

A CASEWORK STUDY OF
PARENTS REQUESTING THE ADOPTION PLACEMENT
OF LEGITIMATE CHILDREN

A Study of Cases from Greater Vancouver Social
Agencies, 1951.

by

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A B S T R A C T

Of all the children who are placed for adoption the legitimate children who are voluntarily placed make up the smallest group. Since voluntary adoption placement of legitimate children differs from the normal cultural pattern cases of this nature present a challenge to the social agencies.

The purpose of the present study is the examination of such a group of cases. All cases of this nature which have been known to the public and private child-caring social agencies and family social agencies in the Burnaby, New Westminster and Vancouver areas during the year 1951 were examined. The criteria of selection were: (a) the parents were married, (b) the husband was the natural father of the child in question. Only seventeen cases were known to the designated social agencies during the year 1951.

A schedule was drawn up for the purpose of analyzing the case records. Besides information such as name, age, occupation of father, the schedule tried to distinguish four main "areas": (a) the attitude of the parents towards the child, (b) the parents' psycho-socio situations, (c) the parents' own childhood experiences, and (d) the parents' contacts with the social agency.

The parents' religious affiliations were varied including the Protestant, Roman Catholic and Jewish faiths. In almost one-quarter of the cases the woman was pregnant at the time of marriage; also almost one-third of the total number of parents came from homes broken by death, desertion or divorce. In five of the cases the child in question was the first child in the family; the remaining twelve families had, on the average, 2.8 children. In eleven of the cases the parents followed through their request for adoption and placed the child with another family; in the remaining six cases the parents decided against adoption placement and kept the child.

The distribution of parental attitudes included rejection, indifference, ambivalence and only two cases of mature love. When the distribution of parental attitudes in the larger group of cases (where the child was placed for adoption) was compared with the distribution in the smaller group of cases (where the child was not placed for adoption) two main differences were revealed: (a) the manifestations of ambivalence expressed by the parents in the "retained" group were weighed in favour of the more positive aspects, and (b) the predominant parental attitude in the "placed"

A B S T R A C T

(continued)

group was one of rejection followed by attitudes of "negative" ambivalence and indifference. No one causative factor leading the parents to consider adoption placement was apparent, but rather a multiplicity of factors, including the following: refusal to assume further responsibilities; marital disharmony between the parents; inability to provide for the child financially; inadequacies of the parents to meet their responsibilities; doubts and anxieties about the family's future economic position; interference by in-laws.

In the majority of the cases the children in question were not regarded by the parents as objects with individuality but appeared to be regarded as "problem objects." This may account for the fact that in none of the cases was there any change in parental attitudes because of the sex of the child. It is impossible to generalize from such a small selection of cases but if later studies bear out these findings then there is no need for delay in making plans for the expected child because the sex is unknown.

Both groups of parents, those who placed their children, and those who decided against placement, are in need of help from the social agency in sorting out their confused feelings. The agency's main resource in working with this type of case lies in the professional worker-client relationship. However, in this type of case the social worker experiences special difficulty because of the dual responsibility of helping to work out a plan which appears to be in the best interests of the parents, and also one in the best interest of the baby.

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PARENTS WHO REQUESTED THE ADOPTION PLACEMENT
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CHAPTER I.

BACKGROUND FOR SUCCESSFUL PARENT-CHILD RELATIONSHIPS

Studies in human behaviour have invariably pointed to the conclusion that the family constellation is of paramount importance in influencing attitudes, behaviour and adjustments both normal and pathological. The different schools of psychology, while disputing other elements in each other's philosophy, agree on the fundamental importance of the effects of family life upon the development of the individual. "... it would seem that, in adopting his attitude towards the members of his family circle, a child is at the same time determining to a large extent some of the principal aspects of his relations to his fellow men in general; and that an individual's outlook and point of view in dealing with many of the most important questions of human existence can be expressed in terms of the position he has taken up with regard to the problems and difficulties arising within the relatively narrow world of the family."¹

The child instinctively seeks in the parent-child relationship, affection, security, recognition and approval. The ability of the parents to satisfy those needs is dependent

¹ J. C. Flugel, The Psycho-Analytic Study of the Family, Hogarth Press Ltd., London, 1921, p. 4.

on the degree to which the parents had those same needs met in their own childhoods. It is not sufficient to say that the responsibility for the child's adjustment or maladjustment lies within the parents, for the parents, themselves, are but the product of earlier influences.

The psycho-analytic school of psychology has made a valuable contribution to the understanding of the importance and the nature of the psychological problems connected with family life. In order to provide a theoretical basis on which to make diagnostic evaluations of the cases studied, the psychological problems connected with family life, and the individual's normal psychological adjustments to those problems, as seen from the point of view of this school of psychology, will be discussed in some detail.

Theoretical Normal Development

The newborn infant is a completely helpless individual.¹ For approximately the first three months of his life his mother's main tasks are keeping him fed, warm, dry and comfortable. It is thought that he is unable ^{for some months} to clearly distinguish between himself and his mother, and feels that the satisfaction of his needs is automatic. He can do little for himself but the satisfaction of his needs is his first concern. Thus those tendencies which are afterwards to develop into love, affection and desire for persons in the outer world are at first connected with sensations

1 J. F. Brown, The Psychodynamics of Abnormal Behavior, McGraw-Hill, New York, p. 186.

from various parts of his own body. His total attitude is one of passive dependence.

However, this type of existence does not continue indefinitely. The ongoing unfolding of the child's personality involves his urges to explore his own growing abilities, and his growing perceptions of things that can be felt, manipulated, et cetera. With a frustration such as the weaning process, the child begins to develop the first crude ideas of outside reality and of himself as an individual. Whereas previously the child had his needs met in what he felt was an automatic process, he now finds that he often suffers temporary frustration before his needs are satisfied. And often at around this time, a second child enters the family group. The advent of the baby combined with the weaning process forces the child to begin to realize that he is no longer the center of attention and that there is an outside reality which he will have to meet. During this period there is also a further development of the first crude manifestation of negative affective responses. The weaning process may be difficult and only completed after considerable resistance on the part of the young child. Furthermore, the child may dislike sharing the mother with a second child even though he may be interested in and proud of "his baby." On the other hand, babies often wean themselves when ready, with little or no resistance, but rather pleasure in their newly discovered abilities to cope with the situation.

Not only does the child give up his passive dependent attitude, and his feeling of being the centre of attention, but he also learns to assume an increasing degree of responsibility for his ~~own~~ bodily processes such as defecation and urination. The child gives up his undisciplined ways and brings these processes under conscious control. This is not accomplished without some wish for the former freedom. And, as in the process of weaning, the child may experience negative affective responses towards the parents through whom the demands of society are transmitted. The child is helped to accept this responsibility by the encouragement and approbation which he receives from his parents.

Having assumed this conscious responsibility for controlling his bodily processes, the child is in the position of deciding whether or not he will give in to his more primitive urges or whether, for the sake of parental approval, he will exercise his conscious control and inhibit the primitive urges. Thus the child has come to what is known as "the level of reality testing." Once this "reality testing" has been firmly established with the child it becomes one of the fundamental principles in guiding all later behaviour.

Looking back in review at this point, it is seen that the child has given up the passive dependence of the newborn infant, and has assumed a degree of responsibility for his own actions. He has given up the idea that he is the centre of

attention, for whom all things are done, and has accepted the fact that there is an outside reality towards which he must make an adjustment.

Anywhere between the third and seventh year the child enters that period of his development about which so much has been written, the period of the "family romance." Coupled with the child's intellectual and physical development up to this point has been the child's emotional development. The various frustrations which the child has faced have not been accepted without some resistance on his part accompanied by feelings of a negative and hostile nature. On the other hand, the child has experienced feelings of a positive and giving nature from his parents, and has learned to reciprocate such feelings.

During the period of the "family romance" the development of the child's emotional life is intensified. The degree of adjustment which the child is able to make in this period is of the utmost importance in furthering the normal development of his personality.

Without going into detail, the development which takes place at this period can be described as follows. It was pointed out earlier that, at first, those tendencies which are afterwards to develop into love, affection, and desire for persons and objects in the outer world, are connected with sensations from various parts of the child's own body. Thus the child

is concerned with persons or objects in the outer world only in so far as they serve to bring about the satisfaction of his own bodily needs. During the period of the "family romance" however, the child is concerned with persons as they relate to him. Thus the child begins to experience the desire for, and affection towards some person in the outer world. This transition from "self love" to what is termed "object love" is a most important step of normal development since on its success depends the possibility of a normal growth of the later love life.

For both the little boy and the little girl the mother is the first object towards whom they experience feelings. This is what would be expected because of the close attachment between the mother and the child. The mother is the one who satisfies the child's most immediate needs. However, at some time between the third and seventh year there is an intensification of feeling between the little boy and his mother and between the little girl and her father. At the same time the child comes to recognize the strong emotional tie which exists between the mother and the father. Because of these factors the child is in the position of a jealous, albeit juvenile, rival with the parent of the same sex. The child has to cope with his feelings of love and affection for the parent of the opposite sex and, also, to cope with his feelings of rivalry and hostility for the parent of the same sex.

During the first few years of his life the child is a relatively amoral individual. Because of the lack of integration in his mind tendencies are worked out without any serious opposition or modification caused by the presence of other conflicting tendencies within the mind. Thus the child can experience in rapid succession both strong positive and negative feelings for the same person. However, the normal development of the mind requires that these primitive emotional tendencies shall undergo grave and far-reaching modifications. The forces which are at work to bring about this repression of the child's crude manifestations of love and hate are not yet completely understood. However, there can be little doubt that one of the forces concerned is to be found in the suggestive influence of social pressures and traditions manifesting themselves through the behaviour and expressions of adult persons with whom the child comes in contact.

The little boy works out this problem of his conflicting feelings for his parents by renouncing his rivalry with his father and by looking forward to the time when he grows up and will be like his father. Then he will be able to have the love of someone like his mother all to himself. By this process of identification with his father the little boy not only solves the immediate problem of his rivalry with his father, but he also begins to take over into his own personality his father's standards and ideals.

The little girl faces a similar problem; she appears to be in a position of rivalry with her mother for her father's affection. Her solution to this problem is similar to the solution the little boy works out. She renounces her rivalry with her mother and looks forward to the time when she has grown up to be like her mother, and when she will be able to love someone like her father. By this process of identification with her mother, the little girl solves the immediate problem of her rivalry with her mother, and also she begins to take over into her own personality her mother's standards and ideals. Thus it is seen that the parents stand as the prototypes of masculinity and femininity for the child.

The child now enters what is termed the "latency period" which lasts, speaking generally, from anytime after the fifth year up until approximately the twelfth year. During this period the emotional development, which was intensified during the period of the "family romance," takes second place to the child's intellectual and physical development. Whereas previously the child's world was the world of the immediate family, during this period the child comes to know the larger world of the neighbourhood, the school, the church and the general community. This is the period of the most rapid formal learning and many children undergo all the schooling they are to receive during this time. But, perhaps of even more importance, they begin to mix and live in society.

At the age of puberty there is a resurgence of the child's emotional development. At first the expression of the more positive affective tendencies is made towards the members of the same sex. Gradually, however, around eighteen to twenty years it is transferred to members of the opposite sex and normal adult heterosexuality emerges.

During the period of the "family romance" the development of the child's emotional life was intensified, and the intensification of feeling was directed towards other members of the family group, particularly the parent of the opposite sex. The resulting conflict was resolved by the child through his unconscious renunciation of his wish for the exclusive love of the parent of the opposite sex and through his unconscious identification with the parent of the same sex. Although there is a resurgence of these feelings at the time of puberty, the affective tendencies are no longer primarily directed towards the immediate family members as was the case during the period of the "family romance." Rather, by a series of steps the affective tendencies are directed towards persons outside the family group.

The choice of persons outside the family group towards whom the child directs his affective tendencies appears to be determined in accordance with a general law governing the process of displacement, viz. "... that the new end or object, to which the psychic energy is directed, must have some associative

connection with the old object which has been abandoned." ¹

For this reason it is very frequently possible to trace some kind of resemblance between the loved parent and the new object of affection, although this resemblance may be either of a similar and positive nature or of an opposing and negative nature. In this latter case the object of love may be ² markedly different from the original object. Flugel suggests that in the case of a succession of such loved objects it is not unusual for the resemblance to the original object of affection to become gradually less pronounced in accordance with a further general characteristic of displacement. Thus it is seen that the first step in a large number of cases is the transference of the affective tendencies from the parent of the opposite sex to some other member of the family such as an older sibling of the opposite sex. Later there is a further transference of the affective tendencies from the first parent-substitutes to persons outside the family group.

The child's attitude at the time of this first expression of affective tendencies directed towards persons other than the parent, is very similar to his attitude towards the parent

1 Ibid., p. 27.

2 Loc. cit.

during his early years of life. He is more concerned with his own worth as an object to receive love than he is with his ability to give love. Thus in the loves of the early adolescent towards persons of the opposite sex there is usually a strong element of reverence and admiration, a deep feeling of gratitude for any favour that may be received combined with a sense of the lover's own unworthiness and inferiority. However, as the child matures this feeling of inferiority, this relatively child-like attitude towards the object of love, is usually replaced by one in which the child plays a more active, vigorous and self-reliant part.

At each fresh choice of love-object the associative link with the original object of affection becomes less marked and at maturity the individual should, for practical purposes, be free to direct his love towards those who show little resemblance of any kind to the first object of his dawning affection. This may be looked upon as the normal development of the child's positive affective tendencies.

Previously mention was made of the negative or hostile affective tendencies which the child may experience during the different stages of his development. Prior to the period of the "family romance" such negative tendencies are not directed against any specific object but are experienced as a result of frustrations in the satisfaction of the child's unmet needs. However, during the period of the "family romance" there develops

"object love" which has already been discussed. As a result of the development of this "object love" jealousy may develop for the parent of the same sex. Such jealousy often gives rise to envy and hatred for the competitor and rival. Thus the negative or hostile affective tendencies of the child's nature would appear to be further developed as a consequence of the love aspect, the affection felt by the child for the parent of the opposite sex. However, through the child's identification with the parent of the same sex, in the course of normal development, the basis for this competitive position is removed, and the negative and hostile tendencies should diminish in intensity.

This presupposes, however, that the child is able to make a successful identification with the parent of the same sex. Such an identification is not always possible. If, in addition to being a rival, the parent of the same sex interferes with the child's desires and activities by adopting a harsh, intolerant, or inconsiderate attitude in their everyday relations, then such an identification may be impossible. In that case the hatred of the child for the parent of the same sex may be of more importance in the child's mental life than the love for the parent of the opposite sex. Although this negative affective tendency may be quiescent during the latency period it may again come to the fore at puberty and come to constitute one of the dominant traits of the individual's character.

The normal development of the child's affective tendencies may also be prevented if the parent of the opposite sex rejects or rebuffs the child's manifestations of positive feelings. The child may develop an indifference to the attractions of others of the same sex as the parent in question or, of more serious consequences, develop an active dislike for persons of that sex.

The importance of the parent's attitude and behaviour throughout all phases of the child's development cannot be over-emphasized. The parent's attitude and behaviour constitutes the primary elements in furnishing the environment within which the child works out his basic adjustments. The parents provide many of the important stimuli for the child's development, the frustration as well as the affection which makes his progress possible. Within this environment the child learns to deal with his instinctive drives of love and hate, sex and aggression, life and death, dependency and independency--drives which provide the motive force for the building of his personality. The extent to which the parents can provide the proper balance of love and discipline largely determine the child's chances of progressing from one level of adjustment to the next. The process is one in which emotional factors far outweigh intellectual ones. The child is enabled to fully use his intellect only by reason of his previous emotional development.

"Maturity"

If the child's development has been normal he is ready, sometime between the eighteenth and twentieth year, to enter into a mature sexual relationship and to start the familial history over again. At that time if his development has been normal he is able to give to others as well as to accept from them. He has assumed responsibility for his own actions, and for acceptable socio-sexual conduct. This would include assuming responsibility for the care and support of himself, obtaining and holding a job in keeping with his capabilities, establishing relationships on the job and in the community at large. Through a positive identification with a suitable parent-figure he has been able to accept his own sex and does not have to deny it. As a result of a series of positive affective relationships he is able to choose a suitable marriage partner, to have happy and satisfying relationships with that partner, to become a parent and have satisfying relationships with his children and they with him, and to assume responsibility for the care and support of his dependents. And, finally, he has learned to handle both his negative and positive affective tendencies and is comfortable in the expression of both. In the case of the young woman, besides the aspects mentioned above, she is able to accept the dependency involved in marriage, and has been able to accept her own sex, including the aspects of child-bearing and child-rearing.

In other words, sometime between the eighteenth and twentieth year, if the child's development has been normal, he has reached a point of maturity and has become a well-rounded and well-integrated individual.

With this theoretical basis on which to make diagnostic evaluations of the case studies, it is now possible to enter into a detailed consideration of the subject of this work.

Purpose of the Study

The placing of children for adoption is an integral part of the programme of any child-caring and family social agency. It is one aspect of adoption work which is the focus of attention in the present study.

The practice of adoption has steadily gained social acceptance over the years. As W. Clarke Hall has stated the modern motive for adoption is the conferring of the "...privileges of parents upon the childless, and the protection of parents upon the parentless."¹ It is generally accepted that the practice of adoption (provided the adoption home is suitable) assures the child, who is in need of a home, of the security, affection, recognition and approval so necessary for his normal development.

¹ Grace Abbott, "Adoption," Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences, 1930, vol. 1, p. 461.

The question of why the child is being given up for adoption is often of secondary importance. The fact remains, however, that every child who is placed for adoption had two natural parents--married, living in common-law, or unmarried, who were either unable or unwilling to care for him.

Many of the children who are placed for adoption are the children of unmarried parents. A further group of children who are placed for adoption come from the ranks of the so-called "neglected" children. In those cases where, due to calamity or disaster, children are left without proper guardianship, or where the courts have adjudged that the parents are "unfit," the guardianship of the child is transferred to the proper authority. A number of these children are also placed in adoption homes.

There is a further very small group of cases where the children placed for adoption are the children of married parents who voluntarily request adoption placement. It is this small group of cases which it is proposed to examine in the present study to throw light on (a) the causative factors behind the parents' request for the voluntary adoption placement and (b) the role of the social agency in such cases.

The voluntary adoption placement of legitimate children is a provocative subject because it so violently contradicts the

cultural concepts of customary family life. It constitutes a unique type of case for the social agency. It is anticipated that the parents who request the adoption placement and the social workers who work with them will have strong feelings around so controversial a subject.

Selection of Cases

In order to validate the cases selected for study the following criteria of selection were decided upon. Only those cases were considered where the parents were legally married, and (b) where the husband was the natural father of the child in question. Several common-law couples also requested the adoption placement of children, but such cases were not considered. It was felt that, since those parents had failed to adhere to the cultural mores in the first place, other factors might also complicate their request for adoption placement. The other important criterion used in the selection of cases was the requirement that the husband had to be the natural father of the child in question. A number of other cases were also known to the social agencies where a parent, usually the mother, requested the adoption placement of a legitimate child. However, in those cases it was found that the husband was not the natural father of the child. Here again it was felt that, since the parents had failed to adhere to the cultural mores, other factors might complicate their request for adoption placement.

All cases, where the adoption placement of a legitimate child had been requested, and which had been known to the public and private child-caring social agencies and family social agencies in the Burnaby, New Westminster and Vancouver areas during the year 1951 were examined. The criteria of selection were applied to this group of cases, and it was found that there were seventeen cases where parents had requested the adoption placement of legitimate children. In eleven of the seventeen cases the parents followed through their request for adoption and placed the child. Seven of the children who were placed for adoption were females and the other four were males. In the remaining six cases the parents decided against adoption placement and kept the child. Of the children who were not placed for adoption, three were females and three were males.

The Method

A schedule (see page 19) was drawn up for the purpose of examining all the cases studied. Besides identifying information, such as name, age, occupation of father, the schedule included four main "areas": details of the parent's psycho-social situations, the attitude of the parents towards the child in question, details of the parent's own childhood experiences, and details of the parent's contacts with the social agency.

Sample of Schedule Used for Case Analysis

1. General:

Agency	Case number
Name of parents	Birth dates
Children	Birth places
Racial Origin	Religion
Husband's occupation	

2. Details of parent's psycho-socio situation:

Financial situation

Housing

Health problems

Employment record

Cultural characteristics

Marital relationship

3. Attitude of the parents towards the child:

Behaviour

4. Details of the parent's own childhood experiences:

5. Details of the parent's contacts with the social agency:

Social worker's evaluation.

A schedule was used for each of the cases studied, and pertinent information from the case files was recorded under the appropriate heading in the schedule. Each of the cases was then analyzed on the basis of the information entered on the schedule.

Consideration was given to the manner in which the cases could be presented most effectively. It was realized that all the information contained in the schedule was inter-related. Thus it was impossible to attempt to analyze the parent's attitude towards the child without taking into account the parent's psycho-socio situation. At the same time the parent's adjustment to their psycho-socio situation was dependent on their total life experiences. However, for purposes of exposition it was decided that the analysis of the cases would be presented in three stages: an analysis of the causative factors in the parent's psycho-socio situation which led to the consideration of adoption placement, an analysis of the parent's attitude towards the child in question, and an analysis of the quality of the parent's own childhood experiences as those experiences equipped them to assume the responsibilities of adult life. No attempt was made to evaluate the quality of the case work services offered by the social agencies to this group of cases.

Introductory Information

By way of an introduction to the cases studied it will be of value to give some factual information about the cases. The median age of the fathers was 31.0 years; the median age of the mothers was 27 years and 7 months. In almost a third of the cases (five cases) the child, who was considered for adoption, was the first child in the family. The remaining twelve families had, on the average, 2.3 children. The parents' religious affiliations included a cross-section--Protestant, Roman Catholic and Jewish faiths. The parents' racial origins also included a representative cross-section--Dutch, German, Scotch, Irish, Russian, English, Italian, French, Swedish. The parents would appear to have received an average public school education: the fathers, on the average, had received 8.5 years of schooling; the mothers, on the average, had received 9.3 years of schooling.

The parents in the group of cases studied would appear to differ from a representative group of parents of the larger community in two respects. Almost one-quarter (four cases) of the women were pregnant at the time of their marriage. Secondly, the occupations of the fathers were predominantly of a labouring nature. The occupations of the fathers included the following: labourer, garage attendant, logger, entertainer, managerial executive, truck driver, butcher, soldier and mechanic.

Further light will be thrown on the group of cases studied in the following chapter which deals with the parents' psycho-socio situations.

CHAPTER II

THE PARENTS' PSYCHO-SOCIO SITUATIONS

The normal development of the affective aspects of the child's personality was dealt with at some length in the first chapter. Some mention should be made at this point of the development of what Flugel calls the "dependency aspects" of the child's personality. The distinction between the affective and the dependency aspects is an arbitrary one because these two aspects are inextricably inter-woven. The child is at first wholly dependent on parental authority and parental care. However, normal psychic development involves a gradual emergence from this dependency to one in which the child is dependent to a greater or less extent upon his own efforts as regards his livelihood and upon his own judgments as regards his conduct.

Flugel suggests ¹ that it seems possible to distinguish two main aspects of this process of development--aspects which are intimately connected with one another. The first aspect is that which is concerned with the actual manifestations of vital activity for the purpose of self-preservation, and for bringing about the fulfilment of the individual's aims and desires.

1 Flugel, op. cit., p. 41.

While at first the child is almost entirely dependent on his parents for the accomplishment of these objects, through his physical, mental and emotional growth he learns to fulfil an increasing number of these wants for himself, and to attain his desires by his own efforts. When he has reached maturity the individual should be able to transact the ordinary business of life and to maintain himself by his own efforts.

The other main aspect which Flugel suggests is concerned with the matter of self-guidance. Here again the child is at first dependent upon his parents who dictate his mode of life and enforce their moral codes. Successful development of mind and character demands an increasing degree of autonomy as regards both thought and conduct. This implies a corresponding gradual emancipation from the jurisdiction of the parents.

This emancipation does not take place without some resistance on the part of the parents. The parents are called upon to give up their protection of, responsibility for, and authority over the child. After long years of fulfilling these duties it is not easy for the parents to make such an adjustment. And also, in the affective relationship between the parents and the child, the child's emancipation calls for a gradual modification, re-distribution and re-direction of those emotions and interests which, for so many years, have been centered on the child.

Marriage often tends to intensify the problem of emancipation because it cuts off children from the direct influence and contact of their parents. Parents, who because of their own needs desire to retain a strong influence over their children, are, therefore, as a rule, opposed to the marriage of the latter, and usually display antagonism to their sons or daughters-in-law. The parents may feel that the person in whom the child is interested is an unsuitable or unworthy object for the child's love and affection. Since the marriage is, however, in many cases difficult or impossible to avert, such parents will often seek to minimize the disturbing effects of marriage by arranging that their children shall be near them after marriage, or that they shall marry a partner whom the parents consider as suitable.

In four of the cases studied the parents were going through this process of emancipation from their own parental homes. The average age of the fathers was 21.4 years; of the mothers 18.7 years. In all four cases the women were pregnant at the time of the marriage. The cases will first be presented in summary form before comment ^{is made} upon the problems involved.

Mr. and Mrs. K moved to Vancouver following their forced marriage in another part of Canada. Mr. K had never held a job for any length of time, and before moving to Vancouver he had been unemployed. He decided that they could not keep the

baby because of their financial position. He was insistent that the baby should be placed for adoption immediately following the birth and was very impatient when there was a delay in this plan. Mrs. K was ambivalent in her feelings towards the baby. In her relationship with her husband there appeared to be a feeling of her own inferiority and she acquiesced to his wishes in the matter.

Quite the opposite was the case with Mrs. N. Mr. and Mrs. N were the youngest parents in the group of cases studied--they were both in their late teens. Mr. N was functioning on a very immature level. He was afraid to tell his parents about his marriage and the baby. He was unemployed but made no attempt to find work and support his wife and child. His attitude towards the baby was one of rejection and he threatened to desert his wife if the baby was not placed for adoption. Mrs. N went about making plans so that they would be able to keep the baby and in the end the child was not placed for adoption.

In the P case Mrs. P. had welcomed her marriage because it gave her a chance to leave her mother who dominated the home. It would appear that Mrs. P was still in the process of satisfying her own needs because she was able to admit that she felt the arrival of the baby would deprive her and her husband of many enjoyments which they would otherwise have been able to share.

Mr. P had a poor employment record and was unemployed at the time they approached the social agency. This fact, and the fact that Mrs. P had suffered a deprived childhood upbringing appeared to strengthen her desire for the adoption placement of the baby. Mr. P was somewhat more positive in his ambivalent feelings for the baby but was agreeable to whatever decision his wife reached. It was at this point that both mothers-in-law stepped into the picture. They felt that placement of the baby for adoption was "inhuman." They persuaded Mr. and Mrs. P to take the baby home for a "trial period" and in the meantime they supplied clothing and equipment. Mr. P was pleased at the turn of events but his wife felt that she had been "railroaded" into keeping the baby. The P's never did follow through with their request for adoption placement.

In the M case it would appear that Mr. M's mother felt that her son had made a very poor choice in the woman he married. Immediately prior to her marriage Mrs. M Junior had been living with her own mother who was engaged in prostitution. This fact, along with several others, appears to account for Mrs. M Senior's attitude towards her daughter-in-law. It was on Mrs. M Senior's instigation that the couple first approached the social agency to discuss adoption placement of the baby. It is possible that Mrs. M Senior hoped that, with the baby placed for adoption, the marriage might be dissolved.

Mrs. M Senior attempted to control and dominate her son, and he appeared to be incapable of making any decisions on his own. His attitude towards the baby was one of ambivalence, and as long as he remained under his mother's influence he was unable to express the positive side of his feelings. However, shortly after the baby was born Mr. M was transferred to another part of Canada. No longer under his mother's control he asserted his positive feelings for the baby, and made plans for his wife and child to join him. But for Mrs. M Seniors interference in the case the M's might never have considered adoption placement.

In each of these four cases it is obvious that the parents had failed to attain to that degree of maturity which was described in the previous chapter. Their request for the adoption placement of the child was but another indication of their immaturity. However, the degree of immaturity was not the same in all the cases.

The arrival of a baby represents a new responsibility which parents must assume. In the K case the parents refused to assume that responsibility and placed the baby for adoption. In the other three cases the child was not placed for adoption. However, only in the M case was it felt that the parents had willingly accepted the responsibility for the child. In the other two cases, one of the parents in each

case was most reluctant to take the baby home.

The general immaturity of the parents was seen in a number of different areas. Three of the four fathers were having difficulty in assuming responsibility for the care of themselves and their dependents. Mr. and Mrs. K and Mr. N were unable to assume responsibility for their own actions. Thus the K's, rather than face their local community, had found it necessary to move to Vancouver following their forced marriage. Mr. N could not even bring himself to tell his parents about his marriage. Mr. K refused to assume responsibility for his child and demanded its adoption placement. Mr. N, who had perhaps the weakest ego in this group of parents, was not even able to demand the child's adoption placement. Rather, he threatened to run away by deserting his wife if the adoption placement did not take place. Mrs. P was able to admit that she felt that the baby would interfere with their activities, thus indicating that she had not reached that point of maturity where she was ready to give to others.

In two of the cases interference by in-laws tended to further complicate the parents' struggle towards independency. Mrs. P and Mr. M had failed to reach that degree of maturity at which they could assert their own wishes and desires as opposed to the wishes and desires of their parents. In the P case Mrs. P felt that she had been "railroaded" into keeping

the baby but apparently accepted the situation. In the M case Mr. M was not able to express his positive feelings for the baby until he was out from under his mother's domination and control following his departure from Vancouver.

The fact that all four women were pregnant at the time of marriage would appear to be another indication of the parents' immaturity because of their failure to adhere to the cultural mores. The forces which caused the parents to conceive the child prior to marriage remain obscure. A comparison between these four women and the unmarried mother is difficult because of the lack of pertinent information in the case records. Young suggests¹ that the behaviour of the unmarried mother is purposeful and that the unmarried mother is determined, however unconsciously, to have a baby out-of-wedlock. Further, she suggests that the unmarried mother wants a baby, but a baby without an accompanying husband, a baby that might somehow serve as a solution for unconscious strivings and conflicts. It would appear, therefore, that since the women in these four cases had chosen to marry the fathers of their children and to continue to live with them following the marriage, that the forces which caused them to conceive the child prior to the marriage are different from the forces operative in the case of the unmarried mother.

1. Leontine R. Young, "Personality Patterns in Unmarried Mothers," The Family, vol. 26 (December, 1945), pp. 296-303.

In another four of the cases it would appear that the wife had serious doubts about the husband's ability to continue to be a successful bread-winner, and the anxiety produced by these fears conditioned her attitude towards the baby. In each of these cases it was the wife who worked out adoption plans with the social agency.

Mr. A who was in his middle forties, had never taken much responsibility in the home, and according to his wife he was "just like another child." Several years prior to this contact with the social agency he had developed tuberculosis, and since that time he had only been able to work on a part-time basis. There were three children in the family: a teen-age boy, a teen-age girl and a baby girl. Mrs. A, who appeared to be a very capable person, had returned to her pre-marital occupation after her husband developed tuberculosis. However, when she became pregnant, she felt that another baby was more than they could care for and approached the social agency for adoption placement. Besides her fear about their future economic position, it would appear that Mrs. A had reached the limit of her ability to assume responsibility for the family. Mr. A's attitude towards the baby was classified as one of indifference. He was surprised that it would be necessary for him to sign adoption papers, thinking that his wife would be able to handle all the necessary details.

Mr. and Mrs. D had been married for six years at the time Mrs. D. approached the social agency for the adoption placement of their sixth child. She felt that financially they could not care for another baby, and that physically she was not able to look after it. However, her more basic desire for adoption placement seemed to stem from her fear that her husband would not always be employable. Mr. D was an excellent worker, but each winter he had a period of unemployment due to his inability to work as a result of a war injury. Mrs. D expressed the fear that her husband would become less and less employable. Mr. D. was ambivalent in his attitude towards the baby but gave in to his wife's desire for adoption placement.

In the T case Mrs. T. approached the social agency shortly after the birth of their third child, and inquired about temporary foster-home care for the baby. Mr. T. had been unemployed for some months and Mrs. T was concerned about the care which she could give the baby. In later contacts with the social agency adoption placement was considered but both Mr. and Mrs. T were ambivalent in their feelings for the baby and decided in favour of keeping the child. Mr. T was one of the few parents in the group of case studies who questioned the moral aspects of making such an adoption placement.

Mr. and Mrs. E's marriage was a mixed racial and religious union, and her family had never accepted Mr. E.

Mrs. E described her father as irresponsible and shiftless, but it would appear that the man she chose to marry resembled her father in some ways. Mrs. E had a protective attitude towards her husband and defended his weaknesses and limitations against the criticism of her family. Mrs. E felt that the responsibility of a third child would be too much for her husband and this opinion was shared by the social worker in the case. Mrs. E's family were horrified at the thought of the E's placing the baby for adoption, and offered financial assistance to Mrs. E if she would leave her husband and keep the baby. However, in keeping with her protective attitude towards her husband, Mrs. E refused to consider such a plan and the E's followed through with the adoption placement. For his part it would appear that Mr. E had some recognition of his limitations because he admitted to the over-burdening responsibility of the first two children. Thus, in this case, it would appear that in-law interference tended to reinforce the mother's rejecting attitude towards the baby.

The responsibility and effort involved in rearing children diminishes very considerably the time and energy available for more directly personal occupations and enjoyments. In another of the cases studied it would appear that the child was seen as a hindrance to the husband's occupational advancement and was, therefore, placed for adoption.

Mr. H was the only father in the group of cases studied

who initiated contact with the social agency; in all other cases it was the mother who first approached the social agency. The agency was delayed in making a home visit and in the meantime Mr. H advertised the baby for adoption in a local newspaper. Mr. H was a very capable individual. Following the completion of his schooling he worked for a world-wide organization and travelled extensively. Later he was transferred to Canada and placed in a managerial position. Mr. H admitted quite frankly that this fourth child had been unwanted by him from the time of conception, and that he felt the child would interfere with the mobility demanded of his family in his present position. Mrs. H gave every indication that she was anxious to keep the baby, but her husband's wishes were of more importance to her and the child was placed for adoption. The adoption placement took place even though the child placed for adoption was a baby boy and the H's other three children were all girls. Mr. H was insistent on the adoption placement from the time of conception and the sex of the baby appeared to play no part in his desire for placement. However, it is possible that in some cases the child may be regarded, perhaps unconsciously, as a threat or competitor to the parent and the request for adoption placement may stem from this fear.

The parents' ability to successfully assume the responsibility for the care and upbringing of their children is dependent on the degree of maturity to which they have attained. The parents' inability to assume responsibility for the care

and upbringing of their children may be but another indication of their immaturity and their inability to meet the responsibilities of normal adult life. This appears to be more prominently the case in another three of the cases studied, two of which will be presented in some detail.

Mrs. C commenced living in common-law with Mr. C several years after her first husband had been accidentally killed. Subsequently the C's were married and had a legitimate child which they placed for adoption. Neither Mr. C nor Mrs. C appeared to be able to meet the responsibilities of normal adult life. Four children had been born to Mrs. C during her first marriage. Following her first husband's death she had received a lump-sum financial settlement but the fund had been soon squandered. Mr. C had an extremely poor work-record, had served a jail-sentence for retaining stolen property, and had very little patience or understanding of the needs of children. The attitude of both parents towards the baby was one of rejection and a refusal to assume any responsibility for its care. Later, in the same year that the baby was placed for adoption, Mr. and Mrs. C became estranged but continued to live together intermittently. The four children of Mrs. C's first marriage had to be apprehended by the authorities as "neglected children."

When Mrs. F came to the social agency in the fall of 1951 and requested the adoption placement of their expected

child it was the third time that she had approached the social agency with such a request. Several years previously the F's had placed a baby boy for adoption. The year before the agency had worked with them towards the adoption placement of an expected child. However, Mrs. F had suffered a miscarriage. As in the case of Mr. and Mrs. C neither Mr. F. nor Mrs. F appeared to be able to meet the responsibilities of normal adult life. Mrs. F had undergone a psychiatric examination prior to the adoption placement of the baby boy and the psychiatrist had diagnosed her as a "constitutionally inadequate psychopath." Mr. F had a poor employment record and he also had a criminal record. There was a history of marital difficulties with both parents deserting the family at different times. Mr. F blamed his wife for becoming pregnant and was annoyed that she had not "done away" with the baby. Mr. F threatened to place the baby privately for adoption if the social agency would not co-operate with their adoption request.

A normal heterosexual relationship is dependent upon the success with which the individual was able to work out the displacement of his early affective tendencies for his parents. This aspect of normal development was discussed earlier and it was concluded that by the process of displacement, through a series of affective relationships with individuals outside the family group, at maturity the individual should, for practical

purposes, be free to direct his love towards those who showed little resemblance of any kind to the first object of his dawning affections. Any failure to attain that goal would seem to constitute to some extent a failure or arrest in the individual's affective development. Failure to reach the normal level of development of the love impulse appears to have taken place in another two of the cases studied, and to account for the problems which the parents faced in working out plans for their children.

The L's were married after a very brief courtship. There was a great difference in their ages: Mr. L was in his early fifties, his wife was in her middle twenties. Mr. L stated that he was flattered by his wife's attentions but realized that they had little in common and was not surprised when she left him. Mrs. L left her husband as soon as she realized that she was pregnant. Later she approached the social agency and requested help in placing her expected baby for adoption. Mr. L was ambivalent in his attitude towards the child and agreed to the adoption placement. It would appear that there had been a fixation in the development of Mrs. L's love impulse and that she was looking for love from a father-person not a husband. If this interpretation of the case is correct it is possible that Mrs. L rejected her child because it represented the fulfilment of unconscious incestuous wishes. She may also have felt that the baby was a rival for her husband's affections which she could not face sharing.

It would also appear that there had been a fixation

in the development of Mrs. S's love impulse. Mrs. S requested the adoption placement of her child by her second husband. In both marriages she had chosen husbands who were considerably older than herself. Mrs. S felt that she had very little in common with her husband and refused to go on living with him. She asked for adoption placement of the baby but in the meantime the baby was placed temporarily in a foster home. Later, however, Mrs. ^S returned to live in common-law and took the baby with her.

In a number of the cases which have so far been discussed there was evidence of marital disharmony and discord. However, in only one of the cases studied was it felt that marital discord was the determining factor which caused the parents to consider adoption placement of the child.

Mrs. R admitted that her husband was a good provider and a steady worker, but she felt that he had often neglected her and substituted material things for affection. Both Mr. and Mrs. R were in their middle forties. Mrs. R felt that at her age she did not want to be "saddled" with a baby. Mr. R. would not consider placing the baby for adoption, and subsequently Mrs. R returned home from the hospital with the child. It would appear that Mrs. R's attitude towards the baby was a manifestation of her desire to punish her husband¹ for his neglect of her, and perhaps a wish not to share with the child what little attention he might give her.

¹ Also characteristic of unmarried mothers in some instances. See Leontine R. Young, "Personality Patterns in Unmarried Mothers."

The total life experience of the parent equips him to face the many responsibilities and sacrifices involved in parenthood. The parent's feelings about his own childhood experiences may be reflected in his attitude and behaviour towards his own children. This form of projection appears to have played a determining role in one of the cases studied.

Mrs. J's mother died giving birth to her. Subsequently Mrs. J's father placed her with another couple who had a very large family. According to Mrs. J's statement she had experienced a happy childhood but it would appear that she had never experienced a real sense of "belonging." The J's had been married for over six years and had four children. When Mrs. J. again became pregnant they considered placing the baby for adoption. The reason for considering such a plan appeared to be Mrs. J's feelings about her own childhood experiences and her desire not to deprive one of her own children of the things she felt that she had missed as a child. It would also appear that Mrs. J had some understanding of her own limitations for adequately providing for a large family.

One of the most important responsibilities which a father must assume in the family setting is that one of providing for his wife and children. Several cases have already been discussed in which the mother had doubts about the

father's ability to continue as a successful provider, and the effect of this anxiety on her attitude towards the child. The father's ability or inability to provide for his family and the resulting economic pressures on the family was a factor of considerable importance in most of the cases studied. However, even in those cases where the family was in financial need due to the husband's unemployment or due to his poor earning capacity, it would appear that consideration of the adoption placement of the child was a result of other added factors which have already been discussed in detail.

The B case was the only one in the group of cases studied where twins were placed for adoption. It would also appear that it was the only case in which the child was placed for adoption because the parents felt that their economic position was too limited for them to provide adequately for the care and upbringing of another child. The B's had been married for almost four years and had two daughters. Mr. B in particular was opposed to keeping the baby because of their financial position. Mrs. B. was more ambivalent in her attitude towards the baby but agreed with her husband on the necessity for adoption placement. Both parents felt that they had more reason to go ahead with the adoption placement when twin boys were born.

Objective and Subjective Factors

There was no one causative factor which accounted for the parents' consideration of whether or not they would place their children for adoption. Rather there was a multiplicity of causative factors. In the group of cases studied the causative factors were primarily of a subjective psychological nature. However, in one of the cases (the B case) the adoption placement appeared to be the direct result of a more objective factor--the family's poor economic position. And in a further four cases the objective factor of the possibility of later economic pressures appeared to play the determining role in the parents' consideration (particularly the mothers') of adoption placement.

The nature of the subjective psychological causative factors varied in the individual cases. These psychological causative factors included the following: marital discord, the projection of the parents' feelings about their own childhood upbringing onto the child in question, the rejection of the child because it was seen as a hindrance to the husband's occupational advancement. In two of the cases the psychological causative factor of in-law interference played the determining role in the decision which was finally reached about the child in question. Thus in the P case because of in-law interference the child was not placed for adoption much

against Mrs. P's wishes. And in the M case but for Mrs. M Senior's interference the M's might never have considered adoption placement.

The psychological problem of the parents' immaturity also played a determining role in a further group of cases. Because of their immaturity a number of the parents were unable to assume the responsibility for the care and upbringing of their children and sought adoption placement (Mr. N, Mr. and Mrs. C, Mr. and Mrs. F). This immaturity was also seen in several cases where there had been a fixation in the normal development of the love impulse. On the other hand a good many of the parents were meeting their responsibilities and functioning on a moderately mature level.

The parents' attitudes towards their children have been noted in most of the case summaries which have been presented. The parental attitudes will be discussed in greater detail in the following chapter with a view to assessing the possible affects of those attitudes on the normal development of the children in question.

CHAPTER III

PARENTAL ATTITUDES AND PARENTAL CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES

The parent's attitudes and behaviour towards the child are of the utmost importance because they constitute the primary elements in furnishing the environment within which the child works out his basic adjustments. Therefore, an examination of parental attitudes and behaviour in the cases studied is of importance as a means of predicting the possibility of the normal development of the children involved. It would appear that this should be one aspect about which the social worker should be particularly concerned on the basis of preventing the development of a maladjusted personality.

All feelings are made up of a positive and a negative aspect. Both aspects may be experienced at the same time for the same person, although one of the aspects may be unconscious. In technical terms such an attitude made up of both negative and positive aspects is termed ambivalent.

The attitude of the parent towards the child is generally thought of as one of "tender emotion." Actually, however, the feeling of the parent towards the child is one of contrasting emotions such as love and hate and is made up of both a

positive and a negative aspect, although one of the aspects may be unconscious.

Contrasting Parental Feelings

There are a number of factors which account for the contrasting emotions which the parent may feel towards the child. The responsibility, the effort and the anxiety involved in rearing children diminishes considerably the time and energy available for more directly personal occupations and enjoyments. To some extent the individual sacrifices himself in becoming a parent. And this sacrifice of personal comforts, leisures, satisfactions and ambitions does not as a rule take place without some degree of resentment being felt against those whose existence necessitates the sacrifice. Or to put it another way, children constitute an ever-present disturbance to the comfort and tranquility of adult life.

The mother, owing to the greater demands which children make upon her time, health and energy, is perhaps the parent to experience most keenly the sacrifices involved in parenthood--sacrifices which may give rise to negative feelings for the child. Furthermore, the role which the woman is called upon to play in bearing the child and in later administering to his growing needs, demands that she has accepted and is comfortable with her own sex. For the woman

who has failed to make a satisfactory identification with a female figure, and who has failed to accept her sex, giving birth to the child and the duties which she is called upon to perform in the care of the child, may come as a tremendous blow to the defences which she has set up to deny her femininity. In such cases strong negative feelings may be experienced towards the child. It is now generally agreed that abortions and attempted abortions may be manifestations of such negative feelings.

The interference of children with the activities and desires of the father is usually less direct, and the ill-will which fathers bear towards their children is, therefore, more apt to be aroused in consequence of jealousy for the affection which the mother may lavish on the child. Nevertheless, in the case of the father there almost always sooner or later arises some degree of interference with his pleasures, his comforts, his work or his ambitions, so that he feels that his children constitute a burden which seriously hamper his individual progress or enjoyment. In such cases some degree of resentment may be felt towards the child.

While the responsibilities, the efforts and the anxieties involved in rearing children may result in some degree of resentment being felt by the parents towards the child, there are also many positive factors which reinforce the "tender emotion" felt by the parents for the child.

The child, which the parents have created, is an outward manifestation of their love for one another. For the woman her child is her greatest achievement and represents the climax of her erotic experience. By the process of identification the parent is able to take pleasure in the increasing powers of the child as if they were his own. He may also through the child enjoy vicariously benefits, privileges, successes and pleasures of which he himself had been deprived or had failed to reap advantage. In later life through this process of identification the parents may compensate for their own dwindling intellectual and physical powers.

Ordinarily the existence of strong counter-impulses towards paternal love insures repression of the negative feelings into the unconscious, and the parent's conscious attitude towards the child is a positive one of "tender emotion."

The attitude and behaviour of the parents towards the child was examined in each of the cases studied, subjectively classified, and the following distribution of attitudes was found.

Table 1. Distribution of Attitudes

Classification	Frequency		Percentage Distribution	
	Maternal	Paternal	Maternal	Paternal
Rejection	8	6	47.1	35.3
Indifference	-	4	-	23.5
"Negative" Ambivalence	3	2	17.6	11.8
"Positive" Ambivalence	5	4	29.4	23.5
Mature Love	1	1	5.9	5.9
Total	17	17	100	100

Criteria for Classification of Parental Attitudes

The following criteria, of what it was felt the normal attitude and behaviour of parents towards an expected wanted child would be, were drawn up as a basis on which to assess the manifestations of parental attitudes expressed in the group of cases studied. In the majority of cases the parents approached the social agency prior to the birth of the child. In the other four cases the parents had contacted the social agency within five days of the birth of the baby.

The parental attitude was classified as one of mature love where the parents expressed positive feelings in what they said about the baby and in the manner in which they prepared for its arrival. It was felt that the parents would look forward to the birth of the baby with a certain amount of positive anticipation. In cases where the baby was the first child in the family it was recognized that there might be, on the part of the mother, a fear of childbirth; on the part of the father, a fear of the death of his wife in childbirth, and perhaps, on the part of both parents some resentment at the adjustments in the family which the birth of the baby necessitated. Nevertheless, it was expected that positive feelings would predominate. It was expected that the parents would have made some plans for the baby's arrival and later care. This would include the mother seeking prenatal care, the making or acquiring of adequate clothing for the baby, and the acquiring of other necessary equipment. It was felt that the parents would have shared their feelings about the baby, perhaps giving some thought to the choice of a name for the baby, and to have expressed some preference in the sex of the baby. Following the birth of the baby it was felt that the parents would express a keen desire to see the child. It was felt that because of the demands made upon her by the baby, and the sensual and emotional satisfactions which she experienced in meeting those demands, that the mother would be particularly concerned with the baby's welfare and with any plans which were worked out for substitute care..

The parental attitude was classified as one of rejection where the child was openly discarded, where there was no responsibility assumed for its care, and where there was a complete lack of any feelings for the child. This rejection was expressed in a variety of ways: in a frank verbalization of the desire to place the baby for adoption where the adoption placement was not the result of a consideration of the needs of the child but merely an attempt to give up the responsibility of caring for the child, in an admission of the annoyance and distress which was felt following conception, in the demand that the agency assume immediate responsibility for the baby, in the threat to place the baby privately for adoption if the agency refused to co-operate in the adoption placement, in the threat to desert the spouse if placement was not made, in the manner in which friends and relatives were informed about the baby--that it had died, in the lack of positive feelings when the parents were discussing adoption plans with the agency, in a refusal to make definite plans with the agency for fear that the child "might be born dead," in the admission of either attempted or contemplated abortion, in the refusal to see the child following its birth, in the resentment at having to carry the child for the nine months of the pregnancy, in a lack of interest in choosing a name for the baby.

For example, in the H case Mr. H's attitude was classified as one of rejection. He was insistent that the baby be placed for adoption, and when the agency was delayed in making a home visit Mr. H advertized in a newspaper for the baby's adoption. In his attitude towards the baby he was not thinking in terms of the baby's welfare but in terms of getting rid of the child.

All these expressions of rejection did not appear in every case. But on the basis of different combinations of these manifestations the parental attitude was classified as one of rejection.

The parental attitude was classified as one of indifference where there was no inclination either for or against keeping the baby, apathy in working out adoption plans with the agency, and a disregard of parental responsibilities. In the A case Mr. A's attitude was classified as one of indifference. His attitude towards the baby was one of unconcern, and he was even surprised that it would be necessary for him to sign the adoption consent form.

The parental attitude was classified as one of "negative" ambivalence where both positive and negative feelings were expressed towards the child but where there appeared to be a preponderance of negative feelings. The negative aspects of the ambivalence was expressed through some of the manifestations of rejection described above.

The positive aspects of the ambivalence were expressed in a variety of ways: in a contemplation of what the baby would look like after birth, in a desire to see and nurse the baby, in a consideration given to naming the baby, in the interest shown in the prospective adopting parents.

In the A case Mrs. A's attitude was classified as one of "negative" ambivalence. While she provided a layette for the baby and expressed a desire to see the baby, her predominant feelings were those of rejection.

The parental attitude was classified as one of "positive" ambivalence where both positive and negative feelings were expressed towards the child but where there appeared to be a preponderance of positive feelings. Mr. M's attitude towards his child was classified as one of "positive" ambivalence. At first Mr. M appeared to be rejecting of the child and considered adoption placement. Later, however, when he was no longer under his mother's domination he was able to express his more positive feelings for the child, and to work out plans so that his wife and child could join him.

The attitude of only one mother, Mrs. N, and one father, Mr. R, was classified as mature love. In these two cases there were no expressions of a desire to discard the child, but rather a desire for and willingness to plan for the child.

In almost two-thirds of the cases the maternal attitude was classified as either rejection or as "negative" ambivalence. In over two-thirds of the cases the paternal attitude was classified as either rejection, indifference or as "negative" ambivalence. No maternal cases were classified under the heading of indifference. This would appear to be in keeping with the previous theoretical discussion which recognized the close relationship of the mother with the newborn child.

In view of the fact that in six out of the seventeen cases the parents decided against placing their children for adoption, it was also interesting to compare the distribution of parental attitudes in the larger group of cases where the child was placed for adoption, and in the smaller group of cases where the child was not placed for adoption.

Table 2. Distribution of Parental Attitudes

Classification	Frequency		Percentage Distribution	
	"Placed" Group	"Retained" Group	"Placed" Group	"Retained" Group
Rejection	11	3	50	25
Indifference	3	1	13.6	8.3
"Negative" Ambivalence	5	-	22.8	-
"Positive" Ambivalence	3	6	13.6	50
Mature Love	-	2	-	16.7
Total	22	12	100	100

In one-half of the cases in the "placed" group the parental attitude was classified as one of rejection. And in over one-third of the cases the parental attitude was classified as one of indifference or "negative" ambivalence. Thus the parental attitude in the "placed" group was overwhelmingly one of rejection, indifference or "negative" ambivalence.

On the other hand, in one-half of the cases in the "retained" group the parental attitude was classified as one of "positive" ambivalence. The "retained" group also contained the only cases of mature love. Altogether, in over two-thirds of the cases in the "retained" group the parental attitude was classified as one of "positive" ambivalence or as mature love. However, in one-quarter of the cases the parental attitude was classified as one of rejection.

The case work implications of these findings will be discussed in the last chapter.

Parental Childhood Experiences

One of the four main "areas" included in the schedule drawn up for the examination of the cases was a section on the description of the parents' childhood experiences. It was recognized that the individual's ability to assume the responsibilities of adult life was primarily dependent upon the degree

to which he has been able to work out his instinctive drives of love and hate, sex and aggression, life and death, dependency and independency within the parental relationship. By such an examination of the parental childhood experiences it was hoped that an evaluation could be made of the quality of their childhood experiences.

The parents' attitude and behaviour constitutes the primary elements in furnishing the environment within which the child works out his basic adjustments. Unfortunately, the environment which the parents are able to provide for the unfolding personality of the child is not always one which is conducive to positive growth and the normal development of the child's mental life. For optimum development¹ the child needs to live with both his parents and to work out his affective relationship with them. However, the parents may be separated because of death, desertion, or divorce in which case the child is no longer able to experience the total relationship which is so important for his normal development. When this takes place some limitation to the degree of maturity to which the individual attains can be expected.

In view of the fact that the parents were requesting adoption placement of their children it was customary for the social agency to complete a social history on each of the parents as a basis for evaluating the suitability of the child

1 O. Spurgeon and Gerald H.J. Pearson, Emotional Problems of Living.

in question for adoption placement. In fourteen of the seventeen cases studied these histories were available for study.

The subjective picture of their backgrounds as given by the parents had no doubt been coloured by all the events that had occurred in their lives since childhood. Prejudice, inhibition, guilt feelings and projection had no doubt all played a part in the subjective picture which they presented. However, the feeling tone associated with their recollections of childhood was the important factor in interpreting the quality of their childhood experiences. If, to the subjective picture, are added such ascertainable facts as the death of a parent at an early age in the child's life, desertion, economic insecurity, the picture will be true in its main outlines. In each of the cases studied an attempt was made to evaluate whatever actual information was available as well as the parents' feelings about their early life and original family group. This information is presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Factors in Parents' Backgrounds

Factors	Frequency			
	Mothers		Fathers	
	"Placed" Group	"Retained" Group	"Placed" Group	"Retained" Group
1. Death of mother at an early age (1 - 7 years)	3	-	1	-
2. Death of father at an early age (1 - 7 years)	-	-	2	-
3. Desertion by father	1	2	-	-
4. Home broken by divorce	1	-	-	-
5. Institutional care (1 - 7 years)	1	-	-	1
6. Early assumption of responsibility	3	-	4	1
7. Unhappy childhood experiences	1	2	-	2
8. Poor relationship with siblings	2	-	-	-
9. Good relationship with siblings	1	-	1	-
10. Happy childhood experiences	2	1	2	-
Number of cases reporting	8	5	6	3

The amount of information given by the parents about their backgrounds was very limited. There may be several reasons for this lack of detailed information. The case work emphasis may have been too exclusively on the decision around adoption placement rather than on the parents who had made that decision. Perhaps the parents withheld what they felt was unsuitable information lest to divulge such information would prejudice their request for adoption placement. The lack of detailed information may also have been due to the fact that the decision to be reached about adoption placement was so overwhelming that the parents could not turn from it to discuss their backgrounds in any great detail. The agency social workers may also have been unable to record as fully as they would have liked to do so, all the information which the parents had been able to give to them. In view of this lack of detailed information it is only possible to speculate about the quality of the parents' childhood experiences.

The factors did not appear singly but in different combinations in each of the cases. Though, for instance, Mr. A had lost his father at an early age he reported that he had enjoyed a relatively happy childhood. Negative and positive factors appeared in the backgrounds of both groups. In view of the very limited information available no attempt was made to compare the backgrounds of the parents who placed

their children and the backgrounds of the parents who kept their children.

The most outstanding feature of the parental backgrounds was the fact that almost one-third of the total number of parents came from homes broken by death, desertion or divorce. Insufficient information is available on the physical and emotional deprivations which they may have suffered but the possibility of their limited psychic development because of the absence of one of their parents is certainly very evident. And if the childhood experiences of the parents and the degree of maturity to which they attained is reflected in the adjustments which they were making to the responsibilities of adult life, then it is clear that many of them suffered deprivations in childhood and that as a result their psychic development was incomplete.

CHAPTER IV

IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

All cases where the adoption placement of a legitimate child had been requested, and where the parents were legally married and the husband was the natural father of the child, which had been known to the public and private child-caring social agencies and family social agencies in the Burnaby, New Westminster and Vancouver areas during the year 1951 were examined.

The placing of children for adoption is an integral part of the programme of any child-caring and family social agency. However, the number of cases where legally married parents voluntarily request the adoption placement of children is a very small percentage of the agency's total caseload. The voluntary adoption placement of legitimate children is a provocative subject because it so violently contradicts the cultural concepts of customary family life. Our cultural teachings lay great stress upon the sanctity of mother-love especially within legal marriage, and the voluntary adoption placement of legitimate children appears to contradict those teachings. Therefore, because of the infrequency of this type of case and because of its provoca-

tive nature the request for the voluntary adoption placement of legitimate children constitutes a unique type of case for the social agency.

It was found that there were seventeen cases where parents had requested the voluntary adoption placement of legitimate children. In eleven of the seventeen cases the parents followed through their request for adoption and placed the child. In the remaining six cases the parents decided against adoption placement and kept the child.

The parents in the group of cases studied did not appear to differ from a representative group of parents from the larger community in terms of racial origin, religious affiliation or average amount of public school education received. The group of cases studied included both families who had other children, and families where the child in question was the first child.

The parents in the group of cases studied appeared to differ from a representative group of parents from the larger community in several important respects: (a) on the whole the parents from the group of cases studied came from the lower income, labouring class of people, (b) almost one-quarter of the women were pregnant at the time of marriage, and (c) almost one-third of the parents came from homes broken by death, desertion or divorce.

There was no one causative factor which accounted for the parents' consideration of whether or not they would place their children for adoption. Rather there was a multiplicity of causative factors. In the group of cases studied the causative factors were primarily of a subjective psychological nature. However, in almost a third of the cases objective factors appeared to play the determining role in the parents' consideration of adoption placement.

The parents in the group of cases studied appeared to further differ from a representative group of parents from the larger community in their attitudes and behaviour towards their children. While the attitude of the parent towards the child may be of an ambivalent nature the existence of strong counter-impulses towards maternal or paternal love will often ensure repression of the negative affective reactions into the unconscious. However, in the group of cases studied this repression did not appear to have taken place. In almost two-thirds of the cases the maternal attitude towards the child was classified as either rejection or as "negative" ambivalence. In over two-thirds of the cases the paternal attitude was classified as one of rejection, indifference, or "negative" ambivalence. Looked at in another way the attitude of the parents in the "placed" group towards their children was largely ~~one of~~ one of rejection, "negative" ambivalence or indifference. The attitude of over

two-thirds of the parents in the "retained" group towards their children was one of "positive" ambivalence or of mature love. However, the attitude of one-quarter of the parents in the "retained" group towards their children was one of rejection.¹

There was a lack of detailed information about the parents' own childhood experiences, but on the basis of the information available it appeared that many of them had suffered deprived childhood upbringings.

No attempt was made to evaluate the degree of maturity to which each of the parents had attained. However, on the basis of the adjustments which they had been able to make in their psycho-socio situations, and on the basis of the information about their childhood experiences, it appeared that a good many of them were functioning on a fairly immature level. On the other hand, however, a good many of the parents appeared to be functioning on a moderately mature level.

1 Rejected children whose parents need to retain them as butts or outlets for hostility, or to deny their rejection by overprotection would not generally be included in the scope of this study since adoption would be a denial of satisfaction to the parents. See Gordon Hamilton, Psychotherapy in Child Guidance, and David M. Levy, Maternal Overprotection.

"Problem Object"

One of the most significant findings which the examination of the cases disclosed was the fact that in the majority of cases the child in question was not regarded by the parents as a person with individuality but appeared to be regarded merely as a "problem object" which had to be dealt with. The parents were primarily concerned with the fact of a baby, not with the developing personality of the child. Thus in only two cases (Mr. B and Mrs. J) was it felt that adoption placement was the result of the parents' earnest desire to place the child in a home which would meet the child's physical, intellectual and emotional needs--needs which the parents themselves felt they could not meet.

The fact that the parents were not concerned with the developing personality of the child may also account for the fact that in none of the cases studied was there any change in parental attitudes because of the sex of the child. In none of the cases did the sex of the child appear to be an important factor in the question of whether or not adoption placement should be made. Not even in those two cases where the parents had approached the social agency prior to the birth, and where the child who was born was the opposite sex of their other children, was there any change in their adoption plans as might have been anticipated. It is impossible to generalize from such a small selection of cases but, if

later studies bear out these findings, it would indicate that there is no need for delay in making plans for the expected child because the sex is unknown.

Implications for Case Work

Because the nature of the problem about which the parents approached the social agency appears to so violently contradict the cultural concepts of customary family life, the parents may anticipate ridicule, rejection or a lack of co-operation on the part of the social agency. Prior to going to the social agency the parents may have encountered these reactions among friends or relatives who knew about their proposed plans. Because of the nature of the problem the parents may have gone through a tremendous upheaval of feeling both within themselves and between each other before going to the social agency. It would appear that the lack of feeling found in so many cases was a defence, a sort of "psychological bracing" for the job in hand. In those cases where the woman was pregnant prior to marriage the couple may feel considerable shame and guilt and anticipate condemnation.

The professional worker-client relationship implies that the social worker's own feelings shall not enter into the situation and play a part in the plan which is worked out with the client. However, because of the nature of the

problem involved in this type of case it would appear that the social worker despite her professional training often experiences some difficulty in handling her own feelings about the proposed adoption placement. Thus in one of the cases studied the social worker found it very difficult to accept the parent's¹ open rejection of their child and at the point in the interview where the parents were signing adoption consent forms she had to leave the office in order to gain control of her own feelings. In the H case the agency supervisor felt it necessary to accompany the social worker on a visit to the home apparently to evaluate for himself the parents' attitude towards the child in question.

If the social worker is not objective and permits her conscious or unconscious feelings of whether a child should or should not remain with its parents to influence her, she cannot be of assistance to her clients. The basis for the social worker's conscious or unconscious feelings may be due to the fact that the social worker sees in the adoption request the rejection she herself felt as a child. Or the proposed adoption placement may stimulate the negative side of her own ambivalent feelings towards children.

It goes without saying that the safeguards in such a situation lie first in the recognition and handling of whatever the social worker's feelings may be, through the

practice of supervision, and secondly in a complete and dynamic understanding of the psychology of the parents making the adoption request as is possible.

In working with this type of case the social agency is faced with a number of special problems which should act as a challenge to the social worker. The social worker will not have a prolonged period for working with the parents. In the group of cases studied the parents in the "placed" group approached the social agency, on the average, shortly after the sixth month of the woman's pregnancy; in the "retained" group contact was made with the social agency shortly after the seventh month of the pregnancy. In two cases in both groups the parents contacted the social agency after the birth of the child. This would appear to point up the necessity for the social worker to formulate as full and dynamic a picture of the problem as possible at an early date. Because of the nature of the problem involved in such cases, and the parents' "psychological bracing" through masking their feelings it would appear that the social worker will have to work through this initial resistance with them. Because of their initial anticipation of rejection and condemnation the parents may feel that any delays on the part of the social agency are indications of the social agency's lack of co-operation with their request for placement.

Unless it is carefully explained to them the parents may feel that the giving of information for a social history merely circumscribes their placement request, and that it is but another indication of the social agency's lack of co-operation. Furthermore, the parents can always place their children privately for adoption and may do so if they feel that the social agency is not working with them. The social worker is, therefore, caught in the dilemma of having to adhere to agency policy and obtain the information about the suitability of the child for adoption placement, and at the same time attempt to help the parents clarify their feelings in such a way that they will not feel that the social worker is putting obstacles in the way of their adoption request.

In working with this type of case the social agency has a number of resources which it can draw upon in helping the parents work out plans for their children. The agency may be able to refer the parents to sources of financial assistance within the community, offer assistance in budgeting, and assist the parents with clothing for the expected child if the adoption placement is being considered as a result of objective causative factors. In several of the cases studied the agencies made use of temporary foster home placements, and in another case suggested that the woman might like to have her child in a maternity home, while clarification of the parents' feelings was under way. However, the

use of foster and maternity homes is not considered good practice¹ because it tends to rouse guilt feelings in the parents and if the child is not placed for adoption it may result in the temporary repression of the negative side of the ambivalence which may later re-appear as neglect or actual abuse of the child.

The agency's main resource in working with this type of case lies in the professional worker-client relationship, and in the ability of the social worker to help the parents sort out their confused feelings in the situation. Both the parents from the "placed" group and from the "retained" group are in need of this help.

Because of the nature of the problem involved and the tremendous fears and anxieties which the parents may experience they are greatly in need of a warm supportive type of relationship. They need a chance to express their feelings and need to have those feelings accepted. Thus if the focus is too quickly centered on the question of whether or not the child is to be placed for adoption, the parents may not have a chance to express their feelings. The parents need to feel that they have the right to make the decision about the placement and that it is the decision which they want, and not one which others,

1 Leontine R. Young, "The Unmarried Mother's Decision About Her Baby," Journal of Social Case Work, vol 28 (February, 1947), p. 34.

such as in-laws, may want.

The worker will want to help the parents sort out their confused feelings, come to recognize those feelings, and reach a decision on the basis of those feelings. In the process of doing this material may be introduced from the parents' own childhood backgrounds, but this will depend on the individual cases.

The social worker will take her direction from her evaluation and diagnosis of the problem presented in each individual case. On the basis of the parents' degree of maturity, their ability to assume further responsibilities, and their attitude towards the child, she will help them work out a plan which appears in the best interests of themselves and also the child. In doing this she will build upon the strength which the parents already have. Her evaluation of the problem will have been an evaluation to help the parents not to coerce them. Therefore, she will not build upon false feelings and attempt to stimulate guilt feelings so that the parents will keep the child.

Once a decision has been reached the social worker will need to help the parents implement that decision. In the case of those parents who decide in favour of adoption placement they may need tremendous support to carry through their plan and to handle their guilt feelings. Again, this

group may need considerable support from the social worker in carrying out their plan of adoption placement as the plan encounters opposition from relatives and friends. Here again the social worker is able to help them see that it is their plan. The social worker may need to support the parents in carrying out their adoption plan as that plan encounters opposition from other professional groups in the community. Such groups may feel that parents must keep their children. Thus in several of the case studies the parents' doctors refused to have anything further to do with them when they were told of the proposed adoption plan. And in the R case Mrs. R was placed by the hospital authorities in a ward with several other mothers, apparently in an attempt to shame her into nursing her child.

The social worker actually has a dual responsibility in working with this type of case. On the one hand she works with the parents towards making a plan which appears to be in their best interests. But, on the other hand, the final decision which the parents may reach may not be in the best interests of the child in question. Therefore, the social worker also has a responsibility towards working out a plan which also appears to be in the best interests of the baby.

The social worker because of her professional training will lay great stress upon the question of whether or not the needs of the child will be met in the plan which the

parents are working out. It can be assumed that where the adoption home is suitable the child's needs will be met. Therefore, it would appear that the social worker would not be too concerned for the child's welfare in those cases where adoption placement was made. It would appear that in those cases her main role was one of supporting the parents around their decision for placement.

However, in those cases where adoption placement has been considered, where the parents have decided against placement, but where one or perhaps even both parents have a negative or even outright rejecting attitude towards the child, the social worker is extremely concerned about the future welfare about the child in question. The attitude of one-quarter of the parents in the "retained" group was classified as one of rejection, and it is wondered what the future held for the children in those cases.

Burgum suggests ¹ that there are some potentially constructive values which the child may develop as a result of parental rejection: values such as independence, self-assurance, fearlessness and resourcefulness. However, the

¹ Mildred Burgum, "Constructive Values Associated with Rejection," The American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, vol 10 (April, 1940), pp. 312-326.

evidence from other studies points overwhelmingly to the conclusion that the results of parental rejection inhibit and warp the normal development of the personality.

In their later attitude and behaviour towards the child the parents may be severely punishing, neglectful, nagging and indifferent. The child may react to parental rejection by developing self-protective barriers against the feeling of being unwanted. This may show itself in a determined campaign or in a provocative programme of attracting attention by offensive behaviour and even criminal acts. Still more seriously it may show itself as a constant fear of other people, or as a bitter prejudice against individuals or groups through deep-seated easily provoked hatred for them. The child may be obsessed with anxiety, feelings of unworthiness, self-reproach, and be nervous, high-strung, insecure or emotionally unstable. Newell¹ studied thirty-three rejected children (median age of eleven years) where the rejection was defined when the birth of the child was unwelcome to the mother. Twenty-seven of the children had made a poor school adjustment. It can safely be said that the unwanted child is likely to become the undesirable citizen.

The social worker because of her understanding of

¹ H. W. Newell, "A Further Study of Maternal Rejection," The American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, vol 6 (October, 1936), pp. 576-589.

the importance of parental attitudes and behaviour on the normal development of the child's personality, because of her understanding of the importance of the proper balance of love and discipline which largely determines the child's chances of progressing from one level of adjustment to the next, and because of her knowledge of the insidious effects of rejection, will evaluate the parental attitudes, the ego strengths of the parents, and the ability of the parents to modify their attitudes, and in those cases where the parental attitude is one of rejection, indifference or "negative" ambivalence and the parents do not appear to be capable of modifying their attitudes she will work with them towards adoption placement of the child.

Previous mention was made of the lack of detailed information in several of the cases. It would appear that information about the course of the woman's pregnancy would be very useful to the social worker in helping her evaluate the maternal attitude towards the child. Wallen and Riley¹ studied the relation between difficulties in infants and the mother's reaction to pregnancy. They felt that since physical reactions to pregnancy (nausea, vomiting) were regarded as entirely or predominantly organic in origin that they were likely reported frankly. They found that the mothers'

¹ Paul Wallen and Rosemary P. Riley, "Reactions of Mothers to Pregnancy and Adjustment of Offspring in Infancy," The American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, vol 20 (July, 1950), pp. 616-622.

reactions to pregnancy forecast their attitudes and behaviour towards their children. They concluded by stating that there was some agreement in the literature that a disturbed reaction to pregnancy was indicative of anxiety about, or a wish to avoid, the consequences of pregnancy.

Recommendations

A number of recommendations have been suggested in this chapter and they can now be gathered together. In view of the fact that the parents do not approach the social agency until the woman is well along in her pregnancy and that a decision has to be reached, in the majority of cases, at or shortly after the birth of the child, it would appear that this type of case should be given priority as far as the work of the social agency is concerned. Further, the limited time in which to work with the parents points up the need for the social worker to make an early diagnosis and evaluation. Because of the nature of the problem involved the social worker will more than likely need careful supervision in handling her own feelings. And finally, it would appear that more detailed information about the course of the woman's pregnancy would be useful to the social worker in her evaluation of the maternal attitude.

No attempt has been made to discuss the cultural aspects of the voluntary adoption placement of legitimate children. Later studies may throw further light on the

causative factors which motivate parents to request such an adoption placement. In the meantime the question can be raised--does not a couple have the right to consider the voluntary adoption placement of a legitimate child when they do not feel that they can assume responsibility for the child or that their rejection would permanently handicap the child?

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