seated problem such as a repetitive reaction to an early separation trauma, then it would appear that some special focus would have to be made on this core problem early in a child's life. Whether an attack on this problem lies within the realm of social work or psychiatric competency is the question. Spitz questions whether psychiatric treatment in its present form would be helpful.

"Whether our verbal, our interpretive analytical approach can touch the basic insecurity, the one which I have called conditioned trauma, remains an open question in my mind. We may have to consider in such cases approaches which complement
the classical analytical therapy. That is not a new idea; child analysis as such already is a modified analytical therapy and play therapy goes still further in its modification. It is my conviction that we may have to become even more radical.  

If Spitz's theory is correct, then it may be true to say that in these instances where severe separation trauma has occurred in a child's life, the matter of what to tell a child about his natural parents and when to tell him may be irrelevant to the basic issue. It would seem that in Carl's case (described in Chapter Two) that the telling of the background to the child may have intensified rather than helped Carl with his basic separation anxiety. This may be also true in the cases of several children studied in this thesis. For example, Jesty must have been told quite a bit of information about his natural parents by the worker. He was told, it would appear, that his mother had died while in a mental hospital. It is likely that he was told his putative father's name. Later in adolescence he used this information not only to punish himself but also to punish the people he believed to have been responsible for his basic separation experience, his natural parents. This seems to be a matter which merits critical diagnostic thinking. It would appear to be a tragic circumstance that the social worker or the foster parents would play into a child's unhealthy fantasy.  

As Sarah Stone says, the fantasy of this type of child differs from that of the child who has had a reasonably normal life history.  

"It is not the quality of the young active child who will stop momentarily in his play to wonder what kind of bouncing games he might devise on top of a pretty white cloud. It is not of the quality of the ado-

lescent girl who before dropping off to sleep dreams of a lover... It is different too from that which derives from the hatred which a well-taken-care-of middle class child develops as a sideline to his anxiety or compulsion neurosis. His (the foster child's) fantasy is pathological in that it immobilises him for productive use of many of his capacities to meet current living.1

However, although the traumatised foster child's fantasy is pathological as Stone points out, she makes this observation: "For some of these children the voids are so large and so deep that little can be done to effectively fill them. These children will, despite the social worker's most skillful efforts, continue to demonstrate a craving for a 'crutch,' a craving which for some will be insatiable. The fantasy will need to be continued in order that life be tolerable."2 Therefore, it would appear that telling the severely traumatized adolescent foster child about his natural parents is a matter which requires a great deal of casework skill. In these cases it would seem a safe generalization to limit many of the specific details about the parent's lives, particularly in regard to their anti-social behavior, so that the child would not build up a fantasy which he could turn against himself and the world.

Furthermore, it would appear that some special means of helping these children early in childhood, in addition to carefully selected foster home placement, seems warranted. Possibly the use of structured play therapy in a clinical setting, as advocated by Solomon and Levy, might help the child to work out the repetitive separation problem by his achieving a desensitization of the basic separation trauma.3 Many of the children in the group studied seemed

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2 Ibid, p. 150
to be unable to benefit by foster home placement because of the behavior
cased by this basic separation anxiety which usually displayed itself
either in anti-social behavior or a restlessness making it impossible for
them to remain situated in a foster home for more than a few months at a
time.

Obviously, such thinking would influence philosophy regarding
whether a child should be told much about his parents at an early age.
Other things being equal however, it would appear that it would be better for
a child to face some facts about his parents and about his foster home situa-
tion throughout his early childhood. The dangers of revelation of these
facts in adolescence would seem to be too great. As Kurt Lewin has said:

"It is of first importance that a stable social ground
be laid very early; the same experience of being called
a foster child which might upset the 15 year old boy
who was not aware of the real situation, will have little
or no effect at all on the child who is properly intro-
duced to his real situation at the age of three. The
variety of social structures to which a growing child
can adapt himself in a relatively stable way is astonishingly
great. It seems, however, extremely difficult to establish
a new stable social ground after one has broken down."

This theory of Lewin's might have to be limited in telling the severely
traumatized child. However, with other children it would seem that a realis-
tic facing of the circumstances is indicated.

The study reveals that, as far as records are concerned, all except
one of the foster children were told nothing about their situation before
adolescence. Some children went by the same name as their foster parents
only to learn in adolescence that their name was different. These children

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1 Kurt Lewin, Resolving Social Conflicts, Harper and Brothers, New York,
1946, p. 176.
were generally the ones who had difficulty facing the facts around them.
Two of them used aliases quite extensively. Both were children who had
used the foster parents’ real surnames at various times in their lives.
However, the fact that concealment and sudden revelation is not a contributing
factor in itself is shown in Jane’s case. Even though Jane was told at an
eyear age that she was a foster child she seems to have repressed this know-
ledge as indicated by her explanation to the worker, after her rejection by
the foster parents, that she always thought the foster parents were her own.
The writer believes that in Jane’s case, separation trauma and rejection,
rather than concealment or lack of it, may have been the crucial factors in
her concern.

The study seemed to point up the fact that negative attitudes toward
the natural parents on the part of the foster parents were related to a basic
rejection of the child by the foster parents. This was obviously so in both
Jane’s and Marjorie’s cases. In Harold’s case the foster father in rejecting
Harold said that he believed that Harold’s bad behavior was caused by here-
dity and ‘foreign blood’. In Jim’s case the fact that the foster father
called him a “bastard” also seemed related to the foster parents’ lack of
acceptance of the child. That this hurt Jim deeply after seven years is an
indication of the sensitivity a child has to the negative attitudes on the
part of the foster parents toward the natural parents. One of the basic
principles in foster placement work is that the foster parent should be able
to accept the natural parents of the child. This is applied more to the
child who has parents in reality; it seems not to have applied so much to the
child who does not have parents. While the records do not indicate the way
workers interpreted the natural parents to the foster parents, it would appear
that one of the critical factors in selecting the foster parents had been over-
looked: that is, the foster parents' acceptance of the natural parents. Here
again, the scarcity of the material in the records points to the need for
more focusing on the interpretive job which the social worker must do to help
the foster parents be able to show the foster child that he accepts the
child's natural parents however nebulous they may be. One worker, Jelowics,
has recommended that foster parents try to keep remembrances of the child's
own parents in the home, such as photographs and mementos. She also recom-
mends that the child observe the birthday of the natural parents.\(^1\) Whether
this is a valid idea or not is probably open to question. However, it would
seem to be worth notice inasmuch as it would tend not only to fill the gaps
in the child's life and thus lessen the need of fantasy and concern about the
natural parents, but it would also tend to help the foster parents have
positive attitudes toward the natural parents. This might be a practical way
in which the worker could help relieve the necessity of fantasy which may
result not only from concealment of information, but also from possible un-
conscious negative attitudes on the part of foster parents. Both of these
factors, concealment and negative attitudes on the part of foster parents,
would appear to be closely inter-related.

The matter of racial difference between the foster child and the
foster parents seems to be one which would accentuate the concern about the
natural parents on the part of the child. As yet, no careful study has been
made in relation to the influence this factor may have on the child's concern.
Cultural attitudes toward racial differences in the community play a part in
intensifying the adolescent's concern about his "difference". Some children

\(^1\) Alameda R. Jelowics, "A Foster Child Needs his own Parents", The Child,
have to be placed in foster homes where the racial background is different from their own. Scarcity of foster homes in certain racial groups makes this necessary. Therefore, the "difference" which the child feels himself can only be minimised with careful casework help. This factor could be discussed with the child at an early age; his feelings of inferiority could be brought out into the open and accepted by the foster parents and the worker. This would seem to be the most practical way of minimising not only concern about racial difference, but the concern about the natural parents which this feeling of difference may engender.

The matter of social-sexual conflict in relation to the adolescent foster child's concern about his natural parents is one which is a subject of considerable controversy. Much of this concern is related to the natural parents' socially unacceptable sexual behavior. Kohlsaat and Johnson\(^1\) believe that a child should never face the fact of his being illegitimately born. While it is true that some children face this fact with more trauma than others, the writer thinks that in many cases concealment of this fact by the worker from the child only tends to intensify his concern in this area. Many foster children probably learn from novels, moving pictures, or talk with peers or adults that a foster child is in many cases illegitimate. It would appear that in many situations it would be better for the child to have his suspicions brought into the open so he can receive help from the caseworker with the anxiety and shame which he may feel. If the child could be helped to accept this fact, it might in general be a more healthy approach than if the whole matter were ignored. In the writer's opinion the child should be helped to see that social stigma is not on the child. His

illegitimate birth was not caused by his behavior and he should be helped to accept this. He could also be helped to see that it was not caused by his parents choosing to be "bad", but rather it was caused by their own unhappiness or unfortunate circumstances. The scarcity of material in these case records about how the child was told about his illegitimacy and how he reacted to this information, point to the need for further focus on the part of social workers in this critical area.

One factor which the study revealed was that knowledge of siblings may have an influence on the child's concern about his unknown natural parents. The study does not show whether this is a factor in itself; however, it would seem that family membership has deep seated import in this culture and that a child might cling to a biological family even though it has no specific meaning to him in reality. Whether children who are too young to know their own siblings should remain with their foster care is a critical question. The writer can see how maintaining the family may be important for the older child. However, in the case of the younger child who hopefully lives in a substitute family of his own, it would seem that keeping a semblance of family for him is unrealistic and would only intensify his concern about a family which is not his in reality. In this study, in both instances the half brothers were only separated in age by a short span of time. These children were separated from their parents in infancy, one set of children did not even live with each other but the other set of children lived with each other until they were eight years old. In the former case a worker may have made an effort to bring the boys together although this is not clearly indicated in the records. In the latter case an effort was made to keep the boys together and it did not work out. This whole question of keeping siblings who never really knew each
The fact that a worker may have special feelings around this area in an important area to be considered.

"The worker needs to understand that his proposed demands to help the child learn about himself will be anxiety producing not only to the child but to himself as well. He needs to understand himself to know why at times he will say 'this I could not share with the child'. Obviously it may not be wise to share with a child everything that becomes known, but the selection of what and when may be related to the worker's own needs and to his own previous personal life experiences. A work of caution is necessary here. While the majority of workers will tend to be over-protective and try to shield the child from an inevitable pain, there are unfortunately a few with such basic hostility that they may run rampant in this kind of situation. Knowing of such elements of hostility in a worker, a supervisor should not permit embarkation on a project such as this unless they can offer sufficient protection."¹

As Yet it is impossible to make valid generalizations, as Stone points out, about what and when to tell an adolescent. The question of how to tell a child seems to be more open for definition. In this situation the social worker should apply the same understanding, warmth and acceptance that he uses in other case work situations. The object is to proceed at the child's pace by not giving him too much information too prematurely or information that would be devastating to his personality structure. A worker, in this writer's opinion should try to help the child see that here is an understanding adult (the caseworker) who accepts the fact that a child can have mixed feelings about his unknown parents and who understands that there are voids in a child's past which need to be filled. With this kind of supportive understanding the worker should be able, except in cases of extreme disturbances, to help the child (1) to relieve his

¹ Stone, op. cit., p. 150.
negative feelings about his situation and (2) to gain a positive perspective toward the facts of his life so that he may be able to feel that what he is himself is important, what he does in the future is important, and that he does not have to be tied to the past. The worker should also help the child to accept the fact that his parents had their good as well as their bad qualities and that basically they had problems over which he personally had no control, but which he could understand. This would seem to help the child to form a better understanding of the difficulties other people in the world around him have. This may eventually lead to his acceptance of his own weaknesses as well as strengths.

In the broad sense this study would seem to point out a need for further efforts on the part of the social worker in child placement to help foster children have the satisfaction of living in a home with accepting foster parents who can remain as a constant parental figure throughout his developmental years. While some of these children may never be adopted, continued efforts should be made to help the child feel that this foster family is his own family, as close as one can possibly be for him. If the worker can help the foster parents and foster child accept the strengths as well as the limitations of foster care, the worker will have accomplished a great deal in helping the child feel that this foster family is a place where he can feel that he belongs and is wanted.
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