

**ADOPTION : SALIENT EXPERIENCES
OF A SAMPLE OF ADULT ADOPTEES**

BRENDA ERNESTINE BOULT

**A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED
TO THE UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN
IN FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR
THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF SOCIAL SCIENCE**

PORT ELIZABETH

1987

The University of Cape Town has been given
the right to reproduce this thesis in whole
or in part. Copyright is held by the author.

The copyright of this thesis vests in the author. No quotation from it or information derived from it is to be published without full acknowledgement of the source. The thesis is to be used for private study or non-commercial research purposes only.

Published by the University of Cape Town (UCT) in terms of the non-exclusive license granted to UCT by the author.

ABSTRACT

This investigation into adoption began in January 1986 in the Republic of South Africa. The aim was to understand adoption from the subjective viewpoint of adults who were adopted as infants or children. It was based on the working hypothesis that although adoption has universal qualities, there would also be regional, cultural and time-related differences affecting both the practice and experience of adoption.

Appeals were made for respondents through three popular magazines, private welfare organisations, the Registrar of Adoption and by means of "snowball sampling". Questionnaires were subsequently posted country-wide between April and October 1986. The questionnaire contained 209 open- and closed-ended questions covering the period from adoption placement to adulthood. An eighty-eight percent response rate was obtained. The material was analysed with emphasis on the qualitative interpretation of the content of the data in the open-ended responses.

The sample comprised eighty-two adult adoptees between the ages of eighteen and seventy, of whom seventy-one percent were female, twenty-nine percent male, 58,5 percent Afrikaans-speaking and 41,5 percent English-speaking. Cultural differences were found in the responses of the two language groups.

Variables that have been considered relevant or insufficiently explored in the literature on adoption were examined. These were: age of placement; attachment in the adoptive home; manner and timing of revelation of adoptive status and adoptee reactions to this; adoptee thoughts and fears concerning birth parents, the school experience; identity problems in adolescence and adulthood manifested as insecurity or behaviour problems; the adoptee's need to know more about his or her origins and the concomitant consequences.

Notable findings were: the paucity of information given to these adoptees about their origins; thoughts and fears about birth parents that occurred as early as the pre-school period; childhood fears arising from the adoptive status; sensitivity about being adopted; peer group cruelty in pre-puberty and a seventeen percent parasuicide incidence among the members of this sample. Another finding related to the adult adoptee's need for a bio-genealogical history, especially in view of the high risk of certain genetic disorders, particularly among the Afrikaner population.

The majority of the adoptees in this sample entertained the possibility of meeting birth parents one day; for many this began in pre-puberty. This was contingent on the quality of the relationship with their adoptive parents in only a minority of cases. Few adoptees could share their thoughts about adoption and birth parents with their adoptive parents.

Adoptees who were 'searching' or who had 'found' birth parents were motivated more by a need to know who they were and why they had been given up for adoption, than by a need to replace the 'lost parent'. Where the relationship with the adoptive parents was warm and satisfying, the finding of birth parent(s) did not affect the adoptive relationship deleteriously.

These findings point to a need for more research on adoption following changes in South African adoption laws allowing adult adoptees access to court records of their adoption. Adoptees and their parents need informed assistance from those who counsel them.

FOR SYDNEY
MARTIN
NICHOLAS and
MELISSA

"Every intelligent being, whether adopted or not searches for his roots - his family history - in order to place himself within his time as a responsible human being. Knowing from whence we come guides us in charting our course in life."

Andrew Cowell (1986)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This research would not have been possible without the co-operation of those who are adopted, adoptive parents, birth parents and grandparents on both sides of what Sorosky et al. (1978) refer to as "The Adoption Triangle". To all those who generously shared of themselves and their life experiences with me, I express my unreserved and wholehearted gratitude.

I am also indebted to the editors of Huisgenoot, Fair Lady and Woman's Value for their support. This appreciation extends to the Registrar of Adoptions and those branches of Life Line, Famsa and Child and Family Welfare who supported me in my quest for respondents for this research study.

I wish to express my appreciation to my supervisor, Professor Ken Jubber, of the Department of Sociology, University of Cape Town, for his unfailing support, empathy and, not least, his erudition.

Research can be and very often is a lonely pursuit. For this reason, the encouragement and interest expressed in my research and papers received from authorities in the field of adoption was so much appreciated. I wish to thank all of the following:-

Dr Alexina McWhinnie, Senior Lecturer in Social Work, Buckinghamshire College of Higher Education, Oxford, England.

Dr H. David Kirk, former Head of the Department of Social Work, University of Waterloo, Waterloo, Canada.

Dr Vera Fahlberg, Medical Director, Forest Heights Lodge, Evergreen, Colorado, U.S.A.

Mrs Yehudith Haniel, former Director, Department of Adoption Services, Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, Jerusalem, Israel.

Mrs Nomi Ben-Israel, Kibbutz Beit Alfa, Israel Department of Adoption and Fostering. Education Department of Kibbutz Movement, Israel.

Dr C. Naaktgeboren (Zoologist) Research Group for Comparative Obstetrics, Amsterdam, The Netherlands.

Mark Elliot Zvi Shapiro (Chief Translator) Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, Jerusalem, Israel.

Dr Michael Humphrey, Department of Psychology, St. George's Medical School, University of London, London.

Professor Paul Sachdev, School of Social Work, Memorial University of Newfoundland, St. Johns, Newfoundland, Canada.

Dr Joseph Raubenheimer, fellow researcher into the field of adoption in South Africa.

My sincere thanks to:-

Avraham Lavine, Director of The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, Department of Internal Relations, Jerusalem, Israel, for sending me a copy of the publication by Nomi Ben-Israel.

The Chief Librarian, University of Zululand, for the copy of Ms Pakati's paper.

My thanks to the following for their kind replies to my queries and for their support and good wishes:-

Dr. G. De Villiers Morrison, M.P. Minister of Health Services and Welfare. Republic of South Africa.

Professor F.P. Hugo, Institute for Child and Adult Guidance, Rand Afrikaans University, Johannesburg.

The Master of the Supreme Court, Department of Justice, Republic of South Africa, Grahamstown.

Professor M. Hough, former Head of the Department of Social Work, Fort Hare University, Alice.

My thanks to the following for their time and the assistance given in providing knowledge and guidance in areas outside my field of expertise, viz. law and genetics:-

Advocate G.B. Myburgh, Port Elizabeth.

Professor G.S. Wood, Vista University, Port Elizabeth.

Dr A.P. Alberts, MB. CHB. MSGP (S.A.) Medical Director, Eastern Province Blood Transfusion Service, Port Elizabeth.

My thanks to colleagues, Dr Peter Cunningham and Professor Lorenzo Togni for their belief in my ability. To Deon Pretorius and M.J. (Ronnie) van Wyk of the Telephone Research Unit, Department of Sociology, University of Port Elizabeth, my thanks for making it possible for me to conduct an investigation into attitudes toward adoption and the adult adoptee's right to trace birth parents.

This research would not have been possible without the generous assistance of the Human Sciences Research Council who awarded me a bursary in 1986 and the University of Cape Town's Bursary Committee who awarded me a U.C.T. Post-graduate Research Scholarship for 1987. I am also very grateful for financial assistance from the Department of Sociology, University of Cape Town.

My thanks to Dr Mike Raath for his critical comments on the text, Pat Smailes for proof reading, Andrew Cowell for permission to quote him and Julie Holden-Jones who typed the final draft of this dissertation. No public expression of gratitude can ever include all those who helped in tangible and intangible ways.

CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
ABSTRACT	i
DEDICATION	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iv
CONTENTS	vii
LIST OF TABLES	xi
<u>CHAPTER 1</u>	1
INTRODUCTION	1
DEFINITIONS THAT APPLY TO THIS STUDY	5
THE IMPLICATIONS OF ADOPTION	8
ADOPTION IN SOUTH AFRICA	13
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE ON THE ADULT ADOPTEE	24
<u>CHAPTER 2</u>	35
THE RESEARCH METHOD AND PROCEDURE	35
UNIT OF ANALYSIS - THE ADULT ADOPTEE	37
GATHERING THE DATA	40
ANALYSIS OF THE DATA	41
VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY	42
BIOGRAPHICAL DETAILS OF THE ADOPTEE SAMPLE	47
DISTRIBUTION OF SAMPLE ACCORDING TO SEX	47
CLASSIFICATION OF SAMPLE INTO 'SEARCHING' CATEGORIES	47
DISTRIBUTION OF SAMPLE ACCORDING TO LANGUAGE GROUP	48
✓ AGE DISTRIBUTION OF THE SAMPLE	49
✓ MARITAL STATUS OF THE SAMPLE	50
DISTRIBUTION OF CHILDREN AMONG THE SAMPLE	50
GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION OF ADOPTEES IN THE SAMPLE	50
EDUCATIONAL LEVEL OF ADOPTEES IN THE SAMPLE	52
DETAILS OF THE ADOPTIVE PARENTS OF THE ADOPTEES IN THE SAMPLE	53
✓ SIBLING COMPOSITION IN THE ADOPTIVE FAMILY	55
✓ REASONS FOR BEING ADOPTED BY ADOPTIVE PARENTS	55
<u>CHAPTER 3</u>	57
AGE OF PLACEMENT	57
THE PRE- AND POSTNATAL PERIOD	57
EARLY MOTHER-INFANT RELATIONSHIPS	61

	<u>Page</u>
AGE OF PLACEMENT : ATTACHMENT AND SEPARATION AS PREDICTOR OF OUTCOME OF ADOPTION SUCCESS	66
AGE AT TIME OF PLACEMENT AS VARIABLE FOR ADOPTION OUTCOME	68
AGE OF PLACEMENT FOR THE SAMPLE	70
RESPONSES OF LATE PLACEMENT ADOPTEES	72
ATTACHMENT OF ADOPTEES TO ADOPTIVE PARENTS AND ADOPTIVE FAMILY	75
ADOPTEE RELATIONSHIPS WITH SIBLINGS	81
 <u>CHAPTER 4</u>	 82
REVELATION OF ADOPTED STATUS	82
DETAILS GIVEN ADOPTEES ABOUT THEIR BIRTH MOTHER	96
DETAILS GIVEN ADOPTEES ABOUT THEIR BIRTH FATHER	98
 <u>CHAPTER 5</u>	 101
ADOPTEE THOUGHTS ABOUT BIRTH MOTHER	101
EXAMPLES OF PRE-PUBERTAL RESPONSES	108
ADOLESCENT THOUGHTS ABOUT BIRTH MOTHER	109
YOUNG ADULthood : THOUGHTS ABOUT BIRTH MOTHER	110
FEARS CONCERNING BIRTH MOTHER DURING CHILDHOOD, ADOLESCENCE AND YOUNG ADULthood	113
EXAMPLES OF PRE-PUBERTAL FEARS	115
EXAMPLES OF ADOLESCENT FEARS	115
EXAMPLES OF FEARS IN YOUNG ADULthood	116
 <u>CHAPTER 6</u>	 117
ADOPTEE THOUGHTS ABOUT BIRTH FATHER DURING CHILDHOOD, ADOLESCENCE AND YOUNG ADULthood	119
EXAMPLES OF PRE-PUBERTAL THOUGHTS ABOUT BIRTH FATHER	119
EXAMPLES OF ADOLESCENT THOUGHTS ABOUT BIRTH FATHER	119
EXAMPLES OF YOUNG ADULT THOUGHTS ABOUT BIRTH FATHER	120
FEARS CONCERNING BIRTH FATHER	120
EXAMPLES OF FEARS ARISING FROM NEGATIVE PORTRAYAL OF BIRTH FATHER	121
EXAMPLES OF FEARS WHERE ADOPTEE WAS TOLD NOTHING ABOUT BIRTH FATHER	121
EXAMPLES OF FEARS ARISING FROM INADEQUATE OR INCOMPLETE INFORMATION ABOUT BIRTH FATHER	122
GENERAL FEARS ASSOCIATED WITH BEING AN ADOPTED CHILD	123
THOUGHTS ABOUT MEETING BIRTH PARENTS ONE DAY	126

	<u>Page</u>
<u>CHAPTER 7</u>	130
THE SCHOOL EXPERIENCE	130
<u>CHAPTER 8</u>	140
IDENTITY PROBLEMS IN ADOLESCENCE FOR ADOPTEES	140
CHANGES IN THE NATURE AND FREQUENCY OF THOUGHTS ABOUT ADOPTION	140
SHARING OF THOUGHTS BY ADOPTEES DURING ADOLESCENCE	141
INTEREST IN ADOPTION DURING ADOLESCENCE	141
POSSIBLE EVIDENCE FOR THE PRESENCE OF 'GENEALOGICAL BEWILDERMENT'	143
PROBLEMS WITH PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS	143
INDECISION ABOUT FUTURE CAREER	144
PROBLEMS WITH SCHOOLWORK IN SENIOR SCHOOL	144
SUICIDE ATTEMPTS IN ADOLESCENCE	147
ATTEMPTED SUICIDE DURING ADOLESCENCE FOR THE SAMPLE	150
ADOLESCENT SEXUAL ACTIVITY FOR THE SAMPLE OF ADOPTEES	159
PREMARITAL PROCREATION FOR THE SAMPLE OF ADOPTEES	159
DEVIANT BEHAVIOUR IN ADOLESCENCE	160
<u>CHAPTER 9</u>	162
EVIDENCE OF IDENTITY PROBLEMS IN ADULTHOOD	162
DEPRESSION	162
PSYCHIATRIC ILLNESS	162
ALCOHOL RELATED PROBLEMS	163
PERSONALITY AND BEHAVIOUR PROFILE OF THE EIGHTY-TWO ADULT ADOPTEES	163
ADULT ADOPTEE REACTIONS TO THE 'ADOPTED CHILD' LABEL	164
FEELINGS OF INDEBTEDNESS TOWARDS THE ADOPTIVE PARENTS	166
PROBLEMS RELATED TO SEXUAL ASPECTS AMONG ADULT ADOPTEES	167
FEARS OF FALLING IN LOVE WITH A BLOOD-RELATED SIBLING	167
PROBLEMS IN RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE OPPOSITE SEX	167
INSECURITY IN DATING RELATIONSHIPS	167
HOMOSEXUALITY AND LESBIANISM	168
SEX-LIFE DIFFICULTIES	169
ADOPTION AND ATTITUDES TO MARRIAGE	169
ADOPTEE RESPONSES REGARDING IGNORANCE OF THEIR MEDICAL HISTORY	170
CONCERNS ABOUT HEREDITARY AND GENETIC ASPECTS OF ILLNESS AND BIRTH DEFECTS	171
GENETIC DISORDERS AND ADOPTION	173
ADOPTIVE PARENT RESPONSES TO ADOPTEES' NEED FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT ORIGINS	177

	<u>Page</u>
<u>CHAPTER 10</u>	181
ADULTHOOD AND SEARCHING	181
THE ADULT ADOPTEE AS PARENT	181
THE ADOPTEE'S NEED TO KNOW MORE ABOUT ORIGINS : THE SEARCH	182
REASONS GIVEN BY ADOPTEES FOR THE DECISION TO TRACE BIRTH PARENTS	186
WHAT ADOPTEES SAID ABOUT THEIR NEED TO FIND ORIGINS	187
DEATH OF ONE OR BOTH ADOPTIVE PARENTS	190
AWARENESS THAT BIRTH PARENTS MIGHT DIE BEFORE MEETING	190
THE NEED TO KNOW 'WHO' AND 'WHY'	191
DESIRE TO SHARE BIRTH EXPERIENCE AND CHILDREN	192
MEDIA PUBLICITY ABOUT ADOPTION	193
ADOPTEE FAMILY DISCORD	193
SIMPLE CURIOSITY	193
MATURITY AND ABILITY TO HANDLE UNPALATABLE FACTS	194
REASON TO DOUBT ADOPTIVE PARENTS' REVELATION	194
OTHER REASONS FOR DECISION TO SEARCH	195
THE LAWS OF INHERITANCE AFFECT ADOPTEE	195
CONFIDING THE DECISION TO SEARCH	195
STEPS TAKEN IN THE PROCESS OF SEARCHING	197
<u>CHAPTER 11</u>	202
EXPERIENCES OF ADOPTEES WHO HAVE FOUND	202
ADOPTEE REACTIONS WHEN THEY FOUND BIRTH PARENT(S)	208
<u>CHAPTER 12</u>	217
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS	217
BIBLIOGRAPHY	235
APPENDIX A - LETTERS OF APPEAL FOR RESPONDENTS	
APPENDIX B - THE QUESTIONNAIRE	

LIST OF TABLES

	<u>Page</u>	
TABLE I	THE NUMBER OF REGISTERED ADOPTIONS IN SOUTH AFRICA FOR THE YEARS 1932 UNTIL 1967, SHOWN AS WHITE OR BLACK	16
TABLE II	NUMBERS AND PERCENTAGES OF REGISTERED ADOPTIONS FOR THE YEARS 1955 TO 1967	18
TABLE III	RESPONSE CATEGORIES AND SOURCES FOLLOWING APPEALS FOR RESPONDENTS DURING INITIAL PART OF RESEARCH STUDY INTO ADOPTION IN 1986	38
TABLE IV	AGE DISTRIBUTION OF ADOPTEE SAMPLE	49
TABLE V	AGE DISTRIBUTION OF THE SAMPLE SHOWN WITH BIGGER CLASS INTERVALS	49
TABLE VI	GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION OF SAMPLE TABLED WITH PERCENTAGES OF POPULATION DISTRIBUTION FOR RSA, EXCLUDING AFRICANS, ACCORDING TO THE 1985 CENSUS	51
TABLE VII	EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS FOR THE SAMPLE ARRANGED ACCORDING TO QUALIFICATIONS AND LANGUAGE GROUP	52
TABLE VIII	COMPARISON OF EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS OF THE ADOPTEES IN THIS SAMPLE WITH THOSE OF THE TOTAL POPULATION, EXCLUDING AFRICANS	53
TABLE IX	COMPARISON BETWEEN THE STUDY OF LANDMAN <u>et al.</u> AND THIS SAMPLE FOR THE AGE OF ADOPTION PLACEMENT	69
TABLE X	AGE OF PLACEMENT IN WEEKS, MONTHS AND YEARS AS REPORTED BY THE TWO LANGUAGE GROUPS IN THE SAMPLE OF ADOPTEES	71
TABLE XI	KNOWLEDGE OF ADOPTED STATUS ACCORDING TO NUMBERS AND LANGUAGE GROUP	85
TABLE XII	COMPARISON OF AGE OF REVELATION BETWEEN PICTON'S AND THIS STUDY	85
TABLE XIII	ADOPTEE EXPERIENCES OF THE MANNER IN WHICH REVELATION OF ADOPTED STATUS OCCURRED	91
TABLE XIV	DETAILS GIVEN TO ADOPTEES IN THIS SAMPLE ABOUT THEIR BIRTH MOTHER, ARRANGED ACCORDING TO INFORMATION CATEGORY	97

		<u>Page</u>
TABLE XV	DETAILS GIVEN TO ADOPTEES IN THIS SAMPLE ABOUT THEIR BIRTH FATHER, ARRANGED ACCORDING TO INFORMATION CATEGORY	99
TABLE XVI	AGE AT WHICH SEVENTY-TWO ADOPTEES (88%) BEGAN TO WONDER ABOUT BEING ADOPTED	103
TABLE XVII	NUMBER OF ADOPTEES, ACCORDING TO LANGUAGE GROUP, WHO RESPONDED TO WONDERING ABOUT THEIR BIRTH MOTHER	104
TABLE XVIII	NUMBER OF ADOPTEES, ACCORDING TO LANGUAGE GROUP, WHO RESPONDED TO WONDERING ABOUT THEIR BIRTH FATHER	104
TABLE XIX	AGES WHEN THOUGHTS ABOUT ADOPTION AND BIRTH MOTHER COMMENCED, AND TYPE OF THOUGHTS	108
TABLE XX	NUMBER OF ADOPTEES WHO HAD FEARS ABOUT BIRTH MOTHER, ARRANGED ACCORDING TO LANGUAGE GROUP AND AGE CATEGORY AT TIME OF REVELATION	116
TABLE XXI	ADOPTTEE THOUGHTS ABOUT BIRTH FATHER CONTRASTED WITH THOUGHTS ABOUT BIRTH MOTHER	118
TABLE XXII	NUMBER OF SCHOOLMATES WHO KNEW RESPONDENT WAS ADOPTED, ARRANGED ACCORDING TO LANGUAGE GROUP	131
TABLE XXIII	DISTRIBUTION OF POSSIBLE PSYCHIATRIC DISORDERS (DSM III CRITERIA) AMONG THE FOURTEEN ADOPTEES WHO ATTEMPTED SUICIDE IN ADOLESCENCE	153
TABLE XXIV	CONDITIONS NOT ATTRIBUTABLE TO POSSIBLE MENTAL DISORDERS IN THIS SAMPLE OF ADOLESCENT SUICIDE ATTEMPTS	153
TABLE XXV	PROBLEMS SPECIFIC TO THE FOURTEEN ADOPTEES IN THIS SAMPLE WHO ATTEMPTED SUICIDE IN ADOLESCENCE	154
TABLE XXVI	REASONS GIVEN BY ADOPTEES FOR THEIR DECISION TO TRACE BIRTH PARENTS, PRESENTED IN RANK ORDER WITH NUMBERS FOR EACH CATEGORY	186
TABLE XXVII	ADOPTTEE RESPONSES TO HAVING FOUND THEIR BIRTH PARENT(S) OR BLOOD RELATIVES, ARRANGED ACCORDING TO LANGUAGE GROUP	209
TABLE XXVIII	ADOPTTEE RESPONSES AS REGARDS ADVISING OTHER ADOPTEES TO 'SEARCH', ARRANGED ACCORDING TO LANGUAGE GROUP	210

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

"No-one who is not adopted can really know what it is like." These words have been spoken or written by a large number of adoptees both in South Africa and abroad.

This research study was embarked on inter alia in an attempt to investigate the experience of adoption from the subjective viewpoint of those most intimately concerned, namely, adults who were adopted as infants or children. This was done in order to help those who are not adopted to understand what 'being adopted' means to those who are. It will provide insights for adoptive parents who are often unaware of the thoughts and feelings many adoptees have about their status and about their birth parents during childhood, adolescence and adulthood.

This first chapter gives definitions of terms and concepts that apply to this research report and presents an overview of the implications of adoption. It also contains a history of adoption in South Africa, together with figures for the numbers of legal adoptions that have taken place since such records were kept. The development of adoption practice in this country closely parallels the social changes that have occurred since 1923 when the first adoption laws were tabled in Parliament. While the practice of adoption and the experience of being adopted have many universal qualities, socio-cultural factors do have an effect. Attention has been drawn to these wherever appropriate.

A review of the literature on the adult adoptee is presented in this chapter. References have been made to these, where relevant in the text, as have comparisons between some of the research findings in the literature and those of this study.

Adoption literature in the past has tended to place its emphasis on the factors that account for this practice. Families by adoption come about as a result of the decision by a parent or parents to relinquish all parental rights in law, in respect of a child or children, and by the assumption of these rights and children by another parent or set of parents. The reasons for this are manifold and have their roots in the consequences of war, economic depression, illness and other conditions of personal and social disorganisation (McWhinnie, 1967; Raynor, 1980; Kadushin, 1980).

Adoption was known and practised in ancient times. The first legal enactments to control what had until then been informal adoption occurred in the State of Massachusetts, America, in 1851. In time, other countries followed suit (Raubenheimer, 1970) and introduced control over the placement of infants and children. The emphasis on praxis on the part of adoption practitioners, both public and private, shifted early during this century from the 'best interests' of parents (both relinquishing and adoptive) to an awareness and concern for the best interests of the child. Infants and children given up for adoption were to be placed under optimal conditions to ensure for the child nothing less than the conditions enjoyed by any child in a consanguinal family.

This shift of focus was undertaken with the most laudable of motives. By utilising methods both social and legal it was intended that the child by adoption would be no different from his or her non-adopted counterparts. A great deal of attention was devoted to making this exercise in social engineering successful. Guidelines for adoption practice were published and researchers in various fields directed their research studies to investigations aimed at facilitating adoption outcome. The criteria for success in the past was that the adoptee as a grafted member of a kinship would accept his or

her assimilation without further question. Children by adoption were supposed to accept with gratitude their complete acceptance into another family or lineage. They were, however, not uniformly advised of their status nor about the parent(s) who had relinquished them.

That such practices might adversely affect adults who had no knowledge of their origins or genealogy, was recognised by the Government of the Republic of South Africa in a Bill tabled in Parliament in 1983 and which became effective on 1 February 1987. Other countries, notably Scandinavian countries, England and Wales (1976), had already effected changes in adoption laws allowing adult adoptees access to documents concerning their origins. Since 1930, Scotland has allowed adoptees seventeen years and older access to their original birth certificate.

This research study conducted during 1986 was prompted by the proposed changes in South African adoption laws which would allow adult adoptees access to court records of their adoption.

The first studies into adults who were adopted as infants or children were published some twenty years ago by McWhinnie (1967) in Britain and Landman et al. (1967) in South Africa.

It was hypothesized that with the passage of time changes would have occurred in attitudes towards the stigma of illegitimacy, infertility and adoption, and in the interest of adoptees in their genealogy. Just what these were and to what extent they had occurred, could not be commented on without empirical research.

It was not known how many adult adoptees, if any, would want to take advantage of the new dispensation accorded them. Further questions that arose prior to the commencement of this research had to do with the extent of, attachment to, and assimilation into, the adoptive family. It was also not known how much the average adoptee knew about his or her biological or birth parents or of the circumstances that had led to his or her relinquishment for adoption. Were there perhaps some adoptees whose curiosity had already led them to trace their birth parent(s) by dint of their own detective work? If this was indeed the case, what factors within the adoptive family or individual adoptee had caused the curiosity and eventual search? These, and the question as to what extent the South African adult adoptee resembles his or her overseas counterparts needed investigation before answers could be provided.

Many variables can and do affect adoption outcome. Some of these are: events occurring during the pre- and early post-natal period; bonding between the infant and birth or adoptive mother; age at which placement occurred; the adoptive family composition; the manner and timing of disclosure of adoptive status; social attitudes to adoption; and the legal status of adoptees.

This study into adoption and salient experiences in the lives of a sample of adult adoptees has attempted to provide answers to the above and other questions. The emphasis has been on the perspective of the adult adoptee. The aim has been to add to the body of knowledge in the field of adoption. It is also hoped that adoptive parents, adoption practitioners and other persons who counsel adoptees, will benefit from this contribution.

DEFINITIONS THAT APPLY TO THIS STUDY

The Penguin English Dictionary (1974:9) defines the term 'adopt' simply and succinctly:

"receive as one's own the child of other parents."

Kadushin (1980:465) defines adoption as"

"Adoption involves becoming a parent through a legal and social process rather than through a biological process."

Intra-familial adoption: where adoption occurs between biologically related persons.

Extra-familial adoption: where adoption occurs between non-biologically related persons.

Disclosure adoption: where the relinquishing parent(s) is allowed by law to know the name and identity of the adopting parents.

Non-disclosure adoption: where the relinquishing parent(s) is not allowed by law to know the name and identity of the adopting parent.

Open adoption: where initial and continuing contact is encouraged between relinquishing parent(s) and the adopting parents. This term is sometimes used to refer to disclosure adoption.

Independent or private adoptions: where adoptions are arranged by private persons, for example, doctors, lawyers, etc.

Agency adoptions: where adoptions are arranged by social workers employed by various welfare organisations.

Legal adoption: where an adoption has been legitimized in a court of law (in South Africa, The Children's Court).

de facto adoption: informal, not legitimate adoption.

(It is not known whether all or only some of the adoptions referred to in this study were in fact legal adoptions.)

Adoptive parents: refers to related or non-related persons who undertake to assume the authority and responsibility of a parent in respect of a minor on a permanent basis.

Adoptee or adopted person: refers to someone who was adopted by biologically related or unrelated persons whilst still a minor, i.e. below the age of eighteen and who in South African Law is referred to as an 'adopted child'.

Birth parent: refers to the biological parent of an adopted person who relinquished all parental rights in respect of that child to another parent or set of parents, in law. Other terms in popular use in the literature are - biological parents, natural parents, 'biomum' and 'biodad'. Adoptees in this study sometimes refer to their 'real parents' when referring to birth parents.

Birth grandparents: refers to the parents of the relinquishing parent(s).

Illegitimacy: refers to a child born out of wedlock. Under South African Law, the time of conception is not taken into account.

Search:

"Search is defined as the efforts of either the adult adoptee or the birth parent to secure identifying information that might lead to locating the other party" (Kadushin, 1980:493).

Found: refers to adoptees who have found either the truth concerning their parentage; one or both birth parents'; natal or half-siblings; or other members of the extended birth family.

Optelkind: There is no exact equivalent of this term in the English language. The denotative meaning of this term in the Afrikaans language is:

- (a) a child who is not born to the mother but nonetheless accepted by her as her own, whether legally adopted or not.
- (b) a foundling.

The connotative meanings of this term which have positive overtones are:

- (a) an illegitimate child left by the mother to be brought up by her parents.
- (b) any informally adopted child reared by related or non-related persons (de facto adoptions).

The connotative meanings which have negative overtones are:

- (a) **Weggooikind** : a child who has been abandoned or discarded.

- (b) a child whose origins are hidden or concealed because of some or other discreditable factor in his origins.

Professor M.A. Hough, former head of the Department of Social Work at Fore Hare University, Alice (to whom I am indebted for the aforementioned explanation regarding the term 'optel-kind'), added that he had also come across the use of this term to refer to children conceived in an adulterous union.

The only other reference to a similar term comes from Elizabeth Pakati (1982:11) who wrote about adoption in the Zulu culture. She states that neighbours or their children refer to the adopted child "... as having been 'picked up' (wacoshwa) (which) has the serious and unpleasant implication of not belonging anywhere. It gives the child a sense of homelessness and lack of attachment to anyone which amounts to being clanless and nameless. This may result in an identity crisis for the child".

THE IMPLICATIONS OF ADOPTION

In order to understand the implications of adoption, it is necessary to look at some of the social and legal practices associated with this. It has already been stated that a shift occurred over the years in terms of the 'best interests' of those involved, namely, the adopting parent(s), the relinquishing parent(s), the society or state and, finally, the child.

The 'best interests' of society and the state were primarily cost saving, for the costs of child-rearing multiply when children are institutionalised (Mandell, 1973; Benet, 1976; Page, 1984).

Adopting parents too were in need of safeguard. Were they to expend time, energy and money on raising a child or children not born to them, some measure of ensuring loyalty in return, or freedom from interference by the relinquishing parent(s) or their families, was essential.

The family (blood-line or clan) found its best interests served by the legal provisions that safeguarded inheritance in the event of the introduction of a stranger into its midst. The United Nations analysis of adoption laws, which studied fifteen European, North American and Latin countries, found that in the statutes of all the countries "... provisions concerning the rights of inheritance between the adoptee, and his adopter are given prime attention and the most detailed analysis" (Mandell, 1973:12).

The best interests of the relinquishing parent(s) were to be served by severing (in non-disclosure adoption practice) all links between parent and child. This was primarily to enable the relinquishing parent to build a new life unfettered by any evidence of past 'mistakes', as in the case of illegitimacy or, more rarely, the abandonment of parental responsibilities.

The best interests of infants and children were to be served by providing them with a new family, a new name and a new birth certificate. All links with their biological and social past were to be cut off wherever and whenever possible. Choices made in regard to the new family frequently involved such factors as matching as closely as possible the physical, intellectual and social characteristics of the two sets of parents. These criteria for matching were to ensure that assimilation into the new family and clan would be as complete as human intervention could determine and thus circumvent visible evidence of difference between genetically unrelated persons (Raynor, 1980).

This emphasis on the best interests of all parties concerned and, primarily, those of the child, entailed a measure of secrecy and/or concealment. Non-disclosure adoption (the most common form of adoption between non-related adoption persons) guaranteed the protection of the fledgling adoptive family. The relinquishing parent or parents were prevented by law from ever knowing who had assumed the responsibility of parenthood in respect of their child. This necessity for concealment (which often took the form of keeping the identities of relinquishing parent(s) from the adopting parent(s)) affected disclosure adoption practice as well. Identity revelation in the latter became clouded with the belief that the truth concerning birth parents was to be concealed in the best interests of the child, even where this occurred between biologically related persons.

The emphasis on praxis and 'best interests' which has distinguished most adoption laws and practice during this century, focussed on the adoptee as 'child'. Further emphasis on complete assimilation of the adopted into new clans or lineages enforced the social safeguards contained in legal regulations regarding the family by adoption. Mention has been made of the complex laws affecting the right of the adoptee to inheritance.

The legal contradictions in modern adoption practice are explored by Kirk (1980, 1985) in a clear and unambiguous manner. He draws attention to the fact that it is not only in matters of inheritance and artificial consanguinity that anomalies arise for adoptees and their adoptive parents, but also in regard to more mundane issues such as beneficiaries of insurance policies.

Adoptees, and to a lesser extent their adoptive and birth parents, have for some time questioned the assumption that the adoptive family can be the equivalent of a consanguinal family. The only theory of adoption extant is that of Canadian sociologist and adoptive father, H. David Kirk (1964, 1981). His theory explains that adoptive parents have to contend with role handicaps that arise out of, and are reinforced by, social attitudes towards adoption in society. Members within an adoptive family develop one of two coping mechanisms. These are a 'rejection of difference' (between their own situation and that of other consanguinal families) or an 'acceptance of difference' which facilitates communication and mutual acceptance of role handicap in the adoptive family.

It has not been possible to test Kirk's theory in this study. What has come to light has been the fact that polarities of 'acceptance of difference' and 'rejection of difference' can be functional or dysfunctional along a continuum, which in turn is contingent upon the social group to which the adoptive family belongs. Further research is needed to throw more light on this modification of Kirk's theory in different societies and cultural groups.

There have been very few studies into social attitudes to adoption. Kirk (1984) refers to two studies, one in a University city in upstate New York conducted in 1952 and another conducted in an Eastern Canadian city in 1956-1957. In both cities, a one percent sample was drawn from the population. Respondents were interviewed to ascertain their attitude to adoption and the values related to adoption. The results of each study were similar in that, while the majority were found to be overtly accepting of adoption, certain subtle distinctions were made between adopting and biological families. It was also found that the higher the socio-economic and educational level, the more support there was for adoption.

A telephone survey into social attitudes to adoption was conducted in Port Elizabeth, Republic of South Africa, during the latter half of 1986 (Boult, 1987). The results of this survey showed that seventy-four percent of those interviewed would consider adoption in the event of their not being able to have children of their own. The reasons given in more than half of these responses were that the respondents 'loved children'. Seventy-one percent of those interviewed felt that adoptees do have the right to trace their birth parents when they reach the age of eighteen. It was also found that in the main the higher the socio-economic and educational level, the more support there was for adoption. These social attitudes reveal a preference for children in a marriage and a belief in the importance of lineage.

Adoptees' questioning of their generally accepted role as persons without a genealogical history has, along with demands by other minority groups, gained increasing momentum and social attention. In countries where access to court records of adoption is barred by law, as in most states of America, Canada and Australia, adoptees, birth parents and occasionally adoptive parents, have attempted to redress the situation.

South Africa has introduced and implemented changes in its adoption laws with very little attendant controversy and publicity. What the long-term effects of these changes will be on those most intimately concerned - namely, adult adoptees and their adoptive and birth parents - is not known. The results of this study show that the matter is complex and needs further research.

The following section gives a history of adoption in South Africa. Data on this subject are difficult to obtain and further historical material may hopefully come to light in future research. A general history of adoption has not been given as this subject has been dealt with comprehensively in publications on adoption, notably by Benet (1967) and Mandell (1973).

ADOPTION IN SOUTH AFRICA

The first law to regulate adoption in South Africa was enacted in 1923. Entitled, "The Adoption of Children Act" 1923 (Act No. 25 of 1923), it sought to give greater protection to the child at a time when the social and economic upheavals of post-World War I left many children needing homes and families. At that time neither the Common Law of South Africa nor the Roman-Dutch Law (upon which the country's legal system is based), recognised adoption (Spiro, 1961). This adoption Bill was modelled on a law governing adoption enacted in New Zealand in 1908.

During the debate preceding the second reading of this Bill, the Hon. Mr. Justice Richard Feetham, K.C. and Member of Parliament for Parktown, Johannesburg, drew attention to the insecurity experienced by both the adoptive parents and the children in de facto adoptions. He recalled the passing of a Private Bill in the Cape Parliament in 1900, "... to provide that a certain man's property should go to his adopted child, as he had not left a proper will, and otherwise his property might have reverted to the Crown. But everyone who adopted a child or children could not go to the expense of passing a private measure through Parliament". (Debates of the House of Assembly (1923-1925:159).)

Other speakers expressed doubts on a variety of issues such as: the Bill was of too wide a character; it did not make provision for the brother or sister of an adopted child; difficulties might arise with regard to inheritance; adoption could be viewed by some as a means of acquiring cheap labour; there was also no limit to the number of children who could be adopted. Notwithstanding these objections, the Bill was passed and legal adoption became possible for the first time in this country. This Bill was replaced by the Children's Act No. 31 of 1937. Steinberg (1958:319) states, "Both these acts provide in almost identical terms that the adopted child shall 'for all purposes whatsoever' be deemed in law to be the legitimate child of the adoptive parents". This 1937 Act empowered the court to withhold the names of the adoptive parents from the relinquishing parent(s) where this was deemed to be in the best interests of the child. Whether this provision in the Act did not perhaps serve the best interests of the adoptive parents, is open to question. A comment in this regard was made in the Annual Report of the Department concerned:-

"Oor die algemeen wil aanneemende ouers graag kinders hê wat nog jonk is en wat kan opgroei met kennis van slegs een tuiste en nie deur verdeelde trou en 'n verwarrende verlede van streek gebring word nie." (Unie van Suid-Afrika. Verslag van die Departement Volkswelsyn vir die Boekjare (1937-1939:55).)

Mention is also made in this 1937-1939 report of the need for a new and abridged birth certificate for the adoptee, as existing certificates, indicating illegitimate status, constituted a stigma for both adoptees and their adoptive parents. The report states that sixty percent of children given up for adoption were born illegitimate.

Statistics on the numbers of children adopted in South Africa are available only from 1932 onwards. The figures listed in Table 1 were obtained from the annual reports of the Department of Social Welfare and the Department of Health Services and Welfare (1986) (where no breakdown for race is given).

In the annual report of the Department of Social Welfare (1944:14) it was stated:

"Commissioners of Child Welfare conduct enquiries and make orders in respect of adoptions, in terms of the Children's Act, while it is the function of the Department of Social Welfare to register them."

Mention is made in the Department's Annual Report of 1943 (p. 5) that more than half the children born between 1939 and 1943 were born illegitimate. The social disorganisation during the period of the Second World War was further reflected in the Department's Annual Report of 1944. Of the 1 238 adoptions that year, 944 or 76,2 percent were born illegitimate. The majority of these, moreover, were White.

The 1950 figures for adoption include the eleven children who came from the Jersey Islands (sic) and "... all the children who entered the country under the aegis of the 'Dietse Kinderfonds'" (Report of the Department of Social Welfare (1949-1951 par. 44).) It was also stated in this report that only eleven adopted children were allowed to leave the country, in accordance with adoption policy, and that the demand for children still exceeded the number available for adoption. Reported adoption statistics were broken down into disclosure and non-disclosure adoptions for the first time in the annual report for the Department for the period 1952-1959. No explanation was given in the report for this departure from standard practice.

The annual report for the period 1964-1966 (p. 50) drew attention to the fact that disclosure adoptions were in the majority - a trend that had been steadily maintained since 1944. The ratio between the two types was said to have remained constant with only minor deviations. Also reported was the fact that the majority of White children were under the age of two years and that in the age groups ten years and older, only 280 White children were adopted in 1964 and 1965. Published tables of adoption figures during the period 1932-1967 do not reflect whether these were intra- or extra-familial.

It can be assumed, however, that here, as elsewhere, the majority of non-disclosure adoptions are extra-familial. The majority of children adopted by non-relatives are born illegitimate (Raubenheimer, 1970; de Bruyn, 1976; Kadushin, 1980).

TABLE 1

THE NUMBER OF REGISTERED ADOPTIONS IN SOUTH AFRICA
FOR THE YEARS 1932 UNTIL 1967, SHOWN AS WHITE OR BLACK

YEAR	WHITE	BLACK	TOTAL
1932	386	185	571
1933	390	196	586
1934	379	168	547
1935	459	175	634
1936	472	226	698
1937	446	225	671
1938	574	218	792
1939	587	244	831

YEAR	WHITE	BLACK	TOTAL
1940	715	240	955
1941	677	225	902
1942	790	234	1 024
1943	743	217	960
1944	1 015	223	1 238
1945	1 194	326	1 520
1946	1 203	354	1 557
1947	1 314	380	1 694
1948	1 166	334	1 500
1949	-	-	1 738
1950	1 438	411	1 849
1951			1 725
1952			1 911
1953			1 911
1954			2 067
			9 463

The figures of the last four years were obtained from the Department of Health Services and Welfare in 1986.

As will be seen from this and the next table, there was a total of 58 332 adoptions in this country between 1932 and 1967. Shown as numbers per decade, or part thereof, the figures are:

1932 - 1939	5 330
1940 - 1949	13 088
1950 - 1959	20 542
1960 - 1967	19 372

TABLE II

NUMBERS AND PERCENTAGES OF REGISTERED ADOPTIONS FOR THE YEARS 1955 TO 1967

YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH	WHITE						BLACK					
	DISCLOSURE		NON-DISCLOSURE		TOTAL		DISCLOSURE		NON-DISCLOSURE		TOTAL	
	NUMBER	%	NUMBER	%	NUMBER	%	NUMBER	%	NUMBER	%	NUMBER	%
1955	935	61.8	579	38.2	1 514	100.0	438	89.9	49	10.1	487	100.0
1956	844	53.9	722	46.1	1 566	100.0	422	90.6	44	9.4	466	100.0
1957	967	57.5	715	42.5	1 682	100.0	487	88.5	63	11.5	550	100.0
1958	1 008	56.8	766	43.2	1 774	100.0	562	91.4	53	8.6	615	100.0
<u>1959</u>	1 006	56.0	790	44.0	1 796	100.0	569	90.5	60	9.5	629	100.0
1960	962	55.8	763	44.2	1 725	100.0	488	88.7	62	11.3	550	100.0
1961	971	54.6	806	45.4	1 777	100.0	387	88.8	49	11.2	436	100.0
1962	923	53.8	794	46.2	1 717	100.0	386	87.3	56	12.7	442	100.0
1963	1 143	56.4	882	43.6	2 025	100.0	390	86.1	63	13.9	453	100.0
1964	1 167	58.1	840	41.9	2 007	100.0	369	85.6	62	14.4	431	100.0
1965	1 122	55.5	899	44.5	2 021	100.0	347	84.6	63	15.4	410	100.0
1966	1 198	54.6	997	45.4	2 195	100.0	392	85.6	66	14.4	458	100.0
1967	1 170	52.7	1 052	47.3	2 222	100.0	434	86.3	69	13.7	503	100.0

\bar{x} = 55.9%

\bar{x} = 44.0%

\bar{x} = 87.9%

\bar{x} = 12.0%

The 1937 Children's Act was replaced by the Children's Act 1960, No. 33 of 1960. The new Act again clearly set out that an adopted child shall be deemed in law to be the legitimate child of the adoptive parents, with two important provisions regarding the right to inherit:

The adopted child shall not:-

- " (a) become entitled to any property devolving on any child of his adoptive parent by virtue of any instrument executed prior to the date of the order of adoption (whether the instrument takes effect inter vivos or mortis causa) unless the instrument clearly conveys the intention that that property shall devolve upon the adopted child;
 - (b) inherit any property ab intestato from any relative of his adoptive parent.
- (3) An order of adoption shall terminate all the rights and legal responsibilities existing between the child and his natural parents and their relatives, except the right of the child to inherit from them ab intestato."

(Statutes of the Republic of South Africa - Children's Act, No. 33 of 1960, p. 97.)

In a letter dated 27 February 1986, the Master of the Supreme Court replied to my query as to whether he knew of any case where an adopted child had inherited from the estate of a natural parent who had died ab intestato:

"Although there may have been cases where the child inherited from the estate of his natural parents who died intestate, I am not aware of any specific case where this happened. The non-disclosure of the adoption would appear to be the problem in such cases of succession."

The 1960 Children's Act stipulated that no-one younger than twenty-five may adopt a biologically unrelated child. This Act also commands the court to have due regard for the adoptive parents' and the child's religious and cultural background, nationality, ethnological grouping and other similarities (Mouton, 1976). The emphasis appears to have been on preserving ethnic identities. The South African National Council for Child Welfare (1972:63) made the following recommendation with regard to guidelines for adoption practice:

"The agency should seek the assistance and advice of the local Commissioner of Child Welfare; of the relevant State Department (... depending on the race of the child) which comes into the picture when ministerial approval of a 'non-disclosure' consent is sought..."

This Act included an important clause, namely the absolute prohibition of marriage and carnal intercourse between the adoptive parent and the adopted child.

Spiro (1961:331) states, "In France, Italy and Spain, the prohibition of marriage extends to descendants of the adopted child and also operates as between the adopted child and other natural or adopted children of the adoptive parents. Germany, too, extends the prohibition to descendants of the adopted child, but only for the duration of the legal relationship flowing from adoption ... In England, like in South Africa ... an adopted child is not prevented from marrying a member of the adoptive family".

Kirk (1981, 1985) draws attention to the legal anomalies which exist in terms of the supposition that the adoptive family can be the equivalent of a consanguinal one. In North America, cases have occurred where an adoptive father married his adoptive daughter after the death of his wife, and other cases where adopted persons have been charged in a court of law with committing incest, albeit unknowingly.

Important changes in adoption law came into effect on 1 February 1987, in the form of the Child Care Act 1983, No. 74 of 1983. This Bill was referred to a select committee and only passed by parliament after extensive debate. The new Act follows the outline of the previous act (which it repeals) with important amendments. Concerning the effect of adoption, Section 20(2) of the 1983 Act states:

"An adopted child shall for all purposes whatever be deemed in law to be the legitimate child of the adoptive parent as if he was born of that parent during the existence of a lawful marriage." (emphasis mine)

It is not clear from the statement whether this definition of status will apply retrospectively, or only to those children adopted after the Act was promulgated. A query addressed in this regard to the Master of the Supreme Court, Department of Justice, Grahamstown, R.S.A., received the following reply dated 27 February 1986:

"It is difficult to say at this stage whether the new Act will only apply to future adoptions. This problem is discussed by L. Schoeman in T.H.R.H.R. of May 1985 on page 224 but no definite solution is given.

The new Act defines a child as a person under the age of 18 years. The age of majority is 21 years. It would appear that persons over 18 years will not be affected by the Act."

If this is indeed the case, then those persons who were older than age eighteen when the new Act came into force will still be subject to the regulations contained in the 1960 Act with regard to inheritance, and brothers and sisters in an adoptive family will be able to marry each other. In this present study into the experiences of eighty-two adult adoptees in South Africa, fifty percent stated that they knew something about the law as it affects adopted persons, while seventy-six percent said that they would be interested in knowing more. Only twenty-two percent had some knowledge of the laws of inheritance as they affect the adopted person, and twenty-four percent of these adoptees did not know that they should make a will upon reaching the age of eighteen. The level of education of the adoptee did not seem to make any difference as among those who expressed ignorance of the need to make a will, were a graduate and several adoptees who had tertiary education diplomas.

The significance of this is that if the changes with regard to the status of the adopted child are not applicable retrospectively, adult adoptees and their parents will remain subject to the laws applying to intestacy. In the event of an adopted person dying intestate, his or her adopted siblings may not inherit from the estate.

Van der Merwe and Rowland (1969:83) state in their exposition on the South African Laws of Inheritance:

"Wat betref die bevoegdheid van 'n aangenome kind om te erf, moet 'bloed verwant' in sub-artikel 74(2)(b), soos reeds gesê, dus wyd opgevat word om ook 'bloedverwantskap' deur aanneming te dek en daarom is 'n aangenome kind onbevoegd om van 'n ander aangenome kind van sy aannemende ouers te erf."

Multiple deaths due to motor vehicle accidents are a common feature of the South African scene, particularly during peak holiday periods. An adoptive family could be among the fatalities. Should the adoptive parents predecease one of the adopted children, who had not made a will (i.e. after the legally stipulated age of sixteen years), that child's share of the parents' estate would not accrue to the surviving adopted child or children.

The 1983 Child Care Act contained important new regulations affecting adoptees, their adoptive and birth parents. These were that records of adoption proceedings be available to:

- (a) an adoptive parent from the date on which the child concerned reaches the age of 18 years;
- (b) an adopted child from the date on which he reaches the age of 21 years.

The registrar, however, may require an adoptive parent and child to receive counselling from a social worker designated by the registrar before records are inspected or copied. This latter provision has been debated by social workers. Many feel that counselling should be mandatory here, as it is in England and Wales. Some of the adoptees contacted in the present study who have found birth parent(s) or siblings, made similar comments. Those adoptees who had the aid of a social worker to act as a go-between in the meeting between adoptee and birth parent(s) expressed their sincere appreciation for this help.

The new provisions which make it legally possible for adoptees to gain access to court records of the adoption proceedings that affect them, may have considerable social repercussions.

It removes, at least in adulthood, the secrecy that surrounds adoption. Obtaining the names and former addresses of their birth parents is but the first step adoptees take in their quest for a genealogical history.

Another important paragraph in the regulations made under the Child Care Act 1983, refers to the fact that the adoptions record book, the register of adoptions, and the record of the children's court may be inspected for bona fide research purposes. This opens the field of adoption for research in South Africa for the first time. That further research needs to be done is obvious, particularly in view of the many unanswered questions raised by the results of this study on adoption in South Africa and the salient experiences of eighty-two adult adoptees.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE ON THE ADULT ADOPTEE

The first major study of the adjustment of adults who were adopted as infants or children was by McWhinnie (1967) in South East Scotland, published under the title, "Adopted children. How they grow up." Her sample consisted of fifty-eight adult adoptees whom she recruited through medical practitioners and subsequently interviewed, some more than once.

McWhinnie found that only twenty-one of the fifty-eight adoptees could be said to be "well adjusted". Factors found to be associated with intermediate or poor adjustment were:

- * older age-group adoptive mothers;
- * health problems of a psychogenic or hypochondriacal nature in the adoptive parents;
- * single adoptive parenthood;
- * rigid and puritanical religious beliefs among adoptive parents;

- * placement after the age of two years;
- * the adoptive parent's critical attitudes towards the biological parents and toward illegitimacy;
- * poor marital relationship of adoptive parents;
- * gratitude expected from the adopted child; and
- * the attitudes of the extended adoptive family towards adoption and the adoptee.

Other facts found to be of significance were the timing, manner and content of revelation of adopted status. She found too that the adoptees themselves preferred early revelation conveyed in a positive manner, together with as much factual information as possible and an uncritical attitude towards the biological parents.

The results of another exploratory study into aspects concerning adoption were published in South Africa by Landman, Anderson and van Wyk (1967). This report has some typographical errors in the tables of figures, but nonetheless made a valuable contribution to an under-researched field of study in this country.

Letters of appeal for respondents were published in newspapers and magazines in South Africa and Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe). Further appeals for respondents were addressed to sixty congregations of the three Afrikaans churches; all hospitals with nurses homes; teachers (through official publications for that body); a radio programme about the research project, and social workers in both countries. One hundred adult adoptees and fifty adoptive parents were reached by means of questionnaires, and fifteen birth mothers were interviewed.

It was found that the reasons for adoption were of lesser importance for adoptees than the relationship within the adoptive family. Like McWhinnie, Landman et al. found that the timing, manner and factual content of information about birth parents was of importance to the adoptee. They also found gratitude to adoptive parents to be the special province of the adoptee, and pointed to the need for early, rather than late, placement.

Jaffee and Fanshel (1970) interviewed one hundred adoptees and their adoptive parents in America. They found no correlation between late placement and adjustment. They did find that male adoptees in the sample had less satisfactory adjustments than female, as did those adoptees placed with childless couples.

An interesting finding in their study (1970:312) was that "Adoptees who showed marked curiosity about their biological past and desired to know more about it than their adoptive parents knew or were willing to divulge, tended to manifest a more problematic adjustment in a variety of life-space areas". They draw attention to a need for longitudinal studies into adoptive family relationships.

Triseliotis (1973) made a study in Scotland of seventy adult adoptees who had contacted Register House for information contained in their original birth certificates. By means of interviews, he found:

- * a high percentage of adoptees who learned of their status well past the recommended age for revelation. Early revelation was associated with adoptee satisfaction;
- * the early teens was the time when most adoptees had wanted factual information about their birth parents and origins;
- * searching for birth parents was most often associated with poor family relationships and a low self-image and was triggered by one or other life crisis; and

- * with one exception, the experiences of those who had found birth parents or siblings were unfulfilling and unsatisfactory for the adoptees.

Triseliotis strongly recommends that adoption agencies keep factually complete records for a minimum period of seventy-five years and that these should be available to adult adoptees. These recommendations arose from his finding that there was a significant difference between adoptees who wanted more information about background and those who wanted to meet natural parents and establish a relationship with them.

The 1976 report of Eldred et al. into the experiences of 216 adult adoptees in Denmark, differs from other studies in that all the material was reported during psychiatric interviews (although the subjects were not psychiatric patients, nor were they aware that their adoptive status was the reason for their selection).

This sample was also compared with a randomly drawn sample of 216 other adult adoptees. Their findings were:

- * forty-two percent were placed before the age of five months and seventy percent during the first year;
- * revelation of adopted status ranged from those who had always known, to those who learned of their status only in adulthood. The average age of revelation was eleven;
- * twenty-eight percent reported curiosity, and thinking about biological parents, with no mention of fantasies, while ten percent had constructed fantasies;
- * of this thirty-eight percent, only five percent had taken steps to discover more information about birth parents, while a further five percent were tempted to do so; and
- * interest in biological parents tended to be associated with poor relationships with adoptive parents and a negative adoptee reaction to the revelation of adoptive status.

Sorosky, Baran and Pannor (1978) investigated the effects of sealed records on adoptees, adoptive parents and birth parents, after their respondents answered media appeals. Their results were published in book form under the title 'The Adoption Triangle'.

They found that very few adoptees were given enough information about origins and that this made them vulnerable to identity conflicts in adolescence and young adulthood. They also found that it was those adoptees who were curious who were most likely to 'search' for birth parents. Only sometimes was searching associated with poor adoptive parent relationships. The authors also found that by and large the 'found' experience was enriching for adoptees and enhanced adoptive family relationships. They came to the conclusion that adoption records should be available to all adult adoptees.

The reports of Day and Leeding (1980) were published after the 1976 changes in the adoption laws of England and Wales allowed adopted adults access to adoption records on condition the adoptees presented themselves for counselling. A wide variety of reasons were discovered as to why adult adoptees sought this information, ranging from those who merely wanted background information, to those who desired personal contact with birth parents. The adoptees' motivation was overwhelmingly curiosity and the need "... to establish or complete a sense of true self-identity" (Day, 1980:32). Day found adverse factors which derived from poor interpersonal adoptive family relationships in only twenty-three percent of his sample of 500 adult adoptees, and that inadequate and incomplete revelation of adoptive status occurred among seventy percent. He also reported that the majority of the adoptees appeared stable and well-adjusted.

Picton's (1982) report on interviews conducted with forty-eight adult adoptees drawn from an association for adoptees, adoptive and natural parents in Australia, supports the Day and Leeding findings to a large extent. Adoptees in his sample were motivated by curiosity and, more importantly, the need to establish their identities in terms of personal history and genealogy, regardless of the manner of revelation of adoptive status.

Kowai and Schilling (1985) base their report on the replies to questionnaires sent to 100 adopted adults who contacted public or private adoptive agencies or an adoptee search group in two mid-Western American cities. Subjects reported on were: age at revelation and information given to adoptees; fantasies about biological parents; feelings about being adopted; interest in and precipitants for searching; and the information desired by adoptees.

Adoptee reasons for 'needing to know' fell in one or other of four categories, namely: (1) to fill a void, (2) to understand themselves better, (3) to obtain a medical history, and (4) to obtain a sense of belonging (Kowai and Schilling, 1985: 359-360).

Their sample contained more females (75%) than males. They reported that, in general, males were more intense and emotional in their need to know and more committed to searching than females. They suggested further research into male/female differences regarding the perception of being adopted and the extent to which the literal and existential void of 'not knowing about origins' affects adoptees who do not contact agencies.

Raynor (1980) in Britain, studied the differences between adoption and fostering outcome, mainly for the purposes of improving agency practice and services to such families. Of interest is her finding, which supports Triseliotis (1973), that there was a considerable difference between adoptees who merely wanted more information about background and those who were searching for birth parents with the intention of establishing relationships with them. Both factors were found to be related to adoptee satisfaction and adjustment, which in turn was contingent upon relationships within the adoptive family home.

These findings pertaining to adult adoptees over the past two decades present interesting similarities together with often conflicting results. All are agreed upon the importance of relationships within the adoptive family. Such comment cannot be reserved solely for adoptive families, since they are important in all family relationships and affect the adjustment and self-images of individuals regardless of whether they are adopted or not.

There appears to be little or no fundamental disagreement about the adopted person's need to know more about origins. Differences were found with regard to the degree of adoptee satisfaction and decisions to search for birth parents. The findings of Jaffee and Fanshel (1970), Triseliotis (1973), Eldred *et al.* (1976) and Raynor (1980), suggest that poor psychological adjustment was most often associated with a need or desire to trace birth parents, while this was not confirmed by Day and Leeding (1980), Picton (1982), or Kowai and Schilling (1985).

The extent to which cultural differences influence adult adoptee self-perceptions and 'need to know about origins' can only be speculated upon. The adult adoptee in Scotland has always had the right to information contained in the original birth certificate, while in England and Wales this right was only granted (subject to certain conditions) in 1976. Both Triseliotis (1973) and Day (1980) estimate that no more than two percent of the adoptee population of Britain take advantage of this.

Perhaps adoptees in Britain's erstwhile colonies (including America) have a greater interest in their genealogy, in order to locate themselves not only as individuals, but also as persons with a 'European' heritage. There is a tendency among many South Africans to introduce into conversation with new acquaintances the subject of 'European country of origin', be this the French Huguenots, the 1820 Settlers from Britain, or other.

Interest groups lobbying for the opening of adoption records are active in America, Canada and Australia. Britain's island society had been comparatively homogeneous and settled for centuries, giving rise to a strong group and national identity in which only class divisions were of importance. Because adoption in Britain became socially acceptable among the middle class only after World War I (Benet, 1976), it can be assumed that the adoptee population for the country would be similarly homogeneous, unlike adoptee populations in other Western countries.

Here it could be argued that the preferred policy of 'matching' the infant or child as closely as possible with the characteristics of the adoptive family, which was so prevalent for much of the fifties and sixties, would have produced homogeneity, at least on an individual family level, if not on a national level.

Adoption practice in the twentieth century has attempted to make the adopted child the equivalent of the child in a consanguinal family. This has entailed legal and social measures that demanded from those involved support for secrecy and suppression of knowledge.

The importance of genealogical history for the adoptee is increasingly being recognised. Whilst legislation has been slow in being amended, it must be born in mind that denial of access to birth records does not affect only those immediately involved. The children of persons who were adopted can, in their turn, become aware of a need to fill that void in their lives. Adulthood and a growing knowledge of the import of genetics through media emphasis can and does cause hitherto incurious persons to attempt to find out who and what their adopted parents or forebears were. One of the respondents who answered my letter of appeal in the magazine, 'Woman's Value', enquired whether there was any way in which she and her siblings could obtain information about their deceased mother's origins. The following extracts from that letter show that concern:-

"My mom died last ... and although we, her three children are mature happy people, we can't help but wonder where our 'real' family is. We were never allowed to talk about it while she was alive and now there is no-one who knows the story. It's strange and might sound funny, but because my mother was adopted it's as if I have this strange feeling inside of not 'belonging' to anyone. Somehow, the fact that my father's family is around should compensate, but it does not ... It is also strange, but some days it does not worry me at all that we know only half our roots. Other days, one really does wonder. Only since writing to you has it entered my head that my real grandma might still be around."

Those of us who have enjoyed the certainty of knowing who and what our parents are, along with as much of our genealogical past as they and other members in our extended families can furnish, tend to take this aspect of our lives for granted. It has simply been a 'given' in our consciousness, not to be questioned other than when we wish for more details which recollected memory may not be able to furnish. Thereafter the possibility exists for further investigation along a variety of avenues dealing with genealogy. This privilege is not available to the adopted as a matter of course.

Where legislation exists for the adoptee to gain access to court records, a long, often arduous and sometimes fruitless search lies ahead. Registration of illegitimate births requires only the name of the birth mother and her address. As many adoptees have found, that address may be worthless, being often no more than the address of the 'Home for Unmarried Mothers', which provides no clue at all when the surname is a fairly common one in a country. An organisation has come into existence in South Africa to assist adult adoptees and birth parents in making contact. It is called the South African Adult Adoptee's Association. This association was formed by Mrs Jill Elliot who is herself an adoptee and who needed to trace her birth mother for medical reasons. Contacts between adoptees and birth parents, as well as information registered and filed, are controlled by ethical considerations and a sensitivity for the feelings of all parties concerned. This non-profit organisation intends establishing discussion groups under the guidance of trained social workers in various centres (Gray, 1986:85).

People who are not adopted can only guess at whatever it is that drives some adoptees to stake so much of their time and energy in attempting to trace their birth parents when they are not even sure their actions will be welcomed. Mrs Elliot is of the opinion that most adoptees are concerned with obtaining information about their backgrounds and that meeting birth parents is not their primary motive. Adult adoptees do not share the same degree of curiosity about origins any more than non-adopted persons do in their genealogy. What they do share is a status that sets them somewhat apart from their non-adopted counterparts. This research has attempted to explore the world of the adult adoptee in South Africa.

CHAPTER 2

THE RESEARCH METHOD AND PROCEDURE

This exploratory study of adult adoptees in South Africa was commenced in January 1986. Despite my belief that the investigation was timeous in view of the proposed changes to adoption laws in this country allowing adoptees access to adoption records, certain obstacles were present which needed careful consideration. These were the question of where to find respondents and how to approach them once they had been located. I was informed by an experienced adoption officer that there were very few adult adoptees in my home town of Port-Elizabeth.

Adoption research is acknowledged to present problems because of the secrecy, both legal and social, surrounding adoption practice (Mech et al., 1967). To deal with these problems a variety of research strategies have been utilised by researchers during the past two decades. These have included: gaining access via medical practitioners (McWhinnie, 1967); gaining access via the Registrar of Adoptions (Triseliotis, 1973); adoptive parents contacted from agency records (Jaffee and Fanshel, 1970); media publicity (Sorosky et al., 1978); mandatory counselling of adoptees in search of information about origins (Day and Leeding, 1980) and private 'search' organisations (Picton, 1982).

The research method used by Sorosky, Pannor and Baran (1978) was selected, with variations, because of the reported scarcity of adult adoptees in the city in which I reside. Letters of appeal for respondents were posted to the editors of the best-known magazines in the country, of which three published the letter, while the remainder regretted that requests of this nature were not in line with editorial

policy. My letter (Appendix 'A') was published in the Afrikaans family magazine, Huisgenoot, which has a readership of approximately one million, and two women's magazines, Fair Lady and 'Woman's Value', whose readership figures are approximately one-quarter and one-sixth respectively that of the Afrikaans family magazine. The letter appeared only once in each of these publications.

My research project was also made known to three private organisations which informed members and clients accordingly. They were: Life Line, South Africa; Family and Marriage Society of South Africa (Famsa) and the Adoption Officers of the Port Elizabeth and Cape Town branches of Child and Family Welfare.

During the course of my research I was informed by several adult adoptees that they had directed appeals for information about origins to the Registrar of Adoptions. Following a letter outlining the aims of my research, the Chief Executive Director of the Department of Health Services and Welfare granted permission (3 July, 1986) for the Registrar of Adoptions to bring my research to the attention of any further adoptees enquiring at that office.

The decision not to approach members of the public directly was made for ethical reasons as I believed that this would constitute an unwarrantable invasion of privacy.

The manner of my appeal made both the initial contact and participation in the research project a voluntary exercise. A total of 175 telephonic or written responses were received. Of these, 104 were from adult adoptees. Some of these adoptees had learned of my letter of appeal from one or other of their adoptive parents. That this was a subject about which people had strong feelings was evidenced by the often lengthy telephone calls and letters from widely separated places.

The following table shows the number and categories of the responses, together with the respondent's source of information regarding the research project.

Where respondents did not indicate who or what their source of information of the project had been, they were categorised as 'snowball'. Personal letters were sent to all respondents who had written or telephoned, giving assurance of continued interest and complete confidentiality and including an outline of the aims of the research.

UNIT OF ANALYSIS - THE ADULT ADOPTEE

Because of the wide geographical distribution of adoptees who had indicated their willingness to participate, a survey procedure using mailed questionnaires was seen as the most suitable and economical.

A pilot study using tape-recorded interviews with local respondents, together with areas of interest identified from the letters received and literature on the adult adoptee, was used in the formulation of the questionnaire. Comment on the final product was invited from fellow sociologists and adoptees not involved in the study.

I am indebted to Professor M.C. Potgieter of the Department of Social Work at the University of Port Elizabeth, for his valuable suggestion that questions emphasizing positive rather than negative aspects be included.

TABLE III

RESPONSE CATEGORIES AND SOURCES,
FOLLOWING APPEALS FOR RESPONDENTS DURING INITIAL PART OF RESEARCH STUDY INTO ADOPTION IN 1986

<u>CATEGORY OF RESPONSE</u>	<u>S O U R C E S</u>							<u>T O T A L S</u>	<u>%</u>
	<u>MAGAZINES</u>			<u>PRIVATE</u>	<u>PUBLIC</u>		<u>OTHER</u>		
	<u>HUISGENOOT (Afrikaans Family)</u>	<u>FAIR LADY (English Women's)</u>	<u>WOMEN'S VALUE (English Women's)</u>	<u>LIFE LINE</u>	<u>CHILD AND FAMILY WELFARE</u>	<u>REGISTRAR OF ADOPTIONS</u>	<u>SNOWBALL</u>		
Adult adoptees	55	11	9	5	3	4	17	104	59.4
Adoptees younger than 18	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	1.1
Adoptive mothers	9	4	2	5	0	0	6	26	14.9
Adoptive fathers	3	1	0	1	0	0	1	6	3.4
Birth mothers	13	3	3	2	0	0	3	24	13.7
Birth grandmothers	4	0	1	0	0	0	1	6	3.4
Adoptive grandmothers	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0.6
Family wishing to adopt	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	1.1
Daughter of deceased adoptee	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0.6
Divorced father with custody problems	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0.6
Appeal on behalf of adoptee	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0.6
Illegitimate/children's home adult	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0.6
TOTAL RESPONSES	91	19	16	13	3	4	29	175	100
PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL RESPONSES	52	11	9	7	2	2	17	100	100

Published advice on questionnaire construction (Bailey, 1982 and Babbie, 1983) suggests that they should be kept as short as possible, particularly when using mailed questionnaires. In this regard my questionnaire errs having a total of 209 closed and open-ended questions, divided into nine sections. These are:

Biographical details.

The adoptive family.

Information furnished regarding birth parents.

The adoptive experience during childhood.

The school experience.

Adolescence, adulthood and marriage.

The experience of those who were 'searching' or who had found birth parents.

(Refer to Appendix 'B' for copy of questionnaire.)

I did not consider the length of the questionnaire to be a serious design fault as the responses received indicated highly motivated respondents who would, in general, welcome the opportunity to share their recollected life experiences. It was, moreover, my intention to uncover as much information as possible given the restrictions of a postal questionnaire.

The question of race was not considered relevant in the questionnaire as the experience of adoption appeared from the literature to be a universal phenomenon, with the exception of the African races of South Africa among whom legal adoption is still a fairly rare occurrence (Pakati, 1982). No responses were received in connection with adoption from the latter group.

The variable of home language was thought to be of greater importance in view of the fact that South Africa has two official languages, viz. English and Afrikaans. The latter is spoken principally by the Afrikaner who comprise a relatively homogeneous group.

GATHERING THE DATA

All the adoptees who participated in the research project did so on their own volition. In view of the sensitivity and secrecy surrounding the practice of adoption, persons who were known to be adopted were not approached unless it could be established beyond doubt that (a) they knew about the aims of the study, and (b) were willing to participate. Confirmation was obtained telephonically or by letter before questionnaires were dispatched or interviews conducted for the pilot study.

Questionnaires in the appropriate official language, together with covering letter and stamped and self-addressed envelopes, were posted to ninety-three adult adoptees between April and October 1986. The recipients were those adult adoptees who responded to my letters of appeal. My covering letter drew attention to the length of the questionnaire and advised that it should be answered section by section over a period of time. No time limit was set for the return date, beyond the suggestion of a maximum period of two months. A total of eighteen reminder letters were sent during the first half of the year to respondents who had been on the first mailing list and who had not returned their questionnaires after two months. Subsequently, this practice was discontinued, as having given respondents the option to sign their names or not on completion of the questionnaire, it became impossible to keep a satisfactory record of which questionnaires had been returned. One adoptee returned her questionnaire after nine months without giving any explanation for the delay.

The research was concluded at the end of December 1986. Eighty-two questionnaires were returned within this period, representing an overall response rate of eighty-eight percent. A response rate of seventy percent is considered to be 'very good' by Babbie (1983), but higher response rates to postal questionnaire surveys have been reported in America (Bailey, 1982).

Respondents who returned signed questionnaires were thanked by personal letter. Those who expressed interest in the research findings were advised of when it was hoped they would be available.

ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

The Afrikaans-language questionnaire responses were translated by myself. Whenever necessary, Afrikaans colleagues were consulted for confirmation regarding the translation of idiomatic phrases, without revealing the respondent's identity.

The material was analysed without the use of a computer in view of the relatively small sample size.

Fellow lecturers in Sociology and Psychology made helpful suggestions with regard to content analysis indices and self-concept ratings.

It must be stressed that analysis of the material and conclusions are mine alone. Researcher bias may be reflected in the choice of quotations from the questionnaires for illustrative purposes in this research report.

For the most part, quantitative analysis was used to analyse closed-ended question responses and qualitative analysis in the form of content analysis and coding according to factors and unit indices for the open-ended question responses. Where possible, examples of the adoptee responses have been given to justify coding choices.

VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

The nature of the information sought through the use of this questionnaire deals almost exclusively with past events. The vexing problem of accuracy in such responses needs to be faced. Goode and Hatt (1952:167) express the belief that "... there is reason to believe that the attitudinal answers are really more stable than those dealing with the more external facts". These 'external facts' refer to dates or times when events occurred, which as we all know can be difficult to recall without access to a diary or other memory aid. Evidence of the unreliability of memory recall for 'external facts' is shown in some of the responses to the questions posed regarding the age at which adoptees were informed about their status, and the age at which they began thinking about being adopted.

For example, one adoptee stated that she had always known that she was adopted. In reply to the next question, "At what age were you told?", however, she filled in the response, "Ten years". Similarly, the age at which respondents were placed for adoption can only be termed approximation as a few revealed that they were unsure whether they had been a few days old or a few weeks old. These findings support the belief of Goode and Hatt (1952), quoted above, as does the section dealing with who had revealed their adoptive status and how they recall this significant event in their lives. There was little or no hesitation in the latter responses.

McWhinnie (1967:84) found that "... retrospective introspection, carefully recorded and viewed against the total current situation, can be valuable, factual and reliable". The material contained in the returned questionnaires supports this contention.

The limitations of the research design and sampling method in my study preclude the possibility of generalising the research results. The only faint claim to representativeness lies in the geographical distribution of the sample, which approximates the total population distribution of Whites, Coloureds and Indians in South Africa based on the 1985 Census figures. This slender link to representativeness must be viewed with caution as the spread of and current total population of adoptees in this country remains unknown.

Notwithstanding this shortcoming and the fact that it was a self-selected sample, it is my belief that these findings will sensitise adoption practitioners, adoptive parents and the general public to the needs of adopted children and adults. The element of secrecy which has so often been associated with the status of adoption in the past and may well still be so for some adopted children, can and does give rise to fears. Other anomalies associated with being adopted arise from the attitudes of peers, particularly in the pre-pubertal phase, the sensitivity of the adoptee to being viewed as 'different' and difficulties that stem from the lack of information about birth family medical history. Further research is necessary before questions uncovered by this study will be answered, for it is in the nature of research that complete answers are rarely found to questions about the subject under investigation.

What has proved of interest during the course of this research is that many adoptees welcomed the opportunity to review their past lives. McWhinnie (1967:77) draws attention to the importance of the therapeutic component of in-depth interviews in her well-known study, Adopted Children. How They Grow Up, by quoting Bowlby and others who contend that, "... in research to arrive at relevant data an interview must be potentially therapeutic".

This contention is further borne out by the testimonies of many adoptees in this sample;

"Children who are adopted should never feel guilty, but simply appreciate the parents they have now, more and more. N.B. I want to thank your organisation for this research. It was nice to know someone cares. Best of luck."

"I want to thank you for giving us the opportunity to tell someone openly how we feel."

"I found the questionnaire comprehensive and it helped me personally to look at myself objectively again as a person and as an adult adoptee. The manner in which I had to return to my past reminded me of experiences and situations that explained present problems, and perhaps offered the beginnings of a solution. The questionnaire succeeds in its objectives and I wish you every success in your project."

"Good luck with your research which is of so important a nature."

"Thanks for giving me the chance to actually think consciously about what I've felt about the adoption experience. It's good to actually open up to one's feelings."

Many more adoptees wished me success with the research study. I agree wholeheartedly with McWhinnie's (1967:77) contention regarding the response of individuals approached for bone fide research purposes, when she says, "One can only assume that, on the whole, when asked for their advice or to make a worthwhile contribution, people are very willing to do this".

I would, however, like to add that it is possible that some or all of the eleven adoptees who did not return their questionnaires may have perceived the questions and their format as the reverse of therapeutic. The probing quality of many of the questions posed may well have been viewed as threatening or as an unacceptable invasion of privacy, or both. It is for this reason that researchers need to temper their enthusiasm with an awareness that they could be treading on delicate ground.

The report that follows covers salient experiences in the lives of eight-two adult adoptees who are currently living in, or who have spent significant portions of their lives in, South Africa. It will also address variables that have been considered significant in other reports on adoption and related matters, including: (a) age at placement, (b) revelation of adopted status, (c) adoptee thoughts about birth parents, and (d) identity problems in adolescence and adulthood. The final section of the report will deal with the experiences of those adoptees who have found birth parent(s) or siblings, and the consequences thereof.

Adoptees (and their responses) have been given code numbers in the sections on attachment and suicide attempts in adolescence, but not elsewhere in the text. This was done to prevent the possible identification of any respondent in this sample. There remains a need to preserve the anonymity of adoptees because many of those who are 'searching' have not disclosed this fact to their adoptive parents. The reason is that these adoptees feel their actions may be misconstrued as disloyalty, and they also do not wish to hurt their adoptive parents.

A lengthy questionnaire often uncovers a great deal of research material. This has been the case in this study as a look at the questionnaire will attest. It has not been possible to include all of this material in this report. Data not dealt with here will either be published at a later stage or incorporated into, and enlarged upon in, future adoption research which I intend to undertake. Subjects that fall into this category are:

1. The role of religion in promoting adoptive family integration.
2. The degree of acceptance by the extended adoptive family of the adopted.
3. Whether adolescent female adoptees have a stronger urge to have 'a baby of their own' than the non-adopted.
4. Whether adoptees are in need of special counselling to help them to come to terms with their sexual and identity problems in adolescence.
5. The self-concept of the adoptee in adulthood.
6. Adoptee role-identification with their adoptive parents.
7. Social acceptance of adoptees as suitable marital partners (the perceptions of future in-laws).
8. The problems adoptees face when trying to trace birth parents.
9. Explanations for the phenomena of sexual attraction between some adoptees and a newly discovered natal sibling.
10. The extent and quality of counselling available to adoptive parents when problems arise in the adoptive family.
11. What particular counselling skills are needed to help adoptees (who are 'searching' or who have 'found' birth parents or siblings), the adoptive parents of these adoptees, and the birth parents and their families after they have been 'found'.

It is hoped that the findings of this study and the above-mentioned items will stimulate the interest of other researchers.

BIOGRAPHICAL DETAILS OF THE ADOPTEE SAMPLE

DISTRIBUTION OF SAMPLE ACCORDING TO SEX

Fifty-eight female (71%) and twenty-four male (29%) adoptees comprise the sample of eighty-two respondents who returned their questionnaires. The tendency for more female adoptees to respond to researcher appeals has led to the belief that female adoptees are more interested in their background than males. However, in the Day (1980) report on the first 500 interviews given at the General Register Office in London to adoptees who wished to know more about their antecedents, the sex ratio was 291 females to 209 males. It is therefore possible that in South Africa the difference between the sexes may also be similar. A likely explanation for the difference in numbers in my sample could be that more females than males read popular magazines. Another explanation may be that females are more concerned with a need to know their origins because they are in a sense closer to the practical aspects of procreation. Although there was a preference in earlier times for female children among adopting couples, this no longer applies as fewer babies become available for adoption.

CLASSIFICATION OF SAMPLE INTO 'SEARCHING' CATEGORIES

A total of thirty-six adoptees (44% of the sample) were searching for birth parent(s) or background information. Of these, twelve are male, representing fifty percent of the total male adoptees and twenty-four are female, representing forty-one percent of the total female adoptees in this sample.

Ten adoptees (12%) were at the time not interested in searching or had never been interested in doing so. Eight of these are female (14%) and two (8%) are male. Seven adoptees (12%) were curious about their origins, of whom five (9%) are female and two (8%) are male. Twenty-nine (35%) adoptees had 'found' either the truth about their origins, one or both birth parents, siblings, or other members of their birth families. Of these, twenty-one (36%) are female and eight (33%) are male.

Triseliotis (1973) and Day (1980) estimate that no more than two percent of the adoptees in Britain want to know background information or trace their birth parents. The Registrar of Adoptions in South Africa will keep a record of all adoptees who contact that office subsequent to the changes in adoption law which came into effect on 1 February 1987. It is thus too early to arrive at any comparable estimate for this country. Such an estimate may, however, not be a true reflection as is suggested by the fact that twenty-nine percent of the adoptees in this sample have traced birth parents or siblings, of whom the majority have done so without official sanction or assistance.

DISTRIBUTION OF SAMPLE ACCORDING TO LANGUAGE GROUP

Forty-eight (58,5%) of the respondents in this sample are Afrikaans-speaking and thirty-four (41,5%) are English-speaking. No attempt was made to relate this distribution to the 1980 census figures for South Africa as questionnaires were sent in response to the language which the respondents used on first contact.

AGE DISTRIBUTION OF SAMPLETABLE IVAGE DISTRIBUTION OF ADOPTEE SAMPLE

AGE DISTRIBUTION	NUMBERS
18 - 24	24
25 - 29	21
30 - 34	11
35 - 39	11
40 - 44	7
45 - 49	4
50 - 54	2
55 - 59	0
60 - 64	0
65+	2
Total	82

TABLE VAGE DISTRIBUTION OF THE SAMPLE WITH BIGGER CLASS INTERVALS

AGE	NUMBER	PERCENT
under 25	24	29
25 - 34	32	39
35 - 44	18	22
45+	8	10
Total	82	100

The age categories for this sample correspond with those of other studies on the adult adoptee. The peak age at which adoptees begin to consider searching in earnest is in young adulthood when marriage and/or parenthood become the precipitant for this decision.

MARITAL STATUS OF THE SAMPLE

The majority of adoptees in the sample were married (i.e. fifty-four, or 66%). Twenty-one (26%) were unmarried, five (6%) were divorced, one was separated and one had been divorced and remarried.

DISTRIBUTION OF CHILDREN AMONG THE SAMPLE

Forty-six (56,1%) were married with own children, one (1,2%) was married with adopted children, two (2,4%) were married with step-children, and six (7,3%) were married with no children. Two (2,4%) of those who were divorced or separated had children, while four (4,9%) had no children. Twenty (24,4%) of those who were unmarried had no children and the remaining unmarried adoptee had an illegitimate child.

GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION OF ADOPTEES IN THE SAMPLE

Fifteen Afrikaans-speaking and sixteen English-speaking adoptees were resident in the Cape Province. The eight adoptees residing in the Orange Free State were all Afrikaans-speaking. Twenty-two Afrikaans-speaking and five English-speaking adoptees were resident in the Transvaal; three Afrikaans-speaking and eleven English-speaking adoptees in Natal; and of the remaining two adoptees, one is currently residing in South West Africa and the other in Zimbabwe.

When these figures are shown as percentages, and corrected to exclude the two adoptees currently residing outside the Republic of South Africa, there is a similarity between the distribution figures for this sample and the country as a whole, as the following table shows.

TABLE VI

GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION OF SAMPLE TABLED WITH PERCENTAGES OF POPULATION DISTRIBUTION FOR RSA, EXCLUDING AFRICANS, ACCORDING TO THE 1985 CENSUS

REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA	N	GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION OF SAMPLE IN PERCENTAGES	TOTAL DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION (EXCLUDING AFRICANS)	TOTAL DISTRIBUTION OF WHITES ONLY
Cape Province	31	38,75	44,2	26,5
Orange Free State	8	10,00	4,8	7,3
Transvaal	27	33,75	34,7	53,9
Natal	14	17,5	15,9	12,3
Total	80	100,00	99,6	100,00

Because the question of race was not asked in the questionnaire, it is valid to assume that the sample represents all the statutorily delineated "race" groups in South Africa, with the exception of Africans. Legal and extra-familial adoption is a relatively uncommon occurrence among Africans. The only known response from an African woman in this study had nothing to do with adoption.

EDUCATIONAL LEVEL OF ADOPTEES IN THE SAMPLE

✓ The following table shows the level of education for the sample contrasted with the levels for the country as a whole, in percentages. The educational level of this sample of adoptees is higher than for the country as a whole. The criticism may be levelled that because my method solicited written answers, my sample could be very biased as far as level of education is concerned.

Eleven adoptees in my sample have an educational level of standard eight or less. One of these adoptees left school after passing standard four. Her responses were among the most lucid in that she wrote simply and with sincerity about her experiences as an abused child and as an adopted person.

TABLE VIIEDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS FOR THE SAMPLE OF ADOPTEES
ARRANGED ACCORDING TO QUALIFICATIONS AND LANGUAGE GROUP

HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATION ACHIEVED FOR THE SAMPLE	AFRIKAANS- SPEAKING	%	ENGLISH- SPEAKING	%	TOTAL	%
Less than std. 8	8	9,75	3	3,65	11	13,4
Std. 9 or 10	18	21,95	9	10,97	27	32,9
Std. 9 or 10 + diploma	11	13,41	16	19,51	27	32,9
Degree	9	10,97	5	6,1	14	17,1
Post graduate	2	2,43	1	1,2	3	3,7
Total	48		34		82	100,00

TABLE VIII

COMPARISON OF EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS
OF THE ADOPTEES IN THE SAMPLE WITH THOSE OF
THE TOTAL POPULATION, EXCLUDING AFRICANS

HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATION RECEIVED	ADOPTEE SAMPLE	TOTAL POPULATION EXCLUDING AFRICANS	WHITES ONLY
Std. 4	1,2	-	-
Std. 7 and 8	12,4	17,9	21,3
Std. 9 or 10	32,9	17,4	25,6
Std. 9 or 10 + diploma	32,9	7,96	12,6
Degree	17,1	2,8	4,7
Post graduate	3,7	0,4	0,44

(The percentage figures were estimated from the population census report of the Republic of South Africa : POPULATION CENSUS. REPORT NO. 028504. LEVEL OF EDUCATION BY DEVELOPMENT REGION, STATISTICAL REGION AND DISTRICT. 1985. REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA.)

✓ DETAILS OF THE ADOPTIVE PARENTS OF THE ADOPTEES IN THE SAMPLE

The adoptive fathers of twenty Afrikaans-speaking and fourteen English-speaking adoptees were deceased at the time this study was conducted. The adoptive mothers of sixteen Afrikaans-speaking and eight English-speaking adoptees were similarly deceased.

Adopting parents are on average seven to eight years older than their counterparts in a normal consanguinal family. This is as a consequence of the time spent trying to conceive before and after medical treatment is sought. Some adoption practitioners require that the couple wait a certain number of

years before they are considered to be unlikely to produce offspring of their own and, as a result, more suitable adoption candidates. Adoption agencies rarely consider any prospective parent who is older than forty. There are sound reasons for this. Parenting is often physically exhausting and it is the younger parents who are more flexible in adapting to their children's needs. There is also comfort to be derived from exchanging ideas and experiences with contemporaries and that bond of friendship is more easily forged with own age-group parents.

Morris (1987), in her investigation of children born to older parents, reports that only children of elderly parents felt particularly lonely and that with a few exceptions all such children were aware that their parents were older than those of their peers and were embarrassed or felt a sense of shame because of this. Such children become aware that their parents might die before they themselves reach adulthood. They also have a concern that they may have the care and responsibility of elderly parents while they are still young or just starting their own families. The adoptees in this sample whose parents were older than average reported similar reactions. Where the fact of being adopted was also kept secret, problems arose. One adoptee disclosed:

"I often wondered why my parents were older than those of my peer group. By the time I was eleven years old my mother was completely grey. Also at Guide camp, two guides commented that it was strange that I did not look like my mother or father and why did I have no brothers or sisters. This set me thinking, was there a "?" to my background. I did not speak about it".

This forty-four year old adoptee, who has 'found', was only informed by her adoptive mother at the age of twelve that she was adopted, but forbidden ever to speak of it again as her adoptive father did not want her to know about it. It was a promise she faithfully kept during childhood.

It has been suggested (Mandell, 1973) that adoption serves as a means of upward social mobility for adopted children. To what extent this was the case in this sample cannot be established without knowing the present social class of the relinquishing parents.

Fifty-six adoptees responded to the question of what their adoptive father's occupation was or had been. The largest single occupational category for the adoptive fathers of these respondents was that of 'farmer', of whom there were thirteen. The fathers of ten adoptees were professional men: doctors, lawyers, architects or university professors. Seven were artisans, six in senior management and six in lower management. Four were in the services, three were teachers, three in clerical positions, three had their own businesses and one was in sales.

SIBLING COMPOSITION IN THE ADOPTIVE FAMILY

Thirty-four (41,5%) adoptees in this sample had only adopted siblings. Twenty-one (25,6%) had only natural siblings, while seventeen (20,7%) grew up as only children. Four (4,9%) had natural and adopted siblings, three (3,6%) had natal siblings who were adopted into the same family, one had adopted and step-siblings, and one had only step-siblings.

REASONS FOR BEING ADOPTED BY ADOPTIVE PARENTS

It would appear that 'inability to conceive' accounted for sixty-seven percent of the adoptions in this sample. Kadushin (1980:472) states that "The principal source of adoptive parents is the infertile couple", although Humphrey (1969) found that only about half of the infertile couples in his study considered adoption. Reasons furnished by couples who wish to adopt despite already having children of their own cover a wide field, including the ability to choose the sex of the infant, or because of the presence of a genetic disorder.

Kadushin (1980:470) gives a list of the sources for children in non-related adoptions, shown in descending order of importance:

- "1. Children born out of wedlock.
2. Abandoned, neglected children.
3. Foreign-born children.
4. Orphans.
5. Legitimate children voluntarily surrendered by adoption by their parents."

CHAPTER 3

AGE OF PLACEMENT

THE PRE- AND POSTNATAL PERIOD

Babies who are given up for adoption are deemed to be more at risk than their counterparts for a number of reasons. The majority of extra-familial adoptees were and are, born illegitimate (Seglow et al., 1972; Kadushin, 1980; Sorosky et al., 1984). For the baby there is also a break in continuity with the birth mother and adaptation to the new.

Several biological and social factors are considered to be of significance in putting this category of infants at risk during the ante- and postnatal period. Concern about the social consequences of being pregnant outside the confines of marriage often causes delay in making use of available antenatal services for the expectant mother.

Low birth weight is associated with illegitimate births (Gore, 1976; Gill, 1977). This is endorsed by Wolf (1974:167) who says:

"The whole group of illegitimate children compared unfavourably with the legitimates in having a greater proportion of very young mothers, in more often being first born, in having poorer obstetric care and lower birth weight ... Illegitimate children both adopted and non-adopted, were more restless, presumably as a result of greater obstetric difficulties."

Whether this can be attributed to prenatal stress is a subject about which there is no consensus among researchers.

Dodge (1972:3), in his study on the association between infantile pyloric stenosis and maternal stress, reports that of the 134 mothers who had reported varying degrees of stress during the last trimester of their pregnancies, twelve were unmarried. The results of this investigation led him to suspect that the "... aetiology of infantile hypertrophy may in part be psychologically initiated, before the infant is born". Klaus and Kennell (1982:160) quote the research done by Blau *et al.* (1963) to examine the possible psychogenic etiology of premature births, in which it was found that the mother of a premature infant tended to be more immature and more uncertain of her role as a woman and as a mother, needing more support during pregnancy. Although the unmarried mother was not specifically the unit of analysis in this research, it must be born in mind that many young women who find themselves pregnant during teenage do not have adequate support during this time, nor do they have the maturity to help them through their pregnancies. Blau *et al.* (*idem.*) noted that, "... though ambivalence is undoubtedly common to all pregnancies, the premature mother has less, in that she tends to become more definitely negative to the pregnancy and hostile to the foetus. She harbours more destructive fantasies about the outcome to herself and to the baby, and is more apprehensive regarding difficulties in labour and delivery". Gill (1979: 79), however, cautions, "... the investigation of obstetrical performance during illegitimate pregnancy provides no evidence to support the view that the stress induced as a result of society's condemnation of illegitimacy has an adverse effect on reproductive performance".

I am able only to resort to conjecture in regard to the possibility of an association between foetal rejection and the experiences of two adoptees in this sample whose childhood and adult lives were marked by problems that were not primarily related to the adoptive home situation.

The first adoptee had a trouble childhood and adolescence. She attempted suicide more than once in the latter period. Her adoptive parents were concerned and consulted various professionals including a psychiatrist. Her adoptive mother was instrumental in tracing her birth parents during the adoptee's teens in the belief that this would prove to be the healing factor. The adoptee discovered that she was conceived whilst her parents were involved in divorce proceedings. Her birth mother concealed the pregnancy, birth and subsequent adoption from her former husband who had been granted custody of their young son. When he did discover that she had had a child, she told him that their baby had died at birth.

The second adoptee who has a long history of mental suffering and illness learned only in adulthood that her birth mother had made a suicide attempt by jumping from a second-floor window of the home for unmarried mothers where she was awaiting the birth of her baby. The adoptee's husband informed me that she has always had an irrational fear of heights and speculated that it stems from this event. He also voluntarily raised the question of whether possible foetal rejection might not have been at the root of his wife's chronic sense of insecurity.

Watson (1986) provides a thoughtful analysis of the stress to which a young unmarried female is subject when she discovers that she is pregnant. What is likely to be more stress inducing than "societal condemnation of illegitimacy", is the knowledge that the man who fathered her baby has no intention of marrying her, even when free to do so. This form of rejection of 'self-as-worthy' or 'self-as-lovable', is particularly keenly felt by young women who experience an initial reluctance to enter into a physical relationship, and are persuaded to do so. Letters printed in the 'Agony Columns' of the popular media suggest that this form of subtle blackmail continues

to form a part of male/female dating relationships. By acceding to male sexual/ego demands, she makes herself vulnerable to rejection in the event of intercourse resulting in conception. This refusal to marry implies an equal rejection of 'their' child. The man concerned sometimes compounds the rejection by denying paternity. Social workers and writers on the subject of illegitimacy subtly condone this attitude by referring to the man involved in an illegitimate pregnancy as the "putative" father.

The sanctity of marriage is well illustrated in South African Law in that, "All the children of a married woman are assumed to be legitimate and the children of her husband, unless he can prove that it was physically impossible for him to have been the father" (Rip, 1978:27).

The decision to give a baby up for adoption is not arrived at lightly. Only the unmarried mother can sign the papers for consent to adoption, even though she may in all other respects be a minor (i.e. below the age of eighteen) in the eyes of the Law. It would thus appear that the younger the mother, the less likely she will be to comprehend fully the social consequences of her act and the implications for herself and her child. The degree to which adoption agencies place covert pressure on the unmarried mother is a matter of differing opinions among writers on the subject (Ehrlich, 1977; Gill, 1977). Considerable pressure may also be exerted by the parents of the young woman involved. Data on the subject are difficult to obtain and may only come from the recollections of those concerned.

Yelloly's study (quoted in Gill, 1977:89) into unmarried mothers who give up their babies for adoption or who decide against this option, suggested that relinquishment was associated with, "... a negative attitude (towards keeping the child) on the part of the natural mother's parents, the fact

that the putative father was a married man, and that the mother had other children ...". Gill (1977) found that the two variables of social class and residence at the time of confinement (whether in a home for unmarried mothers or elsewhere), were of consequence for the decision in favour of relinquishment. Single women from the middle and upper class were more likely to give up their babies for adoption.

EARLY MOTHER-INFANT RELATIONSHIPS

Yarrow (1965:46) states, "It has been assumed that the depth of the mother's feelings is communicated to the very young infant and thus has a significant effect on the infant's development".

In cases where emotional and physical maturity characterise the unmarried or married relinquishing mother, more research is needed into problems posed by the bonding process that occurs between the mother and child during what has been called the 'sensitive period'. Klaus and Kennell (1982:40) come to the conclusion that, "... the events occurring in the first hours of birth have special significance for the mother". That this 'bonding process' occurs as a reciprocal event between mother and infant is reported by the authors from the research of Winnicott (1958), Emde and Robinson (1981), Lang (1976) and Macfarlane (1975). Birrer (1974) enlarges on the physiological aspects of bonding during post-natal mother/infant interaction. The separation that occurs between mother and infant appears to be more painful for the relinquishing mother than for the infant, in the light of evidence provided by Campbell (1979), Toynbee (1985) and Watson (1986) of the grief experienced by mothers who give up their babies for adoption. Wolff (1974) states that delay in placement of the baby with its adoptive parents leads to a proportion of relinquishing mothers questioning the correctness of their decision.

The findings of Pannor et al. (1978:334) on the unmarried mother suggest that considerable mother-infant bonding occurred during the 'sensitive period' among their respondents. Fifty percent of their sample (in a study conducted during 1975 of thirty-eight birth parents), "... said that they continued to have feelings of loss, pain, and mourning over the child they relinquished".

To what extent the grief process after relinquishment is affected by social attitudes is not known. Gill (1977) reports a measure of stigma attached to relinquishment among members of the lower classes in his study, and more so when the baby was given up for adoption to non-relatives.

A study by Carey et al. (1974:352) into temperament in adopted and fostered babies found that the amount or degree of anxiety experienced during pregnancy did not have an enduring effect on infants' temperaments, and that "lasting effects of maternal anxiety on the infant appear attributable to continued distress of a mother caring for the infant after delivery". Carey et al. (1974:356) report that in their investigation into a sample of forty-one mothers and their infants, "... no relationship was found between maternal anxiety and birth weight". They are also of the opinion that where temperamental symptoms manifest in the first six months of adoptive life, these could be due to psychological factors in the adoptive family.

Yarrow (1965) and his associates come to the conclusion that maternal-infant separation is of importance and report that evidence of disturbance following separation from the mother figure occurs in infants as early as three months of age. After the age of six months, all the infants studied showed some evidence of disturbance.

It will be evident from the preceding discussion of factors influencing the pre- and postnatal period in the lives of babies placed for adoption that no clear picture emerges.

Whilst proof exists of certain 'critical periods' in the development of certain species in the animal world (Yarrow, 1965), the likelihood of similar periods for psychological development have not been demonstrated among humans, beyond the positing of theories of development, notably those of Freud and Erikson. The adaptive capacity of humans is demonstrated in history and literature. Thus the importance of mother-infant bonding between the adoptive mother and her new baby must not be overlooked.

Management of the period between birth and placement occurs largely as a consequence of the attitudes of the maternity staff and alternative care-givers, such as foster parents. Yarrow (1965) draws attention to the observed inadequacies of the latter where mothering of infants about to be placed for adoption becomes a career. To illustrate this, Benet (1976: 186) quotes the following comments made by a married woman:

"When I was in the hospital having Emily, I was in the nursery feeding her one night, and a new baby came up. But it hadn't been washed or anything like the others. I asked the nurse what was the matter, and she said, 'Oh, it doesn't have its mother'. The mother was in another part of the hospital and it had been agreed that she wouldn't see her baby because it was going to be adopted. So they hadn't bothered to clean it up, to make it nice for her to hold. And for the next few days, the nurses fed the baby the way they do, holding it out front of them, then just putting it back. All the other babies were being cuddled and held, and this baby was just lying there in the nursery the whole time. And I swear that by the time I left, that baby looked different from the other babies and acted differently."

Anecdotal quotations are not generally believed to constitute sound evidence, but such references are to be found in Robert Page's insightful work, "Stigma" (1984). Davids (1983: 149-150) reports a somewhat similar incident in which an adoptive mother gained the impression of 'lack of caring' towards the ten-day old infant she and her husband had come to collect. Feeding and sleeping difficulties manifested themselves early and Davids reports that "Residues of these early problems were detectable over the years". What is not clear is whether the infant manifested sleeping and feeding difficulties as a result of separation, or of inattention during its early development, or whether these appeared as a consequence of inadequate mother-infant bonding between the adoptive mother and her new baby. Yarrow (1965:53) suggests that difficulties "... often stem from the mother's inability to adapt to the 'strange infant'".

The evidence in this field is inconclusive and further research is needed to help adoptive mothers (and fathers) adapt to the new infant in their lives.

There are several schools of thought about management of the immediate postnatal period. At one time, the relinquishing mother was not even allowed to see her baby or know its sex. This was done in the belief that her distress at parting would be lessened. Today's relinquishing mother is encouraged by most maternity personnel to breastfeed her baby so as to give it the best possible start in life. In addition, the choice between immediate separation or contact until final separation, is one that she may exercise in most cases.

More attention has been given to the special needs of adoptive parents in recent years. They can now take advantage of group discussions dealing with all aspects of adoption, offered by adoption agencies in most of the larger centres in this country and elsewhere. They are also encouraged to think of the

waiting period between acceptance and placement as the equivalent of an extended pregnancy, in the belief that this will facilitate bonding, and lessen the stigma of infertility. The adoptive mother can also under certain circumstances breast-feed her new baby. Lactation as a consequence of hormone treatment, is possible for the non-parturitive mother, although not generally recommended by medical practitioners because of the possibility of upsetting the delicate balance of hormones in her system.

Klaus and Kennell (1982) quote from the studies of Avery (1973) in which attachment was promoted by breast-feeding contact between adoptive mother and infant. One respondent in my sample mentioned that her adoptive mother had breast-fed her brother (also adopted) and that this had created an 'incredible bond' between the two.

De Hartog (1969) and Ben-Israel (1982) stress the importance of allowing for a time of quiet or social isolation in the initial contact period between adoptive mother and infant or child, so that she can make it her own in the fullest sense of the word.

The various and often conflicting reports of researchers into the pre- and postnatal period in the lives of babies given up for adoption has been treated at some length here to emphasize that more research needs to be done in this field. What is needed are longitudinal research studies that could monitor the progress of 'at risk' infants whilst alerting the adoptive parents that their baby will need more loving, face-to-face and physical contact to re-establish the initial bonding with the mother figure and later the father figure.

AGE AT PLACEMENT : ATTACHMENT AND SEPARATION AS PREDICTOR
OF OUTCOME OF ADOPTION SUCCESS

Age at placement is considered to be a significant variable for prediction of success in view of the importance of attachment between the infant or child and the primary caregiver. It is believed that the younger the infant, the more likely bonding will occur between the adoptive parents, particularly the adoptive mother, and the new arrival.

Fahlberg (1979a:5) states: "Attachment has been defined as 'an affectionate bond between two individuals that endures through space and time and serves to join them emotionally (Kennell, 1976) ... The bond that a child develops to the person who cares for him in his early years is the foundation for his future psychological, physical, and cognitive development and for his future relationships with others".

'Separation' refers to absence from the care-giver to whom an attachment has been formed. The separation may be either temporary, as when an infant or child is hospitalised, or permanent (as in adoption).

Studies on attachment and separation anxiety (cf. Bowlby, 1965; Ainsworth, 1965; Mussen *et al.*, 1974; and Klaus and Kennell, 1982) are increasing. Dr Vera Fahlberg, a nationally recognised authority on the treatment problems of foster children in America, has published practical advice on the subject of attachment and separation, through the Michigan Department of Social Services, for use by persons concerned with adoption and fostering.

Caution should be exercised in extrapolating from early separation anxiety to adolescent and adult problems, as there are too many intervening variables. Jaffee and Fanshel (1970:8) endorse this: "... it is not yet clear whether any long-range damaging effects can be attributed to separation experiences".

The importance of age at placement has been commented on by several writers on the subject of adoption (McWhinnie, 1967; Lawder, 1969; Wolff, 1974). In this country the subject has also received the attention of researchers (Landman et al., 1967; Lombard, 1971; Raubenheimer, 1974; and Davids, 1983).

Kadushin (1980) comes to the conclusion that while a very high percentage of successful adoptions occur with older children, age at placement is generally negatively related to outcome. Raubenheimer (1974), in his study of adopted children found to be in need of care, reported that sixty-three percent of the children in this group were found to have been adopted after their thirty-second month.

It is not age per se that is crucial, but "... a nexus of independent variables affecting complications inherent in adoption" (to quote, Davids, 1983: 34).

It is my considered opinion that variables in need of further research include:

- (a) Attitude of birth mother to her growing foetus.
- (b) Bonding between mother and infant during the 'sensitive period' immediately after birth.
- (c) Attitudes of the maternity staff and alternate care-givers to both birth mothers and the infant or child awaiting placement.
- (d) The relationship of care-givers to the infant or child in terms of Eriksen's developmental theory of 'trust versus mistrust' (Hjelle and Ziegler, 1976).

- (e) The number of care-givers prior to placement in the adoptive home.
- (f) The facilitation of attachment between adoptive parents and the infant or child. This could include the use of diagnostic instruments such as the Rorschach test and the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory to help adoption practitioners in their evaluation of prospective adoptive parents.

Dauids (1983) contends that age of placement is unrelated to psychopathology. What should be borne in mind is that the permanent nature of adoption has facilitated the viewpoint that adoption is the equivalent of a consanguinal family, and that by the practice of denial of difference, this myth can be sustained. The older the child at the time of adoption, the less likely that child will be able to dismiss or forget entirely his or her earlier history.

AGE AT TIME OF PLACEMENT AS VARIABLE FOR ADOPTION OUTCOME

The sooner the infant is placed with its adoptive parents, the easier it is for both to adapt. Very young infants interact with their care-givers in a way that is mutually satisfying. The adoptive mother's maternal predispositions will be more readily aroused by the helplessness of the infant and she will soon recognise her infant's particular cry from a medley of other infant cries. She will also know the satisfaction of the infant's dependency on her as its primary care-giver. While late placement is not invariably associated with negative attachment, the bonding process will simply take longer with more mutual adaptation required. Eldred et al. (1976) report from their study that late placement may be associated with vague memories of the birth mother when this occurs after two years of age, giving rise to greater resistance to complete assimilation into the new family.

The study of Landman et al. (1967:6) of 100 adoptees aged eighteen and over in South Africa, presents a table of age of adoption for their sample. Their findings are presented below together with those of my sample.

TABLE IX

COMPARISON BETWEEN THE STUDY OF LANDMAN et al.
AND THIS SAMPLE FOR AGE OF ADOPTION PLACEMENT

Age at time of adoption Landman <u>et al.</u> (1967:6)	Age at time of adoption Landman <u>et al.</u> (1967:6)		Age of placement This study - 1986	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Do not know	4	4	1	1
Younger than one month	24	24	42	51
2-4 months	19	19	21	26
5-9 months	14	14	6	7
10-12 months	3	3	1	1
1-3 years	21	21	6	7
4-7 years	11	11	3	4
8-11 years	4	4	2	2
	100	100	82	100

The authors state that sixty percent of their sample were adopted before the age of one year, eight-one percent were younger than three years of age and fifteen percent older than four years. In my sample, eighty-five percent were placed before the age of one year, ninety-four percent were younger than three years and only six percent were older than four years. The age distribution of the two samples was similar, ranging from 18 to 64 in the Landman sample and 18 to 70 in mine. Since nearly two decades separate the two studies, the

differences could be the result of a greater awareness on the part of agencies and adoption authorities of the advantages of early placement in relation to attachment. They could also be entirely the consequences of other variables such as death of parents or other factors.

Age of placement will be examined further for this sample of 82 adult adoptees in relation to attachment and the integration of 'late placement' adoptees into their adoptive families. The concept of late placement was used in conjunction with Yarrow's (1965) report that infants showed signs of 'disturbance' after being separated from the mother figure after the age of six months.

It must be remembered that the findings of this report represent only indications of association between late placement and other factors in the adoptee and adoptive family. Further research is needed in this regard, particularly in view of Raubenheimer's (1974) report concerning the association between late placement in his sample and children who were found to be 'in need of care' in South Africa.

AGE OF PLACEMENT FOR THE SAMPLE

Seventy (85%) of the adoptees in my sample report having been placed with their adoptive families before the age of one year. There was a slight tendency for Afrikaans-speaking adoptees to be placed later than their English-speaking counterparts. None of the latter were placed after the age of four months, whereas seven of the former were placed between the ages of six and eleven months, the modal age being nine months.

Eight Afrikaans-speaking and five English-speaking adoptees were placed between the ages of one-and-a-half and ten years.

Two Afrikaans-speaking adoptees were adopted twice. The first was placed with his grandmother at the age of two weeks and again with his uncle at the age of eight. It is not known whether these were maternal or paternal relatives, nor whether they were de facto or legal adoptions. The second adoptee was placed first at the age of three months and again at the age of ten years. It was not disclosed whether these were intra- or extra-familial placements or what the reasons were for the second placement.

In the following table, only the first age of placement is recorded for these two adoptees.

TABLE X

AGE OF PLACEMENT IN WEEKS, MONTHS AND YEARS AS REPORTED BY
THE TWO LANGUAGE GROUPS IN THE SAMPLE OF ADOPTEES

LANGUAGE GROUP	AGE OF PLACEMENT TABLED ACCORDING TO NUMBERS							
	0-4 WEEKS	%	1-11 MONTHS	%	1+ YEARS	%	TOTAL	%
Afrikaans	23	48,9	18	38,3	6	12,8	47	100
English	19	55,9	10	20,4	5	14,7	34	100
Total	42	51,8	28	34,6	11	13,6	81	100

(One respondent did not know at what age she was placed.)

The responses of the twenty adoptees in this sample who were placed for adoption after the age of six months (including the two who were adopted twice), were examined in relation to the following variables:

- (a) fears relating to birth mother;
- (b) fears relating to birth father;
- (c) fears during childhood associated with being adopted;
- (d) fears of being given away by adoptive parents; and
- (e) a childhood experienced as 'less than happy'.

These variables will be examined for the sample as a whole in later chapters where it will be seen that early placement was also associated with fears of one sort or another, as well as subjective recollections of childhood as unhappy.

RESPONSES OF LATE PLACEMENT ADOPTEES

In the following account adoptee code numbers are preceded by capital 'A' or 'E' to signify language group. Affirmative responses to the above five variables are indicated as scores of 1 to 5 for each adoptee in this section.

*A3 Placed at the age of eight months; had fears of birth mother as menacing and violent; fears of adoptive parents dying and having to go to an orphanage, or alternatively that they might give her away; reports her childhood as unhappy.
Score (4)

*A6 Placed at the age of eleven months; reported no fears whatsoever; recalled her childhood as very happy and she is 'not searching'.
Score (0)

*A12 Was adopted twice; feared that he would become like his birth father after being told he was a 'bad man'; was afraid of 'dark rooms, night time and being ignored'; experienced his childhood as unhappy.
Score (3)

*A13 Was placed at the age of two and he only recalls fears about birth mother, saying, "That having rejected me once (to the orphanage, despite her attempts to get me back), she would reject me again". Score (1)

*A15 Placed with her adoptive family at the age of seven, she can remember the physical punishment meted out by her maternal grandfather before being adopted. Score (0)

*A20 Adopted twice; fears about birth mother and birth father being 'bad people'; fears in childhood of "When I would be given away again. Afraid of people, afraid of the dark; afraid of hidings, afraid of telling anyone about my problems". His childhood was experienced as insecure and unhappy. Score (5)

*A22 Placed at the age of nine months; fears concerning the mental stability and temperamental and physiological normality of his birth parents, and whether birth father was not perhaps a 'bad man'. Score (2)

*A23 Placed at the age of six months; had fears concerning birth father's moral character; was afraid of adoptive mother who was experienced as rejecting; feared her adoptive parents would give her away and reported her childhood as unhappy. Score (4)

*A29 Was fostered by several families before being adopted at the age of five. She was afraid of her adoptive father who abused her sexually in childhood. This ceased after she went away to boarding school. She reports her childhood as relatively happy on account of having a home and being educated. Score (2)

*A34 Placed at the age of two years, and reports his childhood as 'average'. Score (1)

*A38 Placed at the age of nine months; had fears that one or both his birth parents might be criminals. Score (2)

*A41 Fostered before being placed at the age of five years; fears that birth mother might be a drug addict or prostitute; fears related to birth father perhaps not knowing of her existence; afraid of physical abuse meted out by adoptive father; fears of being given away by adoptive parents; experienced her childhood as 'very unhappy'. Score (5)

*A44 Placed at the age of nine months; fears related to birth mother were only of a second rejection were they ever to meet. Score (1)

*A45 Placed at the age of two years and nine months; feared a second rejection by birth mother; the stigma of illegitimacy during childhood; that her adoptive parents might give her away; experienced her childhood as 'reasonably happy'. Score (4)

*A48 Placed at age eight months and reports only general childhood fears of 'the dark and anything unfamiliar' during her childhood. Score (1)

*E7 Was adopted at the age of three; had fears about a birth father, "Who would one day kidnap me and take me away from my adopted parents whom I loved very much"; feared for the 'normality' or possible criminality of birth parents; was sometimes afraid of being given away by her adoptive parents; experienced her childhood as 'average'. Score (4)

*E8 Was adopted at the age of four; had fears that adoptive parents would give him away and describes his childhood as 'average'. Score (2)

*E23 This adoptee's father remarried and was killed shortly afterwards, when she was four years old. She and her younger sister were subsequently adopted by their young stepmother. She recalls fears of her birth mother as a 'bad woman' and that her father may not have been blameless regarding the divorce. Her childhood which she recalls as 'unhappy' was one punctuated by emotional abuse and insecurity. Score (5)

*E32 Was adopted intra-familialy at about the age of three after the death of her mother and reported no fears or insecurity. Score (0)

*E34 Was placed between the age of one and two years and revealed, 'My security at home was threatened by a faceless natural mother, whom, I then believed, would one day appear to take me away'. Score (1)

Without knowing how the adoptive parents perceived their relationship with their adopted child, it was difficult to analyse the extent of attachment for this group. Twelve (60%) of the late placement adoptees obtained a score of two or more. Whether this can be taken as evidence for negative or inadequate attachment is open to question as only five of the late placement adoptees recall their childhood as unhappy.

ATTACHMENT OF ADOPTees TO ADOPTIVE PARENTS AND ADOPTIVE FAMILY

The concept of attachment is easier to describe than to measure. Responses to the question regarding which adoptive parent they felt closest to, or could confide in, has low reliability as do the responses to the question of whether their childhood was experienced as 'happy', 'average' or 'unhappy'. Too many confounding variables are not controlled for statistically.

Among the confounding variables of an obvious nature is the early death of one or other adoptive parent. In this sample, two female adoptees lost their natural and three their adoptive fathers before the age of ten years. One adoptee lost her adoptive mother when she was five years of age. Two of the three adoptees made no response to the question of which adoptive parent they felt closest to. The remainder had no such hesitation, notwithstanding the early age at which some had lost a parent.

Although there are differences between the male and female adoptee replies concerning the parent to whom they felt closest, only two male and two female adoptees replied that they had felt close to neither parent.

Of the twenty-four male adoptees in the sample,
 nine felt closer to their adoptive mother;
 four felt closer to their adoptive father;
 ten said there was no difference; and
 two felt close to neither adoptive parent.

Responses in the male group add up to twenty-five as one of the adoptees who had been adopted twice said that during the first adoption he had felt closer to his adoptive mother and with the second adoption, closer to his adoptive father.

Of the fifty-eight female adoptees in the sample,
 twelve felt closer to their adoptive mother;
 twenty-three felt closer to their adoptive father;
 nineteen said there was no difference;
 two said that they had not felt close to either; and
 one made no response.

Allied to emotional rapport between adoptee and adoptive parents is the question of trust and confidence. There was little difference between the male responses in regard to closeness and confidence, but a different picture emerges for female adoptees.

Of the twenty-four male adoptees,

seven confided more readily in their adoptive mother;
four confided more readily in their adoptive father;
twelve said that they could confide in both; and
two said they could confide in neither.

Of the female adoptees,

twelve confided more readily in their adoptive mother;
nine confided more readily in their adoptive father;
nineteen said they could confide in both; and
thirteen said they could confide in neither.

Male reticence and work commitments appear to have been obstacles in father/daughter communications among this sample. Reasons for the lack of communication between female adoptees and their adoptive parents, however, are more complex. Most responses indicate that age differences and a lack of flexibility in parental disciplinary approaches played an inhibitory role. It has been suggested that adoptive parents are unnecessarily strict with their adolescent daughters for fear of their repeating the 'mistake' of their birth mother.

Kirk (1968:95-96), in the formulation of his "Theory of difference" submits the finding that "... the capacity for communication with the adopted child is enhanced by the parents' readiness to acknowledge the difference between adoption and natural parenthood".

It will be shown in a later chapter that the majority of adoptive parents (of the adoptees in this sample) eschewed the frankness recommended by Kirk. This contention is supported by the lack of openness to questions about being adopted, and the paucity of information given the adoptees about their birth parents.

Kirk's hypothesis regarding "acknowledgement of difference" versus "rejection of difference" was found to have both negative and positive manifestations for this sample. Examples of this range along a continuum, with "positive rejection" evidenced by the reply of a young woman who, with her twin brother, was told of their adoption only at the age of twenty-one:

"My beloved parents believed it wasn't necessary to ever tell us because we were their very own children."

"Negative acknowledgement of difference" permeated the responses of an abused adoptee whose childhood was very unhappy and others who were reminded of their adoptive status by one or other adoptive parent or by members of the extended adoptive family.

✓ If attachment is associated only with communication between adoptees and their parents, then the responses in this sample show less than complete attachment in that:

thirty-one (37%) adoptees could confide in both adoptive parents;

twenty-three (28%) could confide only in their adoptive mother;

fifteen (18%) could confide in neither; and

fourteen (17%) could confide only in their adoptive father.

Attachment could also be measured from the responses of whether childhood had been experienced as happy or otherwise.

In the responses regarding whether childhood was recalled as 'happy', 'average' or 'unhappy':

forty-nine (60%) recalled childhood as happy;
 twenty-two (27%) recalled childhood as average; and
 eleven (13%) recalled childhood as unhappy.

Eighty-seven percent of the adoptees in this sample recall their childhood as happy or average, which is consistent with the eighty-two percent who recalled many happy memories related to being an adopted child. Those who were not so fortunate give illuminating replies:

"My father was an alcoholic. He was unfaithful and persecuted my sister. My mother was ineffectual and couldn't correct the situation."

"Unhappy, because of my adoptive father's sacrilegious and sanctimonious attitude and very irrational temper."

"Unfortunately, my adoptive father was a mild (thank God!) paedophile and this was often embarrassing when my friends were there and mom never seemed to be sensitive towards me in this connection."

"I think we had a problem with a young adoptive mother who couldn't cope with two children who weren't hers and the fact we were all so different and three females living together with no male stabilisation."

"I did not get along too well with other children and was rather sickly in those days."

"I was insecure, aware of the favour bestowed on me by being adopted, a sort of emotional blackmail, and if I did step out of line, there was a certain look."

"I never got any love or praise from my mother. She could only tell me how bad I was, that I was a 'bad product' without any good qualities."

"The feeling of not being 'one of the family' - that my sister and I were parted when I was eight. She was adopted by another uncle."

"There is so much to tell I could write a book about this because I just had to work, work. There was no time for playing and if my father tried to stand up for me, my adoptive mother threatened suicide. I was always hit in the face with her fist so that my nose and mouth bled."

"I was always oppressed, felt apart, etc."

"I never really had friends - wasn't allowed to visit them. I mostly played alone at home. I always got the blame for anything that went wrong."

A few of those who reported a "less than average childhood" gave replies that were similar to the adoptees who had been unhappy:

"Adoptive mother strict and intimidating. Her behaviour possibly due to being an epileptic having treatment. I was quite a nervous child, shy, but had lots of friends."

"I was very lonely. My parents were so much older - specially my mother. My dad drank too much, then he'd quarrel and fight and I was very ashamed of him."

"Not exactly happy, but there was something that nibbled. I just felt that something was different."

These answers, and the total experience of those adoptees whose childhoods were unhappy, indicate that the authorities who had arranged the adoptions were very remiss in not conducting more careful investigations of the home circumstances before authorising the adoption. Because adoption comes about as a result of human intervention, even the unhappiness of a single adoptee diminishes mankind. Happily, the remaining adoptees in this sample gave answers that attested to the abundant love and feelings of joy and security that they experienced in their adoptive home.

ADOPTEE RELATIONSHIPS WITH SIBLINGS

Content analysis of adoptee recollections of relationships with siblings revealed that forty-three percent "got on very well", forty percent "got on reasonably well" and seventeen percent "did not get on very well". These findings had very little to do with the exact nature of the relationship between siblings.

Poor sibling relationships tended to be associated with inadequate or poor family relationships in general, as experienced subjectively by the adoptee. This was characterised by a lack of attachment to one or both adoptive parents, poor communication within the adoptive family, and in particular, with the adoptive parents, and marked feelings of insecurity.

CHAPTER 4REVELATION OF ADOPTED STATUS

Adoptive parents face a dilemma that is unique to their situation. Having made the child their own, they face the redoubtable task of having to inform the child that he or she was not born to them. That this is an area which causes adoptive parents problems is well researched and documented (Lawton and Gross, 1964; Jaffee and Fanshell, 1970; Wieder, 1977; De Bruyn, 1982; Berger and Hodges, 1982; Kadushin, 1983; Smith, 1984). Nor has there been agreement about the 'best time' for this revelation to take place or whether it should take place at all. Proponents for parental options regarding revelation to take place on an individual basis exist, notably, Ainsworth (1971) as quoted by Davids (1983) and Kadushin (1983). Those who hold this view do not take into account the fact that the adoptive mother will not be able to make anecdotal contributions about her pregnancy in family or women's group discussions. That this is one of life's peak experiences is attested to by the fact that even octogenarians contribute vivid recollections of their own pregnancies and experiences of giving birth during women's get-togethers, should the subject arise. Pregnancy and childbirth are universal experiences however much their management may be affected by class and cultural components. The observant child will begin to be aware of this subtle discrepancy in his or her life history. Until the onset of adolescence and often beyond, children show a keen interest in the conversational content of women socialising in the home without those concerned always being aware of this unobtrusive eavesdropping.

For the adopted child these suspicions become a cause for concern which may never be voiced, leading to what has been termed the 'McWhinnie stalemate' by Humphrey and Humphrey (1986), in reference to adoptees who had wanted to question their adoptive parents, but held back for fear of upsetting them.

Adoption practitioners have advocated that adoptive parents inform their children about their special status from an early age. However, Davids (1983:90) draws attention to the problem that the definition of 'early' may itself be open to interpretation, quoting Kornitzer (1976) who recommends that "... words referring to adoption first be included in the rhythmic lullabies sung to the child". The concept of 'early' is generally accepted as referring to the period until the age of four (Berger et al., 1982). Story books about adoption and being adopted which are suitable for pre-school infants are available from most city libraries and booksellers - for example, Rondell and Michaels' (1965) booklets, 'The Adopted Family'.

Adoption literature shows that there is growing agreement on the importance of revelation by the adoptive parents rather than revelation by outsiders. In South Africa, 'A guide to adoption practice' (Child and Family Welfare, 1972) makes it clear that this is a matter of vital concern so as not to place the child's sense of trust in its adoptive parents in jeopardy.

Current advice given to adoptive parents reflects an awareness of the need to tailor the amount of information given, to the child's emotional and cognitive development. Revelation of adopted status and adoption itself should be viewed as a process of mutual adaptation.

Initial revelation should be communicated before the child leaves the security of the primary group to join its peers in the pre-school and school environment. The reasons for this will be enlarged upon in the section dealing with the school experience.

Information on the manner and timing of revelation of adoptive status in the South African situation is needed to assist adoption practitioners and concerned persons. In his investigation of adopted children judged to be in need of care, Raubenheimer (1974:321) commented, "Daar is reeds daarop gewys dat daar nie kon vasgestel word op welke ouderdom die sorgbehoewende kind van sy aanneming verneem het nie. Voorts kon in die meeste gevalle ook nie vasgestel word deur wie en op welke wyse (met ander woorde simpatiek en begrypend of gevoelloos en afbrekend) die mededeling gedoen is nie. Die omstandighede (tydstip, wyse en deur wie die mededeling gedoen is) is van belang aangesien dit gedrag kan beïnvloed".

The results of the enquiry into revelation of adopted status among this sample of adult adoptees closely resembles the report of Day from Britain (in Day and Leeding, 1980). In his study, forty percent of adult adoptees were beyond infancy when they learned of being adopted, while forty-three percent of adoptees in my sample state that they had not always known that they were adopted.

TABLE XI
KNOWLEDGE OF ADOPTED STATUS ACCORDING TO
NUMBERS AND LANGUAGE GROUP

LANGUAGE GROUP	NO.	ALWAYS KNOWN	%	NOT ALWAYS KNOWN	%	TOTAL
AFRIKAANS	48	24	50	24	50	100%
ENGLISH	34	23	68	11	32	100%
TOTAL	82	47	57	35	43	100%

An Australian study (Picton, 1982:37) of forty-eight adult adoptees who were searching for origins, found considerable variations in the age at which adoptees were told about their status and in 'who did the telling'. A table is provided below giving the ages at which these adoptees learnt of their adoption. This is shown in the left-hand column and the ages at which those of my sample learned of their adoption are shown in the right-hand column. This is not an altogether valid comparison as my figures have not been corrected to delete those adoptees who are not searching or who are merely curious.

TABLE XII
COMPARISON OF AGE OF REVELATION BETWEEN PICTON'S AND THIS STUDY

PICTON'S STUDY			THIS STUDY		
AGE ADOPTION LEARNT	NO.	%	AGE AT REVELATION	NO.	%
5 years and under	13	27	5 years and under	47	57
6-10 years	11	23	6-10 years	16	20
11-15 years	7	14	11-15 years	9	11
16-20 years	8	17	16-20 years	5	6
Over 20 years	9	19	Over 20 years	5	6
TOTAL	48	100	TOTAL	82	100

It would appear from the comparison of the two groups regarding the difference of thirty percent between the numbers who had been informed of their status below the age of five, that South African parents were more ready to carry out the injunction to inform their adopted children at an early age.

Of the ten adoptees in my sample who are 'not searching', seven have always known they were adopted, while the remaining three were informed at the ages of ten, fourteen and sixteen, respectively. Of the seven who are curious, three have 'always known' and the remaining four were informed at the ages of eight, twelve, thirteen and twenty-four, respectively. This finding tends to support the contention that it is not the timing, but the manner of revelation that is most important.

Of the thirty-five adoptees who had not always known that they were adopted, twenty-two (63%) report that they were informed between the ages of six and twelve respectively, while the remainder were informed between the ages of thirteen and twenty-six, the mean for the group being 12,7 years.

It appears that late revelation was not always synonymous with ignorance of adopted status. Where discrepancies occurred between reported awareness of adopted status and confirmation by the adoptive parents, awareness or suspicions grew as a consequence of peer group comments or of overhearing adults talking. An example is:

"The old people always asked my parents, 'Is dit julle grootmaak kind?'" (translated as, "Is this the child you are rearing?") (Forty-four year old Afrikaans-speaking female adoptee who is 'searching'.)

A brief reference must be made about semantics here. In general, the diminutive is used with reference to children among social associates. The term grootmaak kind would imply a

a measure of social disapprobation which might not have penetrated the awareness of the child as much as that of the parents. However, because this adoptee remembers the incident and the words so clearly, this suggests that she was well aware of the connotations.

One adoptee who was adopted twice reported a similar experience:

"People always whispered when I was around, so I eavesdropped and heard that I'd been adopted once before. At the second adoption I was only told once, briefly." (Twenty-nine year old male adoptee who is 'searching'.)

In the report on the first 500 interviews given at the General Register Office in London, following changes in British adoption laws allowing adult adoptees access to adoption records, Day and Leeding (1980:23) give a summary of how these adoptees learned of their adoptive status:

	NO.	%
From adoptive parents:		
in infancy	287	57,4
in teens	49	9,8
as adults	13	2,6
From others - neighbours, friends, etc.:	47	9,4
Self discovered -		
in infancy or teens	55	11,0
as adults	46	9,2
not stated	3	0,6
TOTAL	500	100,0

By way of comparison, my sample of adult adoptees report learning of their adoptive status as follows:

	NO.	%
From adoptive parents:		
in infancy	54	65,9
in teenagers, age 13-18	6	7,3
as adults	4	4,9
From others - siblings, peer group and neigh- bours, etc.:	14	17,1
Self discovered -		
as teenager	1	1,2
as adult	1	1,2
Fostered before adoption:	2	2,4
TOTAL	82	100,0

Where their sources of information had been other than the adoptive parents, not all in my sample recount this event as traumatic, nor can it be assumed that this revelation by others was perceived as distressing in the absence of direct evidence to this effect. The following examples indicate the measure of distress of some of those concerned.

"At my grandmother's funeral someone asked my mother if I was their adopted daughter and she answered reluctantly, 'yes'. I was fourteen and it was as if someone had emptied a bucket of cold water over me and I started shivering." (Forty-year old Afrikaans-speaking female adoptee who is 'searching'.)

Where adoption revelation by others occurred within a sibling rivalry context, it was also experienced as traumatic as the following accounts reveal.

"When I was thirteen, my brother and I were having a quarrel and he said, 'They aren't your mother and father.' So I asked them and they said it was the truth." (Thirty-two year old Afrikaans-speaking female adoptee who is 'searching'.)

and also,

"(I was told) for the first time when I was ten by my brother in an ugly way when we quarrelled. My 'mother' afterwards explained nicely and reassured me of their love. It was a shock, but with my parent's love I was able to accept it and adapt to it." (Thirty-two year old Afrikaans-speaking female adoptee who is 'searching'.)

One revelation from documentary sources occurred as follows:

"I found out in standard five during the visit of the school doctor. I read on the card that I was adopted. I also found other documents (at home) which verified this. In standard ten, my mother's sister also told me I was adopted." (Twenty-year old Afrikaans-speaking female adoptee who is 'searching'.)

Day (1980) confirms that where adoptive parents did not exercise their prerogative to be the informers of adoptive status, adoptees can and do take steps to confirm or refute their suspicions. One of the adoptees in this sample, who only had confirmation of adoptive status in adulthood, volunteered the following information:

"Never told, discovered facts through newspaper of my birth date, as a result of my own suspicions and detective work." (Twenty-eight year old Afrikaans-speaking female adoptee who is 'searching'.)

Revelation by others (who were adults) was either inadvertent or intentional according to those few adoptees who heard about their status as young adults.

"My grade-one teacher disclosed this information in a letter to me when I was a first-year university student, aged seventeen." (Thirty-five year old Afrikaans-speaking female adoptee who has 'found'.)

and also,

"From my parents, absolutely nothing. I first learned that I was adopted from an uncle on my mother's side. He was not aware that I did not know about being adopted. When I asked my grandmother about this, all she would say was that I would never be ashamed of my birth mother." (Forty-nine year old Afrikaans-speaking female who is 'searching'.)

and,

"I was introduced to a man who immediately said, 'So you are so-and-so's adopted son'. This occurred when I was twenty-six." (Seventy-year old English-speaking male adoptee who only discovered the truth about his parentage at the age of forty-six.)

Sometimes, one or other of the adoptive parents was against revelation of adopted status to their child, to which the other parent acceded.

"My mom had died. A person who had known me all my life spoke to my husband at a cocktail party. He (in turn) approached Dad, who said that seeing Mom had died, he felt it only fair to tell me as he'd always wanted to." (Forty-six year old English-speaking female adoptee, who was twenty-five years old at the time.)

In other instances, the trauma of having to reveal the adoptive status was very distressing to the adoptive parent concerned.

"I found out from a friend (sister of our maid servant) and confronted my adoptive mother with it. She was under severe emotional pressure due to problems with my adoptive father and adopted sister at the time. She asked me with tears in her eyes if it made a difference and I lied with tears in mine that it didn't. Shortly afterwards she had a nervous breakdown. It confirmed rumours that my sister had heard from her school friends that I chose to ignore." (Thirty-one year old English-speaking male adoptee who was fifteen at the time and who has 'found'.)

Both Triseliotis (1973) and McWhinnie (1967) found in their studies on the adopted adult, that the adoptees themselves expressed the desire to have been informed by their adoptive parents rather than hear from other sources.

In this sample, 19,5 percent of the adult adoptees discovered their adoptive status from sources other than their adoptive parents, compared with 29,6 percent in the Day and Leeding (1980) report.

The importance of the manner in which revelation of adopted status takes place has already been referred to. Raubenheimer (1974) drew attention to the need to know whether the revelation had been sympathetic and understanding or unfeeling and destructive. In this analysis of the accounts of the way in which they had been informed by their adoptive parents, adoptee answers could be categorised according to whether it had been done 'positively' (i.e. with sympathy and understanding), 'negatively (unfeeling and destructive) or, inadequately. Into the latter category were grouped all those answers that indicated a once-only explanation or where distortion of the true facts occurred, and where revelation was accompanied by very little information or empathy.

TABLE XIII

ADOPTEE EXPERIENCES OF THE MANNER IN WHICH REVELATION OF
ADOPTED STATUS OCCURRED

LANGUAGE GROUP	NO.	POSITIVELY	%	INADEQUATELY	%	NEGATIVELY	%	TOTAL
AFRIKAANS	35	12	34,3	18	51,4	5	14,3	100
ENGLISH	29	11	38,0	13	45,0	5	17,0	100
TOTAL	64	13	36,0	31	48,0	10	16,0	100

The table reveals very little difference between the two language groups as regards adequacy of the manner of telling. Past adoption practice for some Afrikaans-speaking adoptive parents contained restrictions which required them to swear secrecy. This oath took the form of promising never to reveal the name of the birth parent(s) to the child or to anyone else. This information was revealed in some of the letters from adoptive parents and in several adoptee questionnaire responses. One adoptive parent, writing about the period some thirty years previously, said:

"At the time we took an oath, swearing never to reveal to anyone or to our child who his biological mother was. In those days one never talked of the 'unmarried' or 'biological' mother in polite conversation. It was something only whispered about by older women as a scandal."

This practice probably arose to protect the adopted child from the stigma of illegitimacy which was arguably stronger among the Afrikaner because of the strong group affiliation and a religion based on Calvinism.

Evidence derived from letters and telephone calls received from, and interviews with, adoptive parents during the course of my research indicate that there was a conscious or unconscious desire to protect the child from the perceived trauma of dual parentage, feelings of difference and the overt or covert disapproval of illegitimate status in the social group. There was also unacknowledged fear of rejection by their adopted child if too much emphasis were to be placed on the child's 'other' mother. Raynor (1980) suggests that social workers have tended to underestimate the difficulties experienced by adoptive parents in relation to revelation. Mouton (1976) recommends, in regard to the South African situation, that adoptive parents be given as much information as possible in the form of a document. Whether this would be altogether effective is open to question in view of Raynor's (1980:147)

findings that, "Often they 'forgot' or distorted the information given them by their agency, even when the agency had taken the precaution of giving them this in writing ...".

Once the baby has been placed with its adoptive parents and the adoption has been legalised, there is very little, if anything, that social workers can do to ensure that revelation of adopted status takes place in a manner recommended by that agency. Adoptive parent groups which get together for informal discussion and ongoing support can be an effective means of helping adoptive parents face the hurdle of revelation. ✓

Revelation of adopted status appears to have been largely the province of the adoptive mother. Of the sixty-four adoptees (78%) in this sample who had been informed of their adoptive status by their adoptive parents, fifty-two percent state that they were informed of their status by their adoptive mother, fourteen percent were informed by their adoptive father, and thirty-four percent by both parents. ✓

The differences between the two language groups were negligible for the first two categories, with a ten percent difference in favour of the English-speaking group regarding revelation by both parents.

From Mouton's (1976) study of adoption in South Africa covering the period 1966-1974, it would appear that the tendency for adoptive mothers to assume the task of revelation has persisted. Of the seventy-nine adopted children in his study, sixty-one percent were informed by their adoptive mother, six percent by their adoptive father, and thirty-three percent by both adoptive parents. Mouton offers a tentative explanation for this trend, in terms of the adoptive father's feelings of inadequacy toward his infant children (particularly the first-born), and his inability to communicate with

the very young. These findings from the two studies suggest a need for further research into male/female roles in adoptive families in this country to establish whether cultural differences play a part in societal role expectations.

Thirty-one adoptees in my sample experienced revelation as a 'once-only' occurrence. Of this group, twenty-one were Afrikaans-speaking and ten English-speaking, representing forty-four percent and twenty-nine percent of these language groups respectively.

The adoptees in the Afrikaans-speaking group who experienced revelation as a once-only occurrence tend to be younger than their English-speaking counterparts in this section, in that only eight of them are over the age of thirty, whereas eight of the ten English-speaking adoptees are currently older than thirty. This suggests that social stigma against illegitimacy and infertility was more constricting for Afrikaans-speaking adoptive parents over a longer period.

X The story of their adoption was part of bed-time story-telling for twenty-two adoptees in this sample. For the remainder, their adoption was either not discussed at all, or only rarely. The more fortunate few had their questions answered fully, while the majority were discouraged in subtle and not so subtle ways from questioning their adoptive parents or discussing the matter. Only two adoptees, one from each language group, report that the information given them was tailored to their developmental stages and as complete as possible, given the information at their adoptive parents' disposal. One of the two is 'not searching'.

In the past there was a tendency for adoption agency personnel to tailor or abridge the information given to the adoptive parents. Mouton (1976) states in his investigation of three Afrikaans adoption agencies that parents are given a choice of how much information they require. He found that a number of adoptive parents themselves prefer to have as little information as possible, so that they can, in all honesty, inform their adopted child that they 'do not know' in the event of future questioning.

The amount and exact nature of the information made available to adoptive parents over past decades is difficult to establish. Some adoptive parents in my study complained that what information was furnished was given on the day they came to collect the infant. In the excitement of the moment, much of the information given them verbally was forgotten.

Adoption practitioners themselves may have little or no information about the infant or child's birth father. There has been a tendency in the past (and possibly even now) to rely solely on whatever information was given by the relinquishing mother about herself, her family medical history and the father of her child.

The need to involve the birth father in the decision-making process about whether to place the baby for adoption, particularly among the unmarried, is advocated by Anglim (1965), Pannor and Evans (1967), Pannor et al. (1978) and Watson (1986). Their argument is that his presence assists the birth mother in arriving at a decision more easily, and that this also helps her to come to terms with her grief after the relinquishment. These authors found that where the assistance of the birth father was sought, he proved ready to co-operate and to furnish information about himself and his family.

There is a growing awareness among concerned persons and some adoption practitioners of the need to obtain as much biographical material, including medical histories, of the two families involved in the infant or child who will be relinquished for adoption. This information can be sought from whoever can assist, for example, parents, grandparents, older natal siblings, the family doctor and even the Minister of the church to which the young couple belong (Mouton, 1976).

The amount of information about birth parents given this sample of adoptees must be judged inadequate in terms of present-day recommendations. De Bruyn (1976:451) makes a similar comment concerning the adoption process in her study of a sample of adoptive parents in South Africa: "Die beperkte inligting wat in die meeste gevalle aan die kind beskikbaar gestel is is opvallend." She also found that "Alhoewel een uit elke ouerpare die beginsel om vir die kind van sy agtergrond te vertel, onderskryf het, het hulle nie uitvoering hieraan gegee nie - party as gevolg van inhibisies en ander weens onkunde oor die waarde daarvan" (De Bruyn, 1976:453). These results are comparable with the findings of studies in America by Jaffee and Fanshel (1970), Sorosky *et al.* (1975) and Kowai and Schilling (1984), and in Britain, by McWhinnie (1967), Triseliotis (1973) and Raynor (1980).

DETAILS GIVEN ADOPTEES ABOUT THEIR BIRTH MOTHER

Twenty-seven adoptees in this sample were told nothing about their birth mother and only two were informed as fully as possible. Content analysis was applied to the responses of those adoptees who had been given some information. Twenty 'information categories', or unit indices were arrived at. Analysis of the responses showed that: four were given information relating to five unit indices; two were given information relating to four unit indices; twelve were given information relating to three unit indices; thirteen were

given information relating to two unit indices; and the remaining twenty were given information relating to one unit index. The following table gives a numerical presentation of this analysis, together with percentages for the totals in each language group.

TABLE XIV

DETAILS GIVEN TO ADOPTEES IN THIS SAMPLE ABOUT THEIR BIRTH MOTHER, ARRANGED ACCORDING TO INFORMATION CATEGORY

WHAT ADOPTEES WERE TOLD UNIT INDICES	N = 48 AFRIKAANS- SPEAKING		N = 34 ENGLISH- SPEAKING	
	NO.	%	NO.	%
Nothing at all	19	40	8	23
Brief reasons for relinquishment	15	31	13	54
Her age at time of giving birth	7	15	6	18
Her name	6	13	3	9
Educational qualifications/occupation	6	13	11	32
Her attitude to her infant	4	8	2	6
Her nationality	2	4	3	9
Her social class	2	4	1	3
Birth mother dead (childbirth/accident, etc.)	2	4	4	12
Information given a total fabrication	2	4	1	3
Circumstances explained fully	1	2	1	3
Birth mother portrayed in negative manner	1	2	1	3
Her appearance	1	2	4	12
Told she was a 'good woman'	1	2	0	0
Related to the adoptive family	1	2	0	0

WHAT ADOPTEES WERE TOLD UNIT INDICES	N = 48 AFRIKAANS- SPEAKING		N = 34 ENGLISH- SPEAKING	
	NO.	%	NO.	%
Told of her special talents and hobbies	0	0	2	6
Told of her former place of residence	0	0	3	9
Her religion	0	0	2	6
Her personality traits	0	0	1	3
Her health at the time	0	0	1	3
Told that she had been raped	1	2	1	3

The total number of responses in these unit indices add up to seventy-one for the Afrikaans-speaking, and sixty-eight for the English-speaking group. Of the total information units about birth mother (i.e. 80 adoptees x 20 unit indices) that could have been revealed, the Afrikaans-speaking were given an average of 5,4 percent, and the English-speaking an average of 8,8 percent, of this information.

DETAILS GIVEN TO ADOPTEES ABOUT THEIR BIRTH FATHER

Differences occurred between both the content and amount of information given to adoptees in the two language groups about their birth father. On the whole, English-speaking adoptees were given more factual information of a biographical nature.

Forty-six adoptees in this sample were told nothing about their birth father. Only one was informed as fully as possible about the circumstances leading to the adoption and about her birth father. Content analysis was applied to the responses of the remainder. Fifteen 'information categories' or unit indices were arrived at. Analysis showed that: one adoptee was

given information relating to four unit indices; three were given information relating to three unit indices; eleven adoptees were given information relating to two unit indices; and the remaining twenty were given information relating to only one unit index. The following table gives a numerical presentation of this analysis, together with the percentages for the totals in each language group.

TABLE XV

DETAILS GIVEN TO ADOPTEES ABOUT THEIR BIRTH FATHER,
ARRANGED ACCORDING TO INFORMATION CATEGORY

WHAT ADOPTEES WERE TOLD UNIT INDICES	N = 48 AFRIKAANS- SPEAKING		N = 34 ENGLISH- SPEAKING	
	NO.	%	NO.	%
Nothing at all	29	60	17	50
Birth father portrayed in a negative light	5	10	2	6
Did not want parental responsibilities	2	4	3	9
He was a married man	2	4	1	3
His nationality	0	0	5	15
His occupation/educational status	2	4	7	21
His age at time of adoptee's birth	0	0	3	9
His appearance	1	2	3	9
His talents and hobbies	0	0	2	6
His name	3	6	1	3
Told he was dead	1	2	3	9
Reluctant to consent to the adoption	2	4	0	0
Birth father deceased	1	2	1	3
Reasons for not marrying birth mother	3	6	2	6

WHAT ADOPTEES WERE TOLD UNIT INDICES	N = 48 AFRIKAANS- SPEAKING		N = 34 ENGLISH- SPEAKING	
	NO.	%	NO.	%
Unaware of pregnancy	0	0	1	3
Circumstances explained in detail	1	2	0	0

The total number of the responses for these unit indices add up to fifty-two for the Afrikaans-speaking, and fifty-one for the English-speaking, adoptees. Of the total information units about birth father (i.e. 81 adoptees x 15 unit indices) that could have been revealed, the Afrikaans-speaking were given an average of 3,19 percent and the English-speaking an average of 6,66 percent of the total.

These findings illustrate the paucity of information about birth parents that characterised this sample of adult adoptees. Twenty-seven adoptees (33%) were given no information at all about their birth mother. Forty-six adoptees (56%) were given no information whatsoever about their birth father. With the exception of two adoptees, the remainder were given insufficient information concerning either birth parent to satisfy their need for information about their origins. One male adoptee who was told nothing about either birth parent professes not to have any curiosity about either. It can therefore be concluded that adoptees, like persons who are not adopted, differ in their level of curiosity. An alternate explanation is that the young man is not in any way curious because he is still single. His curiosity may grow after he has married and has children of his own. Future research may throw more light on the subject of why some adoptees are curious while others are not.

CHAPTER 5ADOPTEE THOUGHTS ABOUT BIRTH MOTHER

Although curiosity is an attribute found in nearly all of the higher animals, it is particularly well developed in man; the majority of adoptees in this sample proved to be no exception. Awareness of adopted status almost invariably gave rise to a certain measure of curiosity about adoption, birth parents, the possibility of siblings, origins and concerns about these. The social importance of having 'roots' would, no doubt, have had an effect as well.

In reply to the question, "How old were you when you began wondering about being adopted?", the majority of adoptees gave ages ranging from three to twenty-six years. These numbered seventy-two of the total. Of the remaining ten, one adoptee replied, "Very young", two replied that they had never wondered, three could not remember, and four gave no response to this question. Humphrey and Humphrey (1986:136) remind us that "There can be no doubt that adoptees, like any random group, will vary in their level of natural inquisitiveness regardless of how much background information is available". It will be remembered that the adoptees in this sample had, in the main, very little background information concerning their birth parents and origins so as to satisfy their curiosity.

Of interest is that no consistent pattern emerges for age groups or any other variable. Early revelation of adopted status did not automatically result in speculation about this status.

Those who report always having known they were adopted admit to having wondered through all the ages of childhood until late adolescence. Late revelation appears to have been more consistently linked with recollections of immediate concerns and thoughts about all the implications of being adopted than was early revelation for this sample. Conversely, early revelation is associated with early fears concerning birth mother and father, for some of the adoptees in this sample. This finding poses problems for adoption practitioners and parents who advocate 'early revelation of adopted status'.

McWhinnie (1985) advocates group-counselling for adoptive parents to help them cope (particularly in the case of pre-pubertal adoptees) with problems related to revelation of adopted status, and the child's need to incorporate two sets of parents into his or her self-image.

Some of the adoptees who gave the age of onset of thoughts about adoption as pre-pubertal, express some reservations about the reliability of their memories. This took the form of such statements as "... about seven years" or "...plus minus six years old".

Twenty-six adoptees (36%) began wondering between the ages of three and ten. Of these, twenty-one had 'always known' they were adopted and five recall being informed of this between the ages of seven and ten years.

Eighteen (25%) began wondering between the ages of eleven and thirteen, of whom twelve had 'always known' and six were informed between nine and twelve years of age.

Seventeen (23,6%) began wondering between the ages of fourteen and eighteen, of whom six had 'always known' and eleven were told between the ages of six and eighteen.

The remaining eleven adoptees (15,3%) only began wondering between the ages of nineteen and twenty-six. Of these, three state that they had 'always known', two were informed at age seven and eleven respectively and six were informed between the ages of eighteen and twenty-six.

The onset of adolescence appears to have been a time when the significance of adoption most often impinged on the consciousness of this sample, as the following table reveals.

TABLE XVI

AGE AT WHICH 72 ADOPTEES (88%) BEGAN TO WONDER
ABOUT BEING ADOPTED

	N = 26 (36%)						N = 18 (25%)						N = 21 (29%)						N = 11 (15%)					
AGES	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24		
NUMBERS	3	1	2	5	3	3	3	6	2	13	3	5	2	6	3	1	1	4	0	1	1	1		
	CHILDHOOD N = 41									ADOLESCENCE N = 19						YOUNG ADULTHOOD N = 12								

The mean number for each age group is 3, whilst the modal age group is 12 years.

This categorisation into childhood, adolescence and young adulthood is a chronological and popular one based on the average. In the absence of information about the onset of pubertal changes for this sample, the present categorisation will have to suffice as an approximate guide to the association between revelation of adopted status and the onset of curiosity and concerns arising from that revelation for these adult adoptees. That there were curiosity and concerns arising

from the inescapable reality of not being the biological offspring of their adoptive parents, is shown in the analysis of data contained in the questionnaires. Adoptees thought more often about their birth mother than birth father, or any other aspect of adoptive status, as shown in the following tables:

TABLE XVII

NUMBER OF ADOPTEES, ACCORDING TO LANGUAGE GROUP,
WHO RESPONDED TO WONDERING ABOUT THEIR BIRTH MOTHER

LANGUAGE GROUP	N	YES	%	NO	%	OTHER	%
Afrikaans	48	45	93,7	2	4,2	1	2,1
English	34	28	82,3	6	17,6	0	0
Total	82	73	89,0	8	9,8	1	1,2

TABLE XVIII

NUMBER OF ADOPTEES, ACCORDING TO LANGUAGE GROUP,
WHO RESPONDED TO WONDERING ABOUT THEIR BIRTH FATHER

LANGUAGE GROUP	N	YES	%	NO	%	OTHER	%
Afrikaans	48	37	77,0	9	18,8	2	4,2
English	34	24	70,5	10	29,4	0	0
Total	82	61	74,3	19	23,4	2	2,4

In reply to the question, "Did you think more about your birth mother or birth father?", sixty-seven (81,7%) said they thought more about their birth mother, five (6%) said they thought more about their birth father, three (3,6%) replied, "Neither", seven (8,5%) made no response to this question, and one (1,2%) replied, "Probably equal".

Of the seven adoptees who made no response to the above question, four are neither searching nor curious about birth parents, one has found, one is searching, and one is very curious.

Of the three who stated that they had thought about neither, two are not searching or curious, while the remaining adoptee is searching for birth parents.

This analysis closely follows the results of other studies (Jaffee and Fanshel, 1970; Sorosky et al., 1984), which also had more female respondents than male and whose respondents showed a greater interest in their birth mothers than birth fathers. In my sample, seventy-three adoptees thought about their birth mother, some of these from a very young age.

Of the six English-speaking adoptees who replied in the negative to the question of whether they ever thought about their birth mother, the following details emerged: four of the six are 'non-searching' adoptees of whom one refers to fantasies in her reply; the remaining two were only informed of their adoptive status at the ages of seventeen and eighteen, respectively.

Of the three Afrikaans-speaking adoptees who answered 'no' to this question, two are not searching. The third replied in the negative, but went on to say that she did recall having fears about whether her mother had been a 'good' woman. She subsequently 'found' and was greatly reassured to discover that her earlier childhood fears had been groundless.

Content analysis was applied to the seventy-three responses concerning thoughts about birth mother. These answers were divided into pre-pubertal, adolescence and young adulthood according to the ages at which the respondents first recall having begun to think about being adopted. Coding exposed thirteen index units into which the seventy-three responses could be categorised.

Several replies contained more than one unit which is why the totals in TABLE XIX add up to more than one hundred percent. The percentages for each index unit are presented in rank order and the number of responses appear in the next table.

Fifty-three percent wanted to know why they had been given up for adoption.

Forty-four percent were curious to know what she looked like.

Thirty-four percent wanted to know what sort of person she was, her character, talents, occupation, etc. Analysis of the latent content reveals a concern for the moral character of the birth mother.

Twenty-six percent wondered whether their birth mother ever thought about them, particularly so on their birthdays and over Christmas.

Twenty-five percent were curious to know her whereabouts, followed closely by, or allied to,

Twenty-one percent who were concerned with her well-being and circumstances.

Eighteen percent were preoccupied with speculating about their birth mother's possible acceptance or rejection of themselves should they ever meet, expressed as, "Will she want to see me again?"

Sixteen percent wondered who she actually was, her identity.

Fifteen percent were interested to know whether they resembled her in any way.

Ten percent were concerned as to whether she was still alive, while another,

Ten percent wondered whether she had married, but only

Six percent expressed any curiosity at this stage as to whether she had had any more children, and only

One adoptee, or one percent was curious about her nationality or language group.

TABLE XIX

AGES WHEN THOUGHTS ABOUT ADOPTION AND BIRTH MOTHER
COMMENCED, AND TYPE OF THOUGHTS

UNIT CONTENT CATEGORY	PRE-PUBERTAL 3-12 YRS		ADOLESCENT 13-17 YRS		ADULTHOOD 18-26 YRS		TOTAL	%
	LANGUAGE GROUP		LANGUAGE GROUP		LANGUAGE GROUP			
	ENG.	AFR.	ENG.	AFR.	ENG.	AFR.		
Reason why	10	14	1	9	0	5	39	53
Appearance	8	11	3	6	0	4	32	44
Personality	11	6	2	6	0	0	25	34
Attachment	3	6	3	5	0	2	19	26
Whereabouts	3	7	2	4	1	1	18	25
Wellbeing	3	4	1	4	1	1	15	21
Acceptance/rejection	2	4	0	5	0	2	13	18
Identity	4	2	2	2	0	3	12	16
Resemblance	2	2	3	4	0	0	11	15
Still alive	0	1	1	4	0	1	7	10
Married	0	6	0	1	0	0	7	10
More children	0	2	0	0	0	2	4	6
Nationality	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	1

EXAMPLES OF PRE-PUBERTAL RESPONSES

"I always wondered what she looked like, who she was and why she didn't keep me." (Twenty-eight year old female adoptee who has 'found', always known she was adopted and recalls beginning to wonder between the ages of six and seven.)

"I wonder who she is and what she's doing, why she had to give me up. I imagined that she loved a man very much but that he came from royalty, couldn't marry her and she was too poor." (Twenty-four year old female adoptee who is 'searching', has always known she was adopted, and began wondering at the age of six.)

"I wondered if she was pretty, if she thought of me, if she was married. I also wondered what her reaction would be if one day I stood in front of her and said, 'This is me, the child you threw away'." (Twenty-year old female who has always known she was adopted, began wondering at the age of seven and who is 'searching'.)

"I couldn't always understand why she did it and always wondered why. Also wondered where she was and whether she ever thought of me." (Twenty-four year old female adoptee, told of her adoption at the age of seven, began wondering around the age of nine and who has subsequently 'found'.)

Two English-speaking adoptees refer to anger directed at their birth mother during the pre-pubertal phase.

"How much I hated her, and always the question 'why?'" (Twenty-five year old female who is not searching, has always known she was adopted by means of the "chosen baby" story, and began thinking about adoption at the age of twelve.)

"Wondered who she was, what the circumstances were. Sometimes hated her for giving me away." (Twenty-five year old female who is 'searching', has always known she was adopted and began wondering around the age of eleven.)

ADOLESCENT THOUGHTS ABOUT BIRTH MOTHER

Where revelation of adopted status occurred only in adolescence or adulthood, thought content was not appreciably different from those expressed by the pre-pubertal group.

"What she looks like, where she is, does she think about me, is she cared for and not in want." (Thirty-two year old female adoptee, told at the age of fourteen of her adoptive status and who is not searching.)

"Wondered what sort of mother she was who didn't want her children, also why she gave us out for adoption." (Thirty-four year old female adoptee whose adoptive status was revealed obliquely during social occasions, began wondering at age fifteen and who has 'found'.)

"What she looked like, whether she thinks about me, whether I'd ever meet her, how much grief she suffered, what her reaction would be if she recognised me. Does she remember my birthday, does she think about me?" (Twenty-four year old male who is 'searching', was told of his adoptive status at the age of twelve by his adoptive mother, and who began wondering at the age of sixteen.)

YOUNG ADULthood : THOUGHTS ABOUT BIRTH MOTHER

"What did she look like, her features. If she ever thought of me. What it would be like to meet her again if that were possible. What were her circumstances. If she had had more children?" (Forty-two year old male who only learned at the age of twenty-two of his adoptive status in a traumatic manner from his adoptive father, and who has since 'found'.)

"At the age of twenty-five, I couldn't understand how a mother could just part with her child like that." (Thirty-six year old male whose adoptive status was only disclosed at the age of twenty-five by his adoptive father. The latter also furnished the name and address of the birth mother on that occasion. This adoptee has also subsequently 'found'.)

Berger and Hodges (1982:75) are of the opinion that "The most painful and difficult question which confronts the adopted child is why he was given away".

Eldred et al., (1976:283) in their study of 216 adult adoptees found: "A majority of the subjects (62%) had presumably never thought or wondered about their biological parents ... Twenty-eight percent reported wondering or thinking about their biological parents, but they did not mention any particular fantasies. The remaining ten percent had constructed fantasies with a specific, unchanging theme bordering on actual belief".

Kowai and Schilling (cf. 1985) in their study of 110 adult adoptees, list the background information most desired by their respondents and contrast this with the kind and amount of information disclosed by the adoptive parents. This was - in rank order - the medical history of their parents, their personality characteristics, a physical description, their names and ethnic background, the adoptees' own early medical history, the birth parents' interests and hobbies, reasons for being given up for adoption, the current marital status of their parents, their education and occupation, whether they were married at the time of the adoptees birth and where the adoptee was placed prior to adoption. In my sample, what adoptees most wanted to know was why they had been given up for adoption.

Kowai and Schilling (1985) further report that forty percent of their subjects rarely or never thought about biological parents during childhood, and that this number declined to twenty percent during adolescence.

Wieder (1977) and Schecter (1960) also refer to fantasies of adopted children seen at psychiatric clinics.

Only two adoptees in my sample specifically refer to fantasies about their birth mother or birth father. One of these was among the pre-pubertal examples (reference to royalty) quoted earlier, and the second stated that while she cannot recall thinking about her birth mother, she "Dreamed about her, more like a fantasy". This adoptee is not searching.

Kowai and Schilling (1985:357) contend that "... it is significant that, at least for some non-clinical adoptees, an increase in fantasy is the rule rather than the exception. Those subjects who were searching for biological relatives at the time of the study were significantly more likely to recall a high degree of involvement in fantasies about their biological parents during childhood ... and adolescence ... than those subjects who were merely contacting the agencies for background information." It will be recalled that 35,4 percent of my sample have 'found' birth parent(s) or blood-siblings and 43,9 percent are 'searching'. No specific question was asked in the questionnaire about 'fantasies' in the belief that to do so would be in the nature of a leading question and lead to biased responses. I felt that simply to enquire about what thoughts they had had about their birth mother would be sufficient, as fantasies fall within the realm of 'thoughts'. An association between 'fantasies' and those who search does not appear to be substantiated in this sample. Analysis of the data concerning awareness of adoptive status indicates, however, that revelation of that status is positively correlated with curiosity and concerns arising from it.

Seventy-three adoptees (89%) recall wondering about their birth mother, seventy-two (88%) recall wondering about adoption itself, sixty-one (74%) admit to wondering about their birth father, and a further two state that they did so only rarely.

The reasons why she could not keep them, her appearance, and what sort of person she was, were the questions most adoptees in this sample wanted answered. Without similar access to the adoptive parents of this sample of adoptees, it would be idle to speculate about the reasons why these adoptees were not more fully informed. Similar findings about the paucity of information given adoptees were reported by Triseliotis (1973), Sorosky et al., (1976) and Kowai and Schilling (1985).

It is possible that the adoptive parents themselves may not have known much more than that which they imparted to their adopted children. Agency practice in the past tended towards selective disclosure of information to adoptive parents (Humphrey and Humphrey, 1986).

The age of revelation was not found to affect the data other than that the later the revelation the more immediate the curiosity and concerns, but early revelation was found (with some exceptions) to be associated with early curiosity and concerns. This finding is endorsed by Berger and Hodges (1982:86) who proposed: "As the child grows older ... his thoughts take him increasingly in the direction of his biological parents ..."

Age of revelation and concomitant concerns and curiosity are not always associated with decisions to "search" for birth parents or siblings in this sample.

Further research will be needed in South Africa following the changes in adoption legislation which came into effect on 1 February 1987, allowing adult adoptees access to court records to establish 'who searches and why', before the independent variables of age of revelation/onset of curiosity and concerns can be satisfactorily correlated.

FEARS CONCERNING BIRTH MOTHER DURING CHILDHOOD, ADOLESCENCE AND YOUNG ADULTHOOD

All children go through a phase when their incomplete understanding of the world they live in causes them to have fears of one sort or another. What children fear and why they harbour these fears is a subject that has received much attention. What we do not know is the extent and scope of adopted children's fears arising from their special status.

McWhinnie (1967:243) refers to "... certain kinds of information which they did not want or which they feared they would learn if they started to make enquiries". The fears expressed by some adoptees in this sample fall into this category and may well be seen as a form of fantasy by proponents of this viewpoint. These fears have their roots in the lack of information, or its inadequacy about their birth mother that characterised the majority of adoptees in my sample.

Twenty-nine (35%) confessed to having had fears that related to their birth mother. Content analysis of these answers reveal idiosyncratic responses across a wider range than do the thought contents concerning the birth mother in general. As in the previous content analysis, some answers contained multiple and single unit indices and thus the numbers add up to more than the total number of adoptees who responded to this question. The following analysis represents a rank ordering of the expressed fears concerning the birth mother among this sample of adoptees.

Fifteen expressed fears about the moral character of their birth mothers. They feared that she might be a loose woman, prostitute, low-class, or even a criminal. The next most common fear concerned the possibility of rejection a second time were they to contact or ever meet their birth mother. Eight expressed fears of rejection and one expressed fear of being a disappointment to her were they ever to meet. Four feared that she might no longer be alive, or would die before they would meet her again, and two simply fretted about whether they would ever get to meet her. Three feared something reprehensible concerning the reasons they had been given up for adoption. Two feared that she might be living in circumstances of poverty or that she was unloved and lonely. Three had fears about her mental condition and whether insanity might be hereditary. Two had fears that she might be an alcoholic or drug addict. One adoptee feared whether she

was of normal intelligence, and another, whether she perhaps had visual defects. One adoptee had fears of whether her birth mother had an uncontrollable temper and whether she would become just like her. More bizarre fears, which visualised the birth mother as faceless, or a witch who would come to take them away, were expressed by two adoptees.

EXAMPLES OF PRE-PUBERTAL FEARS

"If she were to find me, would she perhaps not hurt me or kill me? Was she a real witch or something?" (Female adoptee who had always known she was adopted and began wondering between the ages of seven and eight.)

"Good and bad. Perhaps she couldn't really keep me or maybe she was a 'bad' woman. Something like that eats at you if you don't know the facts." (Male adoptee who was told of his adoption at the age of five and who began wondering at around that time.)

"The thought that she might have been a prostitute or a bad person." (Female adoptee who has always known she was adopted and began wondering at the age of five.)

EXAMPLES OF ADOLESCENT FEARS

"That if I was ever to meet her I would be hurt through rejection or perhaps that she would be disappointed by what she expected of what I would be like, or vice versa." (Female adoptee who has always known she was adopted, but only began wondering at around the age of sixteen.)

"My security at home was threatened by a faceless natural mother whom, then, I believed would one day appear to take me away." (Male adoptee who only learned of his adoption at the age of seventeen).

"I still have this fear that maybe she'll die or maybe she is already dead and that she'll never have the privilege of seeing me." (Female adoptee who was informed of her adoptive status at the age of thirteen and began wondering then about being adopted.)

"If I were to meet her, what the circumstances would be. Was she perhaps an alcoholic or drug addict - what were the circumstances when I was begat." (Male adoptee who was only informed of his adoptive status at the age of sixteen and began to wonder right away.)

EXAMPLES OF FEARS IN YOUNG ADULthood

"If she perhaps had a mental condition that was inheritable - and if I ever found her she might reject me a second time." (Female adoptee who only learned of her adoptive status at the age of nineteen.)

"That having rejected me once (to the orphanage, despite her attempts to get me back), she would reject me again." (Female adoptee who only learned of her adoption at the age of twenty-five.)

TABLE XX

NUMBERS OF ADOPTees WHO HAD FEARS ABOUT BIRTH MOTHER,
ARRANGED ACCORDING TO LANGUAGE GROUP AND AGE CATEGORY
AT TIME OF REVELATION

LANGUAGE GROUP	ALWAYS KNOWN	6-12 YRS.	13-17 YRS.	18+ YRS.	TOTAL
Afrikaans	8	4	5	2	19
English	8	1	1	0	10
Total	16	5	6	2	29

Just over one-third of this sample recall fears concerning their birth mother. Sixteen of these (55%) had always known that they were adopted. There is no difference between the two language groups for this category, but later revelation is correlated with more fears among the Afrikaans-speaking language group, i.e. eleven compared to two English-speaking adoptees. These findings again place the question of "best age for revelation" in the balance, for no parent knowingly wishes to create conditions that foster fears in young children.

CHAPTER 6ADOPTEE THOUGHTS CONCERNING BIRTH FATHER DURING CHILDHOOD,
ADOLESCENCE AND YOUNG ADULTHOOD

The thoughts adoptees had about their birth father differed qualitatively as well as quantitatively from those expressed about their birth mother. Analysis of the response categories in this section revealed twenty unit indices. In addition to wanting to know 'why' they had been given up for adoption, adoptees wondered about his attitude towards their birth mother and why he had not assumed his parental responsibilities. Twenty of the sixty-three responses reflect this concern, with eight adoptees expressing resentment ranging from mild to active dislike and even anger. Nine wondered whether their birth father even knew of their existence.

There was overall a greater concern and pre-occupation with the reason why their birth mother had parted with them and her moral character and personality, than similar thoughts concerning their birth father. Fifty-three percent wanted to know why their birth mother had given them up for adoption, while only thirty-two percent asked the same about their birth father. This concern applied particularly to those who had been born illegitimate, and reflects an apparent social acceptance of young men who disregard marital and parenting obligations, which is not always accorded to young females who find themselves unequal to the task of single parenting.

The following table illustrates the similarities and differences in thoughts about birth fathers and birth mothers, shown as percentages. Many responses contained more than one index unit which is why the percentages add up to more than 100 percent.

TABLE XXI

ADOPTEE THOUGHTS ABOUT BIRTH FATHER CONTRASTED WITH
THOUGHTS ABOUT BIRTH MOTHER

THOUGHT CATEGORY	BIRTH FATHER		BIRTH MOTHER	
	NUMBER	%	NUMBER	%
The reasons why plus attitude	20	32	39	53
Moral character/personality	15	24	25	34
Appearance and/or age	14	22	32	44
Resentment towards birth parent	8	13	2	3
Physical resemblance/inherited traits	7	11	11	15
Whereabouts	7	11	18	25
Does he/she ever think about adoptee	7	11	19	26
Concern about wellbeing/ circumstances	7	11	15	21
Whether married	5	8	7	10
Identity	5	8	12	16
Nationality/language group/background	4	6	1	1
Acceptance/rejection of adoptee	3	5	13	18
Has he/she any more children	3	5	4	6
Whether still alive	2	3	7	10

Concerns applicable to the birth father only were expressed by nine adoptees (14%) who wondered whether he was even aware of their existence, and six (9%) who were curious about his achievements/profession/work. Three (5%) felt an urgent desire to meet him, two identified strongly with this unknown father, two admitted to having only had vague thoughts about their birth father, while two imbued him with qualities that bordered on idealization.

EXAMPLES OF PRE-PUBERTAL THOUGHTS ABOUT BIRTH FATHER

"From what I heard of him I despised him. He didn't help my mom, but left her when he found out she was pregnant. To me he's a coward. (Twenty-nine year old female adoptee who has 'always known' she was adopted, began wondering at the age of five and who has 'found'.)

"I wanted to know if he wouldn't perhaps have had me - all fathers love little girls." (Forty-five year old female adoptee, who has 'always known' she was adopted, began wondering between the ages of six and seven and who has 'found'.)

"What he looked like, his age, the reasons for my adoption, whether English or Afrikaans, his personality - where he was now? Did he ever think of me, did he want to see me? Did I look like him?" (Twenty-five year old female adoptee who has always known she was adopted, began wondering at the age of ten and who is 'searching'.)

"What really happened and whether what was said about him was true?" (Forty-six year old male adoptee, who was told of his adoption at the age of twelve and who has 'found'.)

"I am a very hairy person. I've often wondered what he looks like and whether I have his blue eyes and lots of hair. I wondered whether he was tall and wellbuilt or whether he was merely sissy'ish?" (Twenty-two year old female who has 'always known', began wondering at the age of twelve and who is 'searching'.)

EXAMPLES OF ADOLESCENT THOUGHTS ABOUT BIRTH FATHER

"I did think about him but only because he left my mother in the lurch when she was expecting me." (Thirty-seven year old female adoptee whose adoptive status was revealed at the age of thirteen and who has 'found'.)

"He's the one I'd most like to meet. I thought about what sort of person he is and what sort of personality he had." (Nineteen-year old male adoptee who was told of his adoptive status at the age of thirteen, and who is 'curious'.)

"Is he bad? Why did he do this? Did he love her? How many of his bad qualities had I inherited? (Thirty-one year old female adoptee, who was told of her adoptive status at the age of fourteen and who is 'not searching'.)

"Don't want to see or know him. He is a shirker who couldn't shoulder the consequences of his deeds." (Twenty-one year old female adoptee who only learned of her adoptive status at the age of sixteen and who is 'searching'.

EXAMPLES OF YOUNG ADULT THOUGHTS ABOUT BIRTH FATHER

"Where he was? How he feels towards me. Does he think of me? How his wife and family feel about me, whether he has other children? (Forty-two year old male adoptee who was informed of his adoptive status at the age of twenty-two and who has 'found'.)

"I wanted to know who and what he was." (Twenty-four year old male adoptee who was told of his adopted status at the age of twenty, and who is 'searching'.)

"My thoughts were rather vague." (Forty-nine year old female adoptee who was only informed of her adoptive status at the age of twenty-five and who is 'searching'.)

FEARS CONCERNING BIRTH FATHER

Thirty-seven percent (30 adoptees) recall having fears about their birth father. These fears can be attributed in some instances to a negative portrayal of the birth father by the adoptive parents. Evidence of 'negative portrayal' comes from the following responses:

EXAMPLES OF FEARS ARISING FROM NEGATIVE PORTRAYAL OF BIRTH FATHER

"If I looked for him, might I not regret not having let sleeping dogs lie; after all my grandparents forbade the marriage because he drank too much." (Thirty-eight year old female adoptee, who has 'always known' she was adopted, began wondering in childhood and who was told his name, his work and appearance.)

"That I would become like him." (Thirty-six year old male adoptee, told of his adoptive status between the ages of twelve and thirteen, and that his father was a 'bad' man.)

"That he may have come from a weak family, or worked in a really low-class position. Maybe he was a 'bad' man." (Thirty-year old female adoptee who has 'always known' she was adopted, began wondering at the onset of adolescence, and was told her birth father had been a married man with children, and that he had worked as a traveller.)

"What if he had really bad habits, if I should run away or drink like he did?" (Twenty-eight year old female adoptee, told of her adoptive status at the age of ten, began wondering at age twelve and who'd been told her birth father had left birth mother flat.)

EXAMPLES OF FEARS WHERE ADOPTEE WAS TOLD NOTHING ABOUT BIRTH FATHER

"Whether he was perhaps a criminal and whether I, a policeman, had ever arrested him or locked him up for one or other reason and whether he'd meet me one day and tell me he was my real father." (Twenty-three year old male adoptee who was told of his adoptive status at the age of twelve.)

"I was afraid I might never know who he is since I was told my birth mother didn't even know and I'm afraid he is not the sort of father figure I imagine him to be." (Twenty-year old female who was fostered before being adopted at the age of six.)

"That he would one day kidnap me and take me away from my adoptive parents whom I loved very much." (Twenty-seven year old female adoptee, who began wondering when she was told of her adoption between the ages of four and five.)

"That he was a rapist. That he was a selfish man." (Twenty-five year old female adoptee who has 'always known' she was adopted, began wondering at the age of six years and who was told nothing about her birth father.)

"That if he had any bad habits, e.g. drinking, I might develop them one day." (Thirty-year old male adoptee who has 'always known' he was adopted, was told nothing about his birth father and who began wondering at the age of eleven.)

EXAMPLES OF FEARS ARISING FROM INADEQUATE OR INCOMPLETE INFORMATION ABOUT BIRTH FATHER

"That he could be dead, or lonely, or ill." (Twenty-five year old female adoptee who has always known of her adoptive status, told very little about her birth father and began wondering at the age of twelve.)

"I was afraid that my father may have been a convict or something of that nature and that I might grow up with some form of his hang-ups one day." (Twenty-one year old female adoptee, told of her adoptive status at the age of three and who was told the name of her birth father, as well as the circumstances that led to her adoption, and given a brief description of him.)

A positive portrayal by the adoptive parents led, in some instances, to fears of rejection by birth father occurring a second time, were they ever to meet.

Thirty-five percent (29 adoptees) of this sample recall having fears about their birth mother and thirty-seven percent (30 adoptees) about their birth father. Almost twice as many Afrikaans-speaking as English-speaking adoptees recall fears

about their birth mother, the ratio being 19:10. The possibility exists that the stigma against unmarried mothers was stronger for the Afrikaans-speaking community as a whole because of its strong group and religious affiliation. The latter is based on Calvinist teaching and has a strong puritan ethic.

A similar difference between the two language groups was found in regard to fears about the birth father.

This suggests stronger disapproval of deviant behaviour in this society, or the possibility that less information was conveyed to Afrikaans-speaking adoptees by their parents than the English-speaking group. Another likelihood is that Afrikaans-speaking adoptive parents themselves knew little more than they conveyed to their children.

GENERAL FEARS ASSOCIATED WITH BEING AN ADOPTED CHILD

The question of fears related specifically to the special status of the adopted child has received some attention. The research findings of the fifties and sixties particularly, pointed to the emotional stress experienced by, and vulnerability of, the adopted child. Schecter (1960), quoted in Sorosky et al. (1975), referred to the anxiety adopted children manifest regarding the possibility of returning to their birth parents and that having been given up once, this could happen again. Forty-one adoptees (50%) in my sample recall fears associated with, or arising from, their special status (question 46 in the questionnaire). Some responses listed more than one fear. Analysis of these responses reveal:

- (a) Fears arising from insecurity or physical and emotional abuse.
- (b) Fears about birth parents or birth family.
- (c) Fears of losing the security of the adoptive home.
- (d) Fears arising from social attitudes to adoption.
- (e) Fears of a general nature.

Eleven adoptees belong in the first category. Five of them experienced physical abuse, of whom two feared their adoptive mother, two their adoptive father, and one expressed fears of physical punishment. Two adoptees expressed fears of rejection by their adoptive parents, while one distanced herself emotionally from them. One adoptee had fears of not belonging anywhere, one expressed fear of revealing personal problems and the fears of the remaining adoptee related to sexual abuse.

Ten adoptees expressed fears relating to their birth families. Of these, seven feared inherited genetic disorders, including insanity, two had fears of marrying a sibling one day and one feared that the birth mother would reclaim the adoptee.

Ten adoptees experienced fears of losing the security of their adoptive parents and home. Of these, seven feared one or both adoptive parents might die, one feared that they might become divorced, and two had vague fears of being abandoned.

Eight adoptees recalled fears of a general nature. Of these, six had fears of the dark, violence or the unfamiliar. One had a fear of ghosts and one of dying young.

In reply to a later question, thirteen adoptees admitted to having had fears at one time or another in childhood, that their adoptive parents might give them away. Interestingly enough, four of the thirteen could recall only unpleasant memories of being an adopted child, whereas fifteen adoptees out of the total of 82 made this response. The remaining 67 adoptees recalled very pleasant memories of their childhood as adopted children.

Twenty adoptees commented on the love they received from their adoptive parents. Ten recalled their 'wonderful' childhood. Nine said they had been made to feel 'very special', while six said their pleasant memories were of feeling that they had been 'chosen'. Six commented that they had been treated just like an 'own born' or 'real child'. Five adoptees said they had 'two wonderful parents'.

Four regarded their adoptive mothers as someone special, and four felt this way about their adoptive fathers. Two referred to a normal happy childhood and one said her childhood had been the happiest time of her life. This overwhelmingly positive confirmation of a very happy childhood for 82 percent of these adoptees suggests that the fears experienced by half the adoptees in this sample were not sufficiently acute in the majority of cases to affect the adoptive relationship seriously. To what extent the attitudes of the adoptive parents gave rise to the responses of the fifteen who could recall no happy memories, is not known. Jaffee and Fanshel (1970) draw attention to the different responses regarding mutual satisfaction expressed by adoptees and their adoptive parents in their research.

THOUGHTS ABOUT MEETING BIRTH PARENTS ONE DAY

Seventy-seven percent (63 adoptees) of this sample thought about the possibility of meeting their birth mother one day and sixty-one percent (50 adoptees), their birth father.

Of the sixty-three who thought about meeting their birth mother, twenty-eight began considering the possibility between the ages of twelve and seventeen, with the larger number (9) in the thirteen-year old category; nineteen began to consider the possibility between the ages of six and twelve, with the greatest number falling in the ten to twelve-year old group; sixteen began considering the possibility between the ages of eighteen and twenty-six.

In contrast, concerning the possibility of one day meeting their birth father, three were not sure at what age this began; seventeen began considering it between the ages of six and twelve, of whom most were in the ten-year old bracket; fifteen recollected thinking of it between the ages of thirteen and seventeen, and fifteen began to entertain this idea only between the ages of eighteen and thirty-four.

These responses indicate that fifty-five percent of the adoptees in this sample began to think during the pre-pubertal stage about meeting one or both of their birth parents one day. Whether these thoughts were wholly concrete or took the form of fantasies is unclear.

These findings pose questions for future research. Adoptive parents need to know how to structure revelation in such a manner as to prevent fears, particularly among the pre-pubertal group.

In the light of available evidence it would appear that the provision of complete biographical details about birth parents to adoptees before the onset of adolescence is unlikely to satisfy their curiosity completely and allay concern (Humphrey and Humphrey, 1986). It might even increase fears in some instances. It is during adolescence that the need for frank and empathetic discussion about birth parents, the reasons why the adoption was necessary, and other details, are most urgently required.

In this sample, adoptees themselves are divided about when complete biographical details of birth parents should be given, as the following quotes show:

"I was adopted in and according to my mother they had to swear on oath in the presence of officials not to disclose any information about my birth parents, etc., so apparently it is a closed matter. I don't even know from which centre I was adopted, except that it was in ... My adoptive mother will not tell me more than that, but I feel that information about birth parents, especially their medical history, should be available to the adoptive mother, and at adulthood, to the adopted person. One worries about hereditary conditions when one does not have the facts."

"In my experience of being one, and meeting adopted persons, only a small percentage care about their birth parents, a larger percentage care more about their birth brothers and sisters; the largest percentage care only about their adoptive family."

"For me, it was a painful experience of adoption and to be an 'illegitimate child', 'one born before marriage', etc. All I really wanted to know was 'why I was given away'. I had to wait thirty-two years for an answer that was supplied in thirty minutes; before I could find a way to stabilize. Couldn't I simply have met my biological mother when I first began to wonder and ask questions about this?" (This forty-five year old female adoptee has 'always known' she was adopted and began wondering between the ages of seven and eight years.

"I can naturally only speak for myself in regard to adoption. Perhaps it is because my parents were never secretive about it and the family was never ashamed of the fact. It is not discussed each and every day - but when the subject does come up it is discussed openly. I wish more adoptive parents would inform children from infancy - it is so much better if they grow up with the knowledge, then the shock of hearing it from others will not occur."

"Mine is, I believe, a happy story. I still believe that if a parent loves his or her adopted child, there need be no fears regarding divulging all information concerning biological parents at the right time to the child. Children are simply naturally curious, that's all."

"I always wonder on my late brother's birthday (we were twins) if there are also two people who wonder what happened to us."

"People who adopt a child should be thoroughly briefed about the needs of adopted children, particularly so when the child knows he's adopted. By running down the biological parents, only tragedy results."

"To remain in ignorance concerning the facts of one's origins can easily cause you to become an aggressive and unbalanced person. You are continually busy struggling with your self and this causes poor interpersonal relationships to a considerable degree. Shortly, you are unhappy, and you make everyone around you unhappy."

These last adoptee responses admittedly reflect adult thinking. What is needed is research on the thoughts and concerns about adoption and birth parents during pre-puberty and adolescence. Triseliotis (1973) draws attention to the fact that adopted children do not as a rule fully comprehend the complexity of adoption before adolescence. Nevertheless, the responses concerning birth mother and birth father show a surprising correspondence regardless of when these occurred.

Analysis of the data obtained from these responses further reveal that thoughts about birth parents and speculation about a possible future meeting with one or both birth parent(s) was only very rarely contingent upon the relationship with the adoptive parents during pre-puberty, adolescence or young adulthood.

CHAPTER 7THE SCHOOL EXPERIENCE

Adoptee fears do not arise out of a vacuum. Those that arose from a lack of knowledge about origins in this sample could have been the result of adoptive parent inhibitions or their lack of sufficient background information. Social attitudes to adoption from 1925 until more recently cannot be overlooked either.

I suspected that negative attitudes to adoption would also find expression in the school environment. In the questionnaire an attempt was made to ascertain the extent of this during the adoptee's school attendance. I had been led to believe that negative attitudes would be most readily perceived as being 'treated differently' by some or all of their teachers. The unexpected finding was that it was the negative attitudes of the peer group which most affected adoptees.

The majority of the adoptees in this sample reported not being sure whether some, any, or none of their teachers knew that they were adopted. However, only seven recall negative teacher attitudes and three recall very positive and sympathetic treatment.

One forty-year-old (non-searching) female adoptee said she did not recall being treated differently, but continued:

"If any child was known to be adopted, it was always 'Ag shame', or 'That's why they're naughty/dumb/bad, etc.' If I was naughty I didn't want any pity."

Responses to the questions concerning openness or secrecy regarding adopted status towards the peer group are given overleaf.

TABLE XXII

NUMBER OF SCHOOLMATES WHO KNEW RESPONDENT WAS ADOPTED,
ARRANGED ACCORDING TO LANGUAGE GROUP

LANGUAGE GROUP	PROPORTION KNOWING OF ADOPTED STATUS											
	N	ONE	%	SOME	%	ALL	%	NONE	%	NO RE- SPONSE	%	TOTAL
Afrikaans-speaking	48	5	10,4	28	58,3	7	14,6	7	14,6	1	2,1	100,0
English-speaking	34	1	2,9	23	67,6	4	11,8	5	14,7	1	2,9	99,9
Total	82	6	7,3	51	62,2	11	13,4	12	14,6	2	2,4	99,9

A total of fifty-five adoptees (67%) said they had informed their schoolmates. Three made no response to this question and twenty-four (29%) replied that they had not informed their schoolmates.

It will be recalled that six adoptees were not informed of their adoptive status until after the age of eighteen, although four suspected that it might be so as a result of peer group talk.

To the question whether they had ever wanted to keep their adoptive status secret, the replies were: forty-one (50%), "never"; nineteen (23%), "sometimes"; seven (9%), "often"; and seven (9%), "always". The remainder made no response. These figures are somewhat misleading in the sense that they do not show individual responses. Many of those who stated that they never wished to keep it secret, nevertheless only revealed this to one or a few intimate friends. A few flaunted their adoptive status to gain attention or sympathy, while three who were unhappy at home did so to disassociate themselves from their adoptive families.

Analysis of the responses of those who never wished to keep it a secret are as follows:

Fifteen adoptees replied that it was nothing to be ashamed of.

Eight replied that it was nothing to hide.

Four replied that it did not bother them.

Four replied that they considered themselves no different from others.

Four thought being adopted was something to be proud of.

Two boasted about being adopted to gain attention.

Two boasted about being adopted to disassociate themselves from their adoptive families.

One hoped her peers would talk about it at home in the hope that this might lead to the discovery of her 'real' parents.

One adoptee commented, "Children do mock you, though".

The responses of the thirty-three or forty percent of those who had always, often or sometimes wanted to keep their adoption secret were analysed and coded into eight response categories:

Teasing and taunts about being adopted	9 responses
Fear of being different	8 responses
Fear of rejection by peer group	7 responses
Selective disclosure	6 responses
Difficulty in answering peer group questions	4 responses
Adoptee sensitivity about being adopted	4 responses
Concern for sibling reaction	1 response
Does not know the reason	1 response

Some replies contained more than one category and have been annotated accordingly. Responses and the numbers for each category are summarised overleaf:

	Numbers
Teasing and taunts	
Afraid of nasty things said	5
Afraid of being called ' <u>optel kind</u> '	3
Children tease, and it hurts	1
Fear of difference	
Do not want to be different	5
Do not want to be treated differently	2
Do not want anyone to be sorry for you	1
Fear of rejection	
Afraid friends would reject you if they knew	6
Afraid boyfriends would not like you having no background, or not knowing it	1
Selective disclosure	
Not necessary for everyone to know you are adopted	5
It depended on who knew	1
Difficulty in answering questions	
Difficult to explain why birth parents did not want you	3
Children's questions revive old hurts	1
Sensitivity about status	
Sensitive about being adopted	3
Unsure of own feeling about being adopted	1
Other	
Not sure of sibling reaction if adoption revealed	1
Do not know why	1

In this analysis of adoptee sensitivity or indifference to and peer group knowledge of their adoption status, and of reaction to it, no significant difference was marked for age categories. There was no evidence to show that peer group attitudes to adoption became more accepting over time.

It will be recalled that the greater number of adoptees in this sample fall in the eighteen to twenty-nine year age group. Other researchers have drawn attention to peer group behaviour with regard to adoptees, notably McWhinnie (1967), Ben-Israel (1982) and Kadushin (1983). The latter stated: "There is a peak period around eight or nine when his peers become explicitly aware of and raise questions about adoptive status" (Kadushin, 1983:489). Ben-Israel is of the opinion that it is the child who is himself unhappy in his home situation who is most likely to taunt the adoptee. McWhinnie (1967:240) states: "There was considerable evidence that the comments of other children were cruel and often vindictive...".

The responses of the group who never wished to keep the fact of their adoption secret could also be interpreted as showing a certain measure of bravado, in view of the fact that only four adoptees actually said that their adoptive status was something to be proud of.

On reflection, the significance of this finding in regard to the attitudes of the peer group suggests that it cannot be assumed that they simply reflect those of the adult community. McWhinnie (1967:240) contends that school children are quick to reject those who are perceived as different, saying: "This kind of group behaviour and the exclusion of the one that is in any way different is very common amongst children." My findings support McWhinnie's contention.

Adoption per se, is an abstract concept. It could thus be posited in terms of Piaget's theory of cognitive development, that the average child under the age of twelve would not readily be able to understand how a 'loving mother' could give her baby away to 'another father and mother'. Kornitzer (1971:46) refers to the "... old not-quite-forgotten gibes of childhood, 'Your mother isn't your mother. Your mother gave you away. You haven't got a father.' ...", that add to the difficulties experienced by the adopted adolescent in developing a sense of identity.

Given the poor or inadequate information concerning birth parents, which so often characterised their lives, it would have been difficult for these adopted children to handle peer group taunts or rejection. Similarly, insufficient or inadequate communication between adoptees and their adoptive parents would have exacerbated the distress experienced during childhood as a consequence of peer group teasing and threat of rejection. It could also be assumed that where the adoptive parents were much loved, the adoptee would not disclose information about negative peer group attitudes to adoption, so as to spare the adoptive parents distress. Children are capable of unswerving loyalty to their friends and those whom they love.

I regret not having asked specific questions in this regard. Further research is needed into peer group attitudes to adoption in the school environment. It could be hypothesized that because children spend the greater part of their lives in the company of their peers during the school years, they will be more affected by negative peer group attitudes than by negative adult attitudes to adoption. Conversely, it is their adoptive parents who are most affected by negative attitudes held by fellow adults.

Relationships with cousins in the adoptive family proved to be very similar to those of the adoptee and his peers. Furthermore, the awareness of difference accentuated in the school environment could account for the emphasis given in replies expressing appreciation about relationships with the extended adoptive family of 'not being treated as different' or 'as if they did not belong'.

That the school experience could be painful for the adoptee, is reflected in the responses to the questions relating to problem areas. Fifty-one percent admitted to shyness along a continuum from 'sometimes' to 'extreme'. Forty-six percent admitted to feelings of 'being different'. Thirty-seven percent admitted to difficulties with friendships. Twenty-nine percent experienced learning problems in varying degrees, and twenty-nine percent failed a standard at least once. Two of the latter stated that this was due to illness during that particular year.

It must again be noted that some responses contained more than one category. Thirty-one adoptees described their particular problem during the school years. Fifteen of these disclosed feelings of insecurity, an acute awareness of being different; loneliness and self-pity. Eight resorted to living in a fantasy world or became extremely introvert or extrovert (by their own admission) so as to cope. Two referred to problems with enuresis until ages eleven and fifteen, respectively. Two became rebellious, while two felt that their adoptive parents were disinterested in their school achievements. Other problems referred to include nail biting, friendships with others who had problems, and possessiveness in friendships.

In response to the question, "What were you good at in junior school?", fifty percent gave positive responses, thirty-five percent gave moderate responses, thirteen percent gave negative responses, and two percent made no response.

The parents of those adoptees who experienced problems most often consulted the following:

The school teacher or school principal	48%
Minister of religion	15%
Family doctor	12%
Private psychologist	9%
School psychologist	7%
Social worker	4%
Psychiatrist	2%

Eight adoptive parents were seemingly unaware of any problems and did not consult any of the above for help. Fifteen adoptees reported that they had not felt any better after consultations with the abovementioned, while eight conceded that they had felt better.

Examples of negative responses were:

"No, I did not. I do not believe that anyone who has not personally experienced adoption, in spite of how well qualified he or she may be, can ever understand and relate to the feelings experienced by an adopted child." (Twenty-one year old female adoptee whose parents had taken her to see the family doctor, a private psychologist, and a psychiatrist. She has since 'found' her birth parents and a natal brother, and come to an appreciation of, and love for, her adoptive parents that was difficult before.)

"No. I think I felt more confused because I felt that there must definitely be something wrong with me."

"Not really. After having been tested by the School Psychologist, I knew I had a learning problem and wondered if my real parents had had similar problems."

"I went with my parents to see the Pastor of our church. I didn't feel any better, only more heart-sore."

"Visited the social worker regularly - didn't feel any better for it."

"The year I failed Standard three, my parents took me to a private psychologist in ---, but I didn't feel better. It just made me feel even more unintelligent."

"Saw the school psychologist, but couldn't talk openly so it wasn't a success."

The responses of those adoptees 'who did feel better' after seeing professionals indicate that where the counselling included the adoptees thoughts and feelings about being adopted, this was perceived as 'feeling better' afterwards. Two examples of such responses are:

"Felt better because I knew my class teacher understood."

"Yes, felt better after seeing a pastoral psychologist. Found explanations for some of the things that worried me."

The responses of the remaining six adoptees gave insufficient indication of why they had felt better after seeing any of the professionals consulted.

Social workers now initiate programmes to inform teachers of the factors involved in what Sorosky et al., call "The Adoption Triangle", so that this can be conveyed in the classroom. How effective teaching about adoption in the classroom will be to lessen or prevent peer group negativity, is a question that needs urgent attention and research. It is not only the adopted child who faces such pressure. The child of divorced parents, single parents, and (in the not too distant future) children who were born to surrogate mothers, will also be at risk. It would be all too easy to dismiss peer group rejection in the playground as of no consequence, but until we have clear evidence that the damage done to the child's self-concept will not be long lasting, we ignore the evidence at our peril.

Adoptive parents need to be forewarned of the hurdle their child will have to face in the school environment. Effective and empathetic communication between parents and child can give the child a greater sense of security that could ameliorate the hurts he or she may receive.

CHAPTER 8

IDENTITY PROBLEMS IN ADOLESCENCE FOR ADOPTEES

There are many references to identity problems or conflicts in adoptees during adolescence (Schechter, 1964; Sants, 1965; Kornitzer, 1971 and Sorosky et al., 1975). The latter (1975: 24) came to the conclusion that adoptees are more vulnerable to identity problems because of difficulties they encounter in coping with the "... psychosexual, psychosocial and psycho-historical aspects of personality development". Norvell and Guy (1977) could find no significant difference in the self concept of adopted and non-adopted adolescents in their matched study of thirty-eight adoptees aged eighteen to twenty-five. These adoptees were all university students and do not fall into the age category customarily accepted for adolescence. Triseliotis found in his study (1973:20) that: "... a real grasp of adoption did not, as a rule emerge before puberty and adolescence". His contention is born out by the findings for this sample.

CHANGES IN THE NATURE AND FREQUENCY OF THOUGHTS ABOUT ADOPTION

The adoptees in this sample were asked in the questionnaire whether any change had occurred in either the nature or frequency of their thoughts about adoption in adolescence. Fifty-one percent attested to an increase in frequency and forty-four percent disclosed that their thoughts had changed slightly or completely. Their answers reflect, in decreasing order:-

- | | |
|---|-----|
| 1. Increasing maturity and understanding of circumstances | 44% |
| 2. Concern for and about birth mother and father | 36% |
| 3. Thoughts about information given and need for more | 31% |
| 4. Greater awareness of self as an adoptee | 19% |
| 5. Negative changes in affect and behaviour, including rebelliousness | 11% |

SHARING OF THOUGHTS BY ADOPTEES DURING ADOLESCENCE

The sharing by adolescents of their thoughts with adoptive parents is acknowledged to be problematic for adoptees (McWhinnie, 1967 and 1985; Triseliotis, 1973; Kirk, 1984 and 1985). McWhinnie (1985:4) explains: "It is a question of loyalty to those rearing you - it is an implied criticism of them if you are too interested in your other parents".

In this sample, fifty-three adoptees (64,7%) could confide in someone, twenty-three (28%) could not confide in anyone, while six adoptees (7,3%) were unaware of their status, during adolescence.

Of the fifty-three who could confide in someone, nineteen (35,8%) could confide in their parents, while thirty-four (64,2%) could confide only in others. Thus, only 23,2% could share their thoughts with their adoptive parents during adolescence.

An obvious point needs to be raised here, namely that many adolescents and their parents experience difficulties in personal communication (Gordon, 1970 and 1975). The difference for the adopted is that they cannot readily communicate their thoughts about being adopted to those to whom they are closest (McWhinnie, 1967).

INTEREST IN ADOPTION DURING ADOLESCENCE

Thirty-six adoptees (44%) answered the question on whether their interest in adoption began in adolescence, and indicated in their responses what these interests were. These replies show that locating themselves in genealogical continuity became linked with their quest for 'self identity'.

Sants (1964) first mooted the concept of 'Genealogical bewilderment' referring to children who either have no knowledge of, or only uncertain knowledge of, their birth parents. This, he believed, undermined their security and, consequently, their mental health. Humphrey and Humphrey (1986:137) took a 'fresh look' at this subject and recommended that "Any future discussion of genealogical anxieties in adoptees must take account of at least three separate, though interrelated, factors:

1. information available to the adopters;
2. quality and quantity of information disclosed, and
3. timing of disclosure ...".

Humphrey and Humphrey (1986:139) also contend that "It is primarily where family relationships are disturbed, or in some other way unsatisfactory, that the syndrome of genealogical bewilderment is likely to arise ...".

'Disturbed' family relationships occurred only in a small percentage of families in this sample. This is difficult to prove, but it will be recalled that the majority of adoptees spoke very warmly of their relationships with their adoptive parents and recalled many pleasant childhood experiences.

The possibility of family relationships being unsatisfactory in 'some other way' could well apply, in view of the paucity of background information furnished by the adoptive parents. That this can be stressful for adolescent adoptees is noted, among others, by McWhinnie (1985:5) who remarks: "Where there is uncertainty about origins, then this is a potential time of stress".

Adoptive parents, too, experience periods of self-doubt and uncertainty about their role during their adopted children's adolescence, if not before. Seglow *et al.* (1972:163-164) refer to the problems adoptive parents face because they are "... a minority group ... with little support from others like themselves ... (and) ... that at present systematic and continuous professional support is rarely available to help them face and cope when these difficulties arise". (Refer: The school experience.)

The question of loyalty to, or sensitivity for, adoptive parents' feelings (McWhinnie, 1985) must be considered in view of evidence from this sample that eighty-one percent of Afrikaans-speaking and seventy-four percent of English-speaking adoptees had entertained the possibility during and after reaching adolescence of meeting their birth parent(s) one day.

Insecurity, in terms of Sants's (1964) concept of 'genealogical bewilderment' was explored in this sample, in relation to problems with personal relationships, indecisions about future career, and problems with school-work in adolescence.

POSSIBLE EVIDENCE FOR THE PRESENCE OF GENEALOGICAL BEWILDERMENT

PROBLEMS WITH PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

The problems in interpersonal relationships encountered by these adoptees were in the main those that had to do with school friends and the extended family. Fifteen English-speaking (44%) and seventeen Afrikaans-speaking (35%) adoptees (i.e. a total of 39%) in this sample divulged the existence of interpersonal problems during adolescence.

INDECISION ABOUT FUTURE CAREER

Twenty-four English-speaking (70,6%) adoptees replied that they were undecided about their future career compared with twenty who were Afrikaans-speaking (41,7%). One Afrikaans-speaker remarked that decisions were made for her in this regard. Whilst indecision about future career is not unusual in adolescents, the number of adoptees (39%) who experienced problems in coping with their school-work in senior school, together with the fifty-four percent who experienced indecision about career choices, suggests that problems were experienced in adolescence. However, it cannot simply be assumed that these were solely attributable to their adoptive status, without further evidence.

PROBLEMS WITH SCHOOL-WORK IN SENIOR SCHOOL

Davids (1983:35-36) is of the opinion that: "Adoptive children have been shown to be more at risk for pressures and difficulties in the educational areas ... The failure of adopted children to rise to their parents' and their own educational aspirations has been understood in terms of the adopters' need for gratification through the achievements of their children ... If the injury of infertility has not been worked through to a reasonable degree, the adopters may seek compensation in the achievements of the adoptee ...".

The pre-occupation with adoptive parent infertility as a raison d'être for a variety of problems that arise in adoptive families, and in particular with regard to achievement, is one that has often been mooted in the literature on adoption, without sufficient evidence to support it.

What is more likely is that adoptees themselves are prompted in varying degrees to prove themselves worthy, despite their perceived or experienced role handicaps (Iremonger, 1984; Raynor, 1980).

Sixteen Afrikaans-speaking adoptees (33,3%) reported having problems with school work in adolescence, as did sixteen (47%) who were English-speaking. Without evidence from a matched sample, it is impossible to test the significance of this finding. It must be remembered that problems with school work in adolescence are not the sole province of the adoptee; their non-adopted counterparts also experience them.

These problems for thirty-two adoptees were reported as being:-

Difficulties encountered with certain subjects	11	34%
Problems in concentrating/daydreaming	9	28%
Disinterest in studies	7	22%
Parental pressure or disinterest	3	9%
Problems with school friends	3	9%
Feelings of inferiority	2	6%
Too many outside interests	2	6%
Dislike of a particular teacher	1	3%

Some responses contained more than one category, which is why the percentages add up to more than one hundred. The categories also show that these problems cannot be attributed directly to the adoptive status; they are problems that are experienced by most adolescents in varying degrees.

Notwithstanding the real or imagined difficulties encountered by adolescent adoptees and the general pessimism of Davids (1983) and others, this sample of adoptees compares more than favourably with the national average in South Africa as regards educational qualifications (cf. biographical details, page 52).

The above-average educational level of this sample could possibly be explained in terms of the work of Zur Nieden (1951), who investigated the 'relative contributions of nature versus nurture' in the development of adopted children during a long-range study conducted in Germany. Zur Nieden (1951:93) reported that "... the greater intellectual alertness can be attributed to another factor. Adopting parents often give very special care, time and money for the sake of a child that is so greatly wanted and loved and try in every way to further its education and its intellectual progress".

Grotevant et al. (1977 and 1978) found a striking dissimilarity between the interests of adoptive parents and their genetically unrelated children. In addition, they found no support for the social learning hypothesis when they compared the interests of biologically unrelated adopted siblings in the same family. They did find a significant association between the interests of parents and children in consanguinal families.

This finding is of interest because these researchers wished to establish whether career interests are inheritable or not. The findings also bring into question the emphasis that has been placed on the importance of 'matching'. Matching refers to the practice of placing a baby with adoptive parents whose intellectual, physical and other characteristics most closely resemble those of the birth parents. The reasons advanced for

the importance of matching are that this prevents (in most cases) situations arising where the differences between the child and its adoptive family are such as to cause social comment.

SUICIDE ATTEMPTS IN ADOLESCENCE

Research on suicide attempts among adolescent adoptees are few. Schechter et al. (1964) explored the extent and causes of emotional problems among the adopted. Their study also addressed the extent of suicide attempts among children and adult psychiatric patients. Comparisons were made with non-adopted child and adult psychiatric patient control groups. They report (1964:43), with reference to the children: "No differences were found between the two groups on the suicide symptom, with relatively few patients manifesting this particular symptom ... (while for adult patients) a nonsignificant (X^2 , $P < 0.20$) trend occurred in the adopted psychiatric group".

Statistics are available in most countries for both the rate and ages of children who commit suicide. Such figures are rarely available for failed suicide attempts (Husain and Vandiver, 1984; Ackerman, 1985), nor is there consensus among researchers as to the possible numbers of attempted suicides. Cummins and Allwood (1984) state that attempted suicides amongst adolescents are reported to be some thirty to one hundred times more frequent than successful suicides.

Husain and Vandiver (1984) based their report on a content analysis of 167 cases of attempted and completed suicide taken from research reports presented internationally for the period

1953-1980 on child and adolescent suicide behaviour. They found a significantly higher female suicide rate at adolescence, and list seven underlying reasons for attempted suicide. These are: rejection, loss, separation, depression, illness (physical or mental), hostility directed at the child from significant others (i.e. those in the primary group), and school difficulties.

The categories of rejection (27,5%) and hostility directed at the child (24,6%) contained the highest frequencies. However, depression was found to be the underlying reason almost twice as often for completed suicides. They also found (1984:203) that: "Males experienced loss, separation, and illness (either physical or mental) as more frequent underlying reasons than did females; females experienced depression and hostility directed at the child as more frequent underlying reasons than did males. Males and females split evenly on rejection and school reasons".

Schlebusch (1986) reports on a study of 150 parasuicides aged between ten and nineteen years, conducted in the Department of Psychiatry, Addington Hospital, Durban, during 1983. Of these, 117 were female and 42 male.

The DSM III is an international classification scheme for mental disorders adapted by the American Psychiatric Association (Coleman et al. 1980). Psychiatric disorders based on the DSM III criteria were diagnosed in 54,7 percent of the patients. Of these, adjustment disorders of adolescence were the most prevalent. This was characterised by anxiety or depression, feelings of hopelessness, conduct disturbance or academic problems following previously adequate functioning. The 45,3 percent not attributable to psychiatric disorders grouped under Section V of the DSM III included parent-child problems (29%), academic problems (22%), other specified family problems (19%) or interpersonal problems (12%).

Schlebusch (1986:167) states: "Causation remains complex and multifactorial ... The act of suicide, albeit manipulative at times, becomes a method of solving a problem", but notes a sharp decline in such behaviour after the age of eighteen years, because adolescent suicide attempt, "... is an age-related stress response". Ackerman (1985) supports the contention of Schlebusch (1986) that studies on adolescent suicide and suicide attempts reveal a broad spectrum of causal factors.

Cummins and Allwood (1984) reviewed and analysed the records of fifty-four female and twenty-seven male patients between the ages of ten and fifteen who were referred to the Child, Adolescent and Family Unit of the Department of Psychiatry, Transvaal Memorial Institute for Child Health and Development, Johannesburg, following suicide attempts in the period 1976-1982.

A follow-up study was done on these eighty-one patients. They found that the peak incidence during this period was among thirteen-year-olds for both sexes, with the female/male referral ratio at 2:1. This confirms other findings for adolescent suicide attempts in South Africa (van Zyl, 1986). The figures of Cummins and Allwood (1984) show that suicide threats and attempts represented an average of ten percent of all child and adolescent psychiatric referrals for that period. They report that the major determinants and associated factors in these suicide attempts were found to be: family dysfunction, including divorce, (89%); psychiatric disturbance in the index patient (52%); school problems (37%); family psychiatric illness (32%), and socialization problems (24%). Three adolescents in their study had a history of previous suicide attempts. Of interest is their finding that two of the three had "... a history of sexual abuse and secretiveness concerning their adoption" (Cummins and Allwood, 1984:729).

Wiendieck (1973) proposed that suicide attempts arise out of communication breakdowns with significant others and that, as such, they are appeals for help.

The popular press suggests that suicide behaviour among children and adolescents is on the increase and that this is due to increased stress for this age group in society.

Is the adopted adolescent more prone to stresses that arise out of his or her special status? Were the present sample a random one, this question might have been easier to answer. However, the question in regard to attempted suicide was included in the questionnaire, without any expectation that there would be affirmative answers. That there were such responses at all should give all adoption practitioners and adoptive parents pause for thought.

ATTEMPTED SUICIDE DURING ADOLESCENCE FOR THIS SAMPLE

Fourteen adoptees (17%) in this sample reported suicide attempts during adolescence, of whom four stated that this had occurred more than once. Twelve are female (representing 21% of the total females) and two are male (representing 8% of the total males in the sample). Only one adoptee gave the age when this occurred, while one adoptee, from the larger sample, who has not been included here, said she had often contemplated suicide.

These suicide attempts occurred in the time period covered by Husain and Vandiver (1984); the oldest was born in 1942 and the youngest in 1967. Almost twice as many Afrikaans-speaking adoptees attempted suicide in adolescence than did English-speaking. No reasons can be advanced for this without the opportunity for closer study of the respondents and their adoptive families. It is also not possible to hazard an estimate

as to what proportion this represents of the total adolescent suicide attempts in South Africa, as no data are available (Ackerman, 1985).

Dr Michael Humphrey (of the Department of Psychology at the University of London, and well-known author on the subject of adoption) made the following comment in a personal letter dated 3 October 1986, received during the latter part of my research:

"Your comment on attempted suicide led me to the second edition of Rutter and Hersov's book on Adolescent Psychiatry. I could find no data on the frequency of attempted suicide among teenagers in the general population, but I would agree with you that 13/74 or 17,5% seems to be on the high side."

The material contained in the questionnaire responses of these fourteen adoptees reveals that the reasons for their suicide attempts were indeed 'multi-factorial', with the exception of the one English-speaking male whose only admitted reason was 'depression' during adolescence. Analysis of these reasons will be attempted to show that adoptees do face stresses that are unique to their status.

Husain and Vandiver (1984:161) make only one reference to an adoptee, taken from the 1971 study on adolescent suicide by Finch and Poznanski:

"Helen was a 17-year-old girl when she was first seen by the psychiatrist. The history revealed that she had been adopted at age two by American parents when they were in a foreign country. On the surface it would have appeared that their motives were entirely altruistic. A more thorough evaluation revealed serious, neurotic factors contributing to the adoption. Both parents were extremely

strict and unloving although they considered themselves model parents. They thought they had made a 'great sacrifice to adopt this child from a 'bad background' and give her all their 'love and attention'. Needless to say, the youngster became aware of their basic hostility early and much difficulty developed between her and her parents. By the time she was fifteen, she made a suicide attempt by taking half a bottle of aspirin."

(Finch & Poznanski, 1970)

Analysis of the responses of the fourteen adoptees in this sample have been grouped according to DSM III categories in addition to those that arose as a consequence of their adoptive status. These latter responses have been coded numerically according to the original sequence of questionnaire return, and annotated with a capital letter 'E' or 'A' to signify the language group of each respondent. This has been done to facilitate the grouping of questionnaire response material. For example, the responses of adoptee 'code A19' appear in six of the category indices.

The DSM III grouping can only be taken as an approximation in the absence of diagnosis by a psychologist or psychiatrist. The affective disorders in this group refer to depression whose frequency ranged from 'sometimes' to 'often'. Conduct disorders include truancy, rebelliousness and sexual acting-out behaviour.

TABLE XXIII

DISTRIBUTION OF POSSIBLE PSYCHIATRIC DISORDERS
(DSM III CRITERIA) AMONG THE FOURTEEN ADOPTEES
WHO ATTEMPTED SUICIDE IN ADOLESCENCE

	MALES	FEMALES	TOTAL	%
Adjustment disorders of adolescence	1	10	11	78,6
Affective disorders	2	9	11	78,6
Eating disorder, anorexia nervosa	0	1	1	7,1
Conduct disorder	1	7	8	57,1

TABLE XXIV

CONDITIONS NOT ATTRIBUTABLE TO POSSIBLE MENTAL DISORDERS
IN THE SAMPLE OF ADOLESCENT SUICIDE ATTEMPTS

	MALES	FEMALES	TOTAL	%
Parent-child problems	1	9	10	71,4
Academic problems	1	5	6	43,0
Rejection by one, some or all of the adoptive and extended adoptive family	0	5	5	36,0
Other interpersonal problems	1	7	8	57,1

The category referring to parent-child problems in Table XXIV includes those who were unable to confide their thoughts about being adopted to their adoptive parents or others in the primary group.

TABLE XXV

PROBLEMS SPECIFIC TO THE FOURTEEN ADOPTEES
IN THE SAMPLE WHO ATTEMPTED SUICIDE IN ADOLESCENCE

CATEGORY	CODE NUMBERS	NO.	AS % OF TOTAL
Sensitivity about being adopted and different	A19, A31, A35, A37, A44	10	71
Unable to confide thoughts about adoption	E15, E24, E29, A4, A17, A19, A31, A37, A44	9	64
Inadequate or negative information about origins	E5, E15, E24, E29, A19, A31, A35, A39 A44	9	64
Peer group taunts about being adopted	E5, E15, A4, A19, A37, A44	6	43
Fears concerning birth mother	E15, A19, A31, A37, A39, A44	6	43
Childhood fears arising from adopted status	A4, A17, A27, A31, A35, A44	6	43
Obsessive thoughts about birth mother	E5, A24, A4, A17, A31	5	36
No information about origins	A4, A17, A27, A37	4	29
Late revelation	A4 (age 14), A17 (age 13), A27 (age 11), A37 (age 9)	4	29
Late placement	E29 (3 mths), A4 (3 mths), A44 (9 mths)	3	21
Fears concerning birth father	E15, E24, A19	3	21
Rejection by extended adoptive family	E29, A4	2	14
Perceived rejection by adopted mother	A4, A27	2	14
Childhood experienced as unhappy	A4, A17	2	14

CATEGORY	CODE NUMBERS	NO.	AS % OF TOTAL
Perceived rejection by adopted parents	A17	1	7
Abuse by both adoptive parents	A17	1	7
Emotional abuse by adoptive mother	A4	1	7
Rejection by adoptive grandmother	E15	1	7
Early death of adoptive mother	E5	1	7
Early death of adoptive sibling	A31	1	7

Adoptees with code numbers E24, A4, A17, and A31 made more than one suicide attempt.

Seventy-one percent of those who attempted suicide in adolescence revealed a sensitivity about being adopted and different. Sixty-four percent had inadequate or negative information about origins, while a further twenty-nine percent were given no information about their origins. Sixty-four percent were unable to confide their thoughts about being adopted to significant others. Forty-three percent suffered peer group taunts about being adopted, forty-three percent had fears about their birth mother, and forty-three percent experienced fears arising from their status.

Wiendieck (1973:5) argues for a psychoanalytic interpretation of attempted suicide as a "... strong and desperate appeal to significant-others to re-establish the lost communication channel". Might the suicide attempts of these adolescent adoptees not be seen as a desperate appeal to the birth

mothers whom they perceived as having abandoned them? Alternatively, the appeal could have been directed at the adopted parents in those instances where the relationship was perceived as unsatisfactory by the adoptee. Unsatisfactory relationships may have been due, in part, to inadequate communication between adoptive parent and adoptee. Sixty-four percent of these fourteen adoptees could not discuss their thoughts and fears about being adopted with their adoptive parents.

A low self-esteem during adolescence characterised the majority of the adoptees who attempted suicide. A view of self-as-worthless, despite being loved by the adoptive parents, could have developed as a consequence of their perception of their birth mother's action as abandonment. This reasoning would lead to a double-bind situation for the adoptee which might have taken the following form of mental dialogue:

"If she gave me away - it was because I was worthless."

"If she gave me away - she must be worthless."

"If the one who gave me away is worthless, then, because she is the one who bore me for nine months - my mother, I must be worthless."

The following extract from R.D. Laings' poem, "Knots", illustrates the personal dichotomy in the thoughts of disturbed children,

"My mother does not love me

I feel bad.

I feel bad because she does not love me

I am bad because I feel bad

I feel bad because I am bad

I am bad because she does not love me

She does not love me because I am bad.

(R.D. Laing, 1970:9).

Eleven of the fourteen adoptees who attempted suicide in adolescence furnished their reasons for doing so. The theme of abandonment, rejection and self-as-worthless permeates several of these responses, which are quoted below:

- E5 "Everyone was trying to commit suicide at school. I think it was because my best friend rejected me, when I was fourteen. I took an overdose of pills and had to have a stomach washout."
- E15 "I feel I am no good to anyone. Sometimes I hate my parents and everyone close to me. I didn't achieve anything in life and people look down on me."
- E24 "I don't really know. When things (emotionally) got too much and hurt too much I seemed to break down easily and the only way of putting a stop to the pain was by attempting suicide."
- A4 "I was so terribly unhappy with a mother who continually scolded about nothing important and the loneliness which defeated me."
- A17 "I just couldn't stand it any more. I was always so tired from all the work I had to do and so very unhappy."
- A19 "Because I failed standards."
- A27 "My adoptive mother was very strict with me and we clashed on a number of issues. Often I felt that she didn't love me, but I also know she wasn't someone who could show her feelings."
- A31 "Depression."
- A35 "Depression. Dissatisfaction with friendships. Sexual identity problems."
- A39 "Quarrels with my parents."
- A44 "I felt rejected by my friends and my sister-in-law."

No discussion about suicide would be complete without reference to Emile Durkheim's theory of suicide. Breault (1986) conducted an investigation into suicide in America to test the present-day validity of Durkheim's theory in terms of religious and family integration in which Breault (1986:640)

ADOLESCENT SEXUAL ACTIVITY FOR THIS SAMPLE OF ADOPTEES

Promiscuity did not feature prominently in this sample of adoptees. In reply to the question of whether they had had more sexual partners than other teenagers, forty-three percent replied that they had had no sexual experiences whatsoever, sixteen percent said they did not know, ten percent said that they thought so, and four percent replied, "Definitely not".

PREMARITAL PROCREATION FOR THIS SAMPLE OF ADOPTEES

Four male adoptees responded to the question concerning pre-marital pregnancies. Two married the girl involved and the other two described how they felt:

- (a) "Awful, to this day."
- (b) "My girlfriend phoned me . I went round to see her and when I heard the news I was so happy. Then came the shock of my life. She wanted money for an abortion. She refused my offer of marriage and my request to have the child registered in my name so I could assume parental care. She gave no explanation at all and simply asked me never to see her again. It broke me up."

In response to this question, one adoptee volunteered that he had "Very strong principles about sexual relationships before marriage". Another adoptee commented in response to the same question,

"I have thought that I will never adopt a child. I don't want anyone going through the same identity problem I had. I've never slept with a girl."
(Thirty-year-old male adoptee who is 'searching'.)

Five adoptees had late-teenage pregnancies. Three married the father of the baby before its birth and two had abortions. One adoptee had a baby in young adulthood. Her adoptive parents are helping her raise her illegitimate child.

Three of these female adoptees commented as follows:

"I became pregnant at seventeen and my baby was born three months after my eighteenth birthday, during which time I married the father of my baby. My adoptive mother wanted me to give the baby up for adoption, but knowing I was adopted, I'd made a vow that I would never do that to my child. My husband and I love one another. We've been married for eight years now."

"My mother told me to have an abortion in another country. They were worried about their name and the scandal it would create."

"I was eighteen. The father of the baby arranged for an abortion. Even today, I still haven't got over this. I could only tell my parents about this recently. Eight months after the abortion I married the person concerned but the abortion episode left a sort of mistrust in me. We were later divorced."

DEVIANT BEHAVIOUR IN ADOLESCENCE

Lifton (1979:43) writes: "The adult adoptees we've met so far were not part of a clinical population, but they still described adolescence as an unbearable turmoil of deep depressions, even suicide attempts". This description or generalisation is not applicable to my sample without some qualifications. The term 'depression' as used in relation to adolescent mood swings does not imply that these were the equivalent of a depression that would need medical treatment. Moreover, only twenty-three percent of the adoptees in this sample said that they were 'often depressed' in adolescence. Fifty-one percent said they were only 'sometimes depressed', and twenty-six percent replied that they were 'never depressed' in adolescence. There was also very little evidence of the deviant behaviour that can often mask serious adolescent depression.

Four adoptees ran away from boarding school, four confess to often playing truant, and twenty adoptees sometimes played truant. For fear of receiving evasive or untruthful answers because of the sensitive nature of the question, I simply enquired, "Were you ever in trouble with the authorities?" Four English-speaking adoptees answered in the affirmative, of whom one said, "Only in standard six". Three Afrikaans-speaking adoptees said 'Yes' in reply to this question, one of whom communicated with me and completed his questionnaire whilst serving a prison sentence for committing a "white-collar" crime.

The responses of the adoptees in this sample do not substantiate the belief held by earlier psychologists and some criminologists that adoptees are more at risk for deviant behaviour than non-adopted children and adolescents. Factors other than the adopted state could have caused the truancy and other deviant behaviour reported by the adoptees in this sample.

CHAPTER 9EVIDENCE OF IDENTITY PROBLEMS IN ADULTHOODDEPRESSION

Thirty-two percent of English-speaking and forty percent of Afrikaans-speaking adoptees reported that they were often depressed in adulthood, while a further forty-six percent said they were sometimes depressed in adulthood. These figures must be viewed with caution as what many people term depression is not true depression in the medical sense. However, nine English-speaking and fifteen Afrikaans-speaking adoptees reported having received medical treatment for depression. This amounts to twenty-nine percent.

PSYCHIATRIC ILLNESS

Haslam (1982:23) has claimed that, "... one in six women and one in nine men will enter a psychiatric hospital at some stage of their lives ...".

Seven Afrikaans-speaking (15%) and two English-speaking adoptees (10%) of my sample have been treated for psychiatric illness. Six are female and three are male. The ratio is thus 6:58 for females and 3:24 for males. The ages of these female adoptees range from twenty-two to fifty-three and males from twenty-four to thirty-eight, with the average age for the nine being 32,9 years. Of the nine, one English-speaking female, three Afrikaans-speaking females, and one Afrikaans-speaking male attempted suicide during adolescence.

ALCOHOL RELATED PROBLEMS IN ADULTHOOD

Seven Afrikaans-speaking adoptees reported having had problems related to alcohol in varying degrees. Five of them are male (21% of the males) and two are female (3%).

It would be erroneous to suggest from the preceding analysis that adoptees as a group are more liable to show symptoms of unresolved conflicts in their lives, manifesting as pathology or deviance. In this study, the following profile of the sample shows that adolescent identity problems had, in the main, been resolved in varying degrees of adjustment during adulthood. For many, marriage and becoming a parent, coupled with maturity, brought an acceptance of adoption. Decisions about whether to search for 'the missing ingredient' in their lives, namely, information about their origins, were either arrived at, acted upon, or dismissed as unrealistic and unnecessary.

PERSONALITY AND BEHAVIOUR PROFILE OF THE EIGHTY-TWO ADULT ADOPTEES

This analysis shows in descending order that:

Ninety-eight percent of females in this sample are heterosexual.

Ninety-one percent have never had any problems related to alcohol abuse.

Eighty-nine percent have never had a psychiatric illness.

Eighty-eight percent of the male adoptees are heterosexual.

Eighty-eight percent did not procreate before marriage.

Eighty-three percent did not attempt suicide in adolescence.

Eighty-two percent do not mind being referred to as 'an adopted child'.

Eighty percent have always enjoyed good relations with the opposite sex.

Eighty percent grew up with siblings in the home.

Seventy-four percent were not sexually promiscuous or active in their youth.

Seventy-one percent have never been treated medically for depression.

Seventy percent never had any fears concerning their birth father.

Sixty-five percent never had any fears concerning their birth mother.

Sixty-five percent could confide their thoughts about adoption to someone during adolescence.

Sixty-two percent have never experienced any problems with their sex lives.

Sixty-one percent had no problems with personal relationships during adolescence.

Sixty-one percent had no problems with school work during adolescence.

Sixty percent never felt uncomfortable when asked for their family history by the medical profession.

Sixty percent have never been afraid of falling in love with a blood-related sibling.

ADULT ADOPTEE REACTIONS TO THE 'ADOPTED CHILD' LABEL

Fifteen adoptees (18,3%) in this sample find the appellation distasteful, or worse. They were asked whether they still hear themselves referred to as an 'adopted child' and what their feelings were about this. The following comments are illuminating:

"Insulted."

"It's a bit silly. I don't really understand why people refer to me as such."

"It makes me feel vulnerable and a bit inferior."

"Pity towards the people referring to me as one."

"Yes, it still hurts sometimes, making me angry and depressed."

"Anger. I'm not a child any more."

"It only hurts temporarily, but now I have my own family (husband and children) I am happy."

"Sometimes it makes me feel uncomfortable. It can get worse, particularly when we have to move in certain social circles."

"I feel bad. My sister-in-law said I wasn't a very nice person because I am an 'optelkind'."

"It makes me react! My ex-wife refers to me as an 'optelkind' and that I don't even know where I come from. She's now influencing my five-year-old daughter."

"Yes, I feel very hurt."

"It hurts me and makes me unhappy. I feel as if I stand completely alone."

Seventeen adoptees (20,8%) reported that it did not bother them at all to be referred to as an 'adopted child'.

"It doesn't worry me at all. I call myself that at times, too."

"It no longer hurts as much, rather I have now in a measure proved myself and have shaken off the label."

"I'm proud of being adopted and when people see this they accept you. It all depends on your own attitude."

"Old family friends will say things like, 'Oh! Are you the adopted daughter?' It doesn't really bother me. It is a fact. It simply amuses me at times. It seems to me that people expect us adoptees to look different."

"It doesn't really bother me. Some of my friends and in-laws know I'm adopted but we never discuss it."

These responses reveal a certain sensitivity with regard to their adopted status among thirty-nine percent of this sample. Kirk (1981:120) writing from Canada, says: "It is this issue

of labelling the adopted as 'adopted children' which has, I suspect, contributed to their role handicap as adults. The institution of adoptive kinship has never clarified at which point in life an 'adopted child' becomes legally an adult who also happens to be somebody's child by adoption."

It is suggested that the term 'adopted child' should be discarded in favour of the term 'adoptee'.

FEELINGS OF INDEBTEDNESS TOWARDS THE ADOPTIVE PARENTS

Feelings of indebtedness are sometimes attributed to the adoptee/adoptive parent relationship in contrast to the 'taken-for-granted' attitudes of children in consanguinal families. Lifton (1979) draws attention to the feelings of indebtedness that adoptive children have towards their adoptive parents which causes feelings of guilt because of 'owing them' and the consequent anger that this provokes in the adoptee.

Fifty percent of adoptees in this sample said 'yes' to the question regarding 'indebtedness'. There is, however, a striking but unexplained difference between the two language groups. Twenty-six of the thirty-four English-speaking adoptees (76,5%) felt indebted. Of these nine often felt guilty, five sometimes felt guilty and seven never felt guilty about 'owing them'. Three often felt angry and six sometimes felt angry and resentful as a result. Fifteen of the forty-eight Afrikaans-speaking adoptees (31%) felt indebted, of whom ten often felt guilty and five sometimes felt guilty about 'owing them' as a consequence. Three often felt angry while only two sometimes felt this way. These findings pose questions for which there are no ready answers. It seems that cultural factors do play a part in perceptions of family life, which would include the family by adoption.

PROBLEMS RELATED TO SEXUAL ASPECTS AMONG ADULT ADOPEES

FEAR OF FALLING IN LOVE WITH A BLOOD-RELATED SIBLING

Adoptee fears of falling in love with a blood-related sibling are often very real where knowledge of origins remains incomplete.

Twenty-four Afrikaans-speaking adoptees (50%) admitted to having such fears at one or other time in their lives. One replied, "only sometimes", and another who has found birth mother and siblings answers, "not any longer". Only nine English-speaking adoptees (26,5%) feared this possibility.

PROBLEMS IN RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE OPPOSITE SEX

Ten Afrikaans-speaking adoptees admitted to having trouble making and keeping friends of the opposite sex, of whom seven number amongst those who are afraid of falling in love with a blood-related sibling.

Six English-speaking adoptees have trouble making and keeping friends of the opposite sex, of whom four have been, or are, afraid of falling in love with a blood-related sibling.

INSECURITY IN DATING RELATIONSHIPS

Insecurity in dating relationships appears to have been a feature in the lives of nearly sixty percent of these adoptees. In response to the question, "Were you ever afraid your boyfriend/girlfriend would abandon you?", thirty-four Afrikaans-speaking (71%) replied, "yes", as did fifteen (44%) of the English-speaking adoptees.

Lifton (1979) drew attention to the fact that adoptees are particularly susceptible to feelings of insecurity in their dating relationships and that the old 'spectre of abandonment' is never far from the surface. I am not in a position to explain why there should be differences between the two language groups in my sample in this regard.

HOMOSEXUALITY AND LESBIANISM

Three male adoptees revealed that they were or are homosexual of whom one is sure that this has nothing to do with being adopted. The second replied:

"My upbringing may have kept me from heterosexual company. Girlfriends were taboo at home and I felt guilty about friendships with women. Male friends were always welcome and taken out with the family. My sister's friends were likewise fêted and I never interfered with her friends nor she with mine."

The third responded as follows:

"Don't know. Was on the gay scene for five years. Because I'm adopted I always searched for something. What the something was I didn't know myself. Because of feeling 'different', I tried out different things like homosexuality, drugs, the wrong friends, etc."

Another wrote:

"Where sexual identity is concerned, I did go through a stage lasting till about age 25, when I thought I might be gay, or at least have gay tendencies. I realize now that I am certainly not gay, and am very definitely hetero, but I still do have a great deal of sympathy for gays, and have some gay friends. I don't know if the fact of my adoption had anything to do with this temporary sexual identity crisis, but it could have been a factor."

Of the two female adoptees who are lesbian, one replied that she did not know whether this had anything to do with her being adopted. The other said,

"I am a lesbian (something I cannot fully accept). I believe it is genetically inheritable because I very definitely wasn't raised that way."

These adoptees could be using their status as a scapegoat. Lifton (1979) contends that a great many adoptees are drawn to homosexuality or lesbianism as a result of their subconscious insecurity and fear of committing incest.

SEX-LIFE DIFFICULTIES

Nine adoptees (or nearly 11%), experienced difficulties in their sex lives, and twenty-two (or nearly 27%), sometimes did so. The majority of these are women who confessed to being conservative in regard to their approach to sex, for fear of being thought wanton or promiscuous like their birth mothers.

One married female adoptee volunteered the following explanation:

"My (birth) mother herself was the child of 'another man'. She became pregnant with me when she was only sixteen. I was so convinced that I'd follow the same path and fought so against this, that after my marriage (according to our family doctor) I still subconsciously held back from pleasure in our sex lives. My poor husband got a very tense and frigid bride."

ADOPTION AND ATTITUDES TO MARRIAGE

Two adoptees admit that being adopted may have something to do with their still being unmarried. Only one gave reasons for this, saying:

"To a certain extent it does have something to do with being adopted. Divorce is so easy today and you can never be certain that your husband won't just up and leave you. One thinks of this."

Another adoptee who is divorced feels that being adopted did have an influence here. However, in this case it was less a matter of adoption per se than other factors in his adoptive family life. He was adopted twice and conditions in his adoptive families were not conducive to the promotion of feelings of either being loved or of security.

ADOPTEE RESPONSES REGARDING IGNORANCE OF THEIR MEDICAL HISTORY

Thirty-three adoptees (40%) in this sample acknowledged that they felt uncomfortable when asked for their family history by a doctor. Of these, six were male. They confess that they have never told a doctor that they are adopted for fear of being 'different' or because they cannot easily talk about being adopted to a stranger, or are ashamed to reveal ignorance of their family medical history. This appears to have been so for adoptees in other countries as well. McWhinnie (1967:60) says in her study which involved general practitioners as a means of gaining access to adult adoptees, that several general practitioners "... came across adopted adults in their practise whom they had not known to be adopted".

Adoptive parents also face problems when incomplete, inadequate, or no medical and genetic history is given them by adoption practitioners. One adoptee's answer illustrates this:

"I had to have a stomach ulcer operation when I was eight, and all the doctors asked whether this was hereditary and of course we didn't know."

Some responses to this question introduced a note of unconscious humour:

"Because you don't know the answers to his questions, you're looked at as though you're crazy until you explain."

"Stupefaction evident in his expression."

"I have felt uncomfortable on behalf of the medical profession. I've felt sorry for them because their manner is almost apologetic when I've told them I'm adopted."

Others were more poignant.

"On two occasions I had to say whether there were any hereditary diseases in my family and what illnesses my parents have had and I couldn't say."

"I can't give him my family history. My adoptive parents' history would not help my medical problems."

"You experience worry more than anything else. It opens another door as to why you must find your birthparents in case one day you did require this information."

CONCERNS ABOUT THE HEREDITARY AND GENETIC ASPECTS OF ILLNESS AND BIRTH DEFECTS

In this section on the 'adult experience' of being an adopted person, the question was posed as to whether respondents had ever been concerned about the hereditary and genetic aspects of illness and birth defects.

Twenty-one English-speaking adoptees (62%) and twenty-four Afrikaans-speaking (50%) answered in the affirmative. One of them replied: "Only recently", and one added the qualifier, "Only sometimes" to her response. One adoptee added, "Especially mental illness" to her reply, without explaining further. Just over half the adoptees (55%) in this sample were concerned about this aspect of their lives arising from a lack of adequate knowledge about their birth family medical history.

From the evidence shown by this group, marriage sometimes allayed these fears but was not always instrumental in removing them. Fifty-three adoptees in this sample are married or were married. Seven of the twenty-three English-speaking adoptees (30%) who are married or were married, report that their fears grew stronger after they were married. The two adoptees who are divorced and the adoptee who is separated are among this group.

There is almost no difference in the response percentage of 31,5 for the Afrikaans-speaking married or ever-married group which numbers thirty-eight of the total. However, only one of the three divorced persons in this group answered in the affirmative.

Marriage is linked with procreation in all cultures, but while procreation, of itself, is in all or most instances a figurative 'leap into the unknown' - for adoptees this 'leap' becomes very much a literal one. Fear of what may happen takes the form of feelings of disquiet and anxiety, particularly when the first child is expected. Evidence of concerns about the 'unknown past' and 'unknown future' are reported in the literature on adoption dealing with 'those who search', and 'why'.

Sherry Sleightholm in Redmond and Sleightholm (1982), Canadian author and adoptee, who was successful in tracing her birth mother in adulthood, describes these concerns:

"I remember the confirmation of my first pregnancy, about to launch the most gratifying period of my life, yet gradually becoming steeped in apprehension.

I remember my gynaecologist, a widely respected practitioner and a pioneer in his field, shaking his head and scratching out the section on family medical history when I mumbled the word 'adopted'. He leaned back in his chair asking whether there was anything I would like to discuss, a statement

that customarily signalled the end of the consultation. Perhaps it was my unaggressive nature, my lack of persistence that prompted him to pass over my question on heredity. Perhaps it was not he who failed me, but I who failed myself.

And so, as my term progressed, I internalized my anxieties about the hereditary illnesses that might affect my unborn child."

(Redmond and Sleightholm, 1982:xi).

GENETIC DISORDERS AND ADOPTION

One aspect of adoption which has received relatively little attention in the past is that of the importance of genetic disorders. The January 1971 issue of Child Welfare, however, made the following pronouncement in connection with an article in the issue:-

"Because of the dearth of published information on genetics as related to adoption, CHILD WELFARE is making one of its rare exceptions on length of manuscripts in order to place this full statement on its pages ...".

The statement in question referred to an article on "Medical Genetics and Adoption" by Schultz and Motulsky (1971:4).

Information about genetically determined disorders and diseases in South Africa is accumulating, as is the understanding of their medical implications. Some of this interest was prompted by the fact that South African Whites (4,5 million) have the highest death rate for coronary heart disease in the Western world. A contributory factor is thought to be the high prevalence of familial hypercholesterolaemia (Seftel et al., 1980).

The Afrikaner population, estimated to be about fifty-seven percent of the Whites, represent a culturally and biologically distinct group which is particularly at risk for genetic disorders. The present population derives from settlers from Western Europe dating back over a period of 330 years. Theal (1922) is quoted in Botha and Beighton (1983:609) as saying that up to 1795 church registers contained the names of 1 526 male immigrants with children, and added "... these men are the ancestors of nearly all present-day Afrikaans-speaking Whites in South Africa".

Afrikaner homogeneity was and is maintained principally by the ties of race, religion and language. Botha and Beighton (1983:609) explain, "The Afrikaners form a biologically distinct group as a result of past breeding patterns and may therefore be regarded as a 'population' because of their unique genetic constitution." The incidence of certain genetic disorders is uncommonly high among them. Geneticists have been able to estimate the prevalence and trace the founder families for a number of these disorders.

Botha and Beighton (1983:610) give a list of fourteen of the genetic disorders most commonly found in the Afrikaner population. They are: familial hypercholesterolaemia; progressive familial heart block; Huntington's chorea; porphyria variegata; Gaucher's disease; cystic fibrosis; familial colonic polyposis; sclerosteosis; spondylo-epimetaphyseal dysplasia with joint laxity; lipid proteinosis; keratolytic winter erythema; abnormal haemoglobins; glucose-6-phosphate dehydrogenase deficiency and hereditary sperocytosis. Of these, sclerosteosis is found among twenty-eight families, Huntington's chorea among fifty families, and familial hypercholesterolaemia (among others) in twenty families that had an association with the Reformed Church. Botha and Beighton (1983:610) state: "The Reformed Church has formed a religious isolate within South Africa over a large part of its history".

It is estimated that 1:75 Afrikaans-speaking persons have familial hypercholesterolaemia; of the thirty-four patients with this condition seen at a Johannesburg clinic between 1972 and 1979, two were Afrikaans-speaking adoptees (Seftel et al., 1980).

Dean (1971:125) discussed the history, incidence and type of porphyria which has an unusually high incidence in this country. He said:

"I estimate the overall incidence of porphyria variegata in South Africa to be 3 in 1,000 of the white population; a very high incidence for a dominant gene."

His estimate of the incidence of porphyria variegata among the Afrikaans-speaking population of the Eastern Cape is considerably higher at 1:250 of the population.

A young Afrikaans-speaking woman volunteered the information that it was only discovered that she has this disorder after several problems occurred during her pregnancies. Advised by her medical practitioner to obtain a complete genealogical history, she approached her father and learned for the first time that her mother was an adoptee. He explained that it was something her mother was sensitive about and did not like discussed.

Many of the above-mentioned conditions occur among the general population, with the exception of Gaucher's disease, which is found predominantly among Ashkenazi Jews. The non-neuropathic form of this disease occurs with higher frequency among Afrikaners than any other group in the world (Goldblatt and Beighton, 1979). Gaucher's disease, in its non-neuropathic form, is also found among the Coloured population. All the

Coloured children in a study reported by Swart et al. (1987), had surnames denoting Dutch ancestry. The authors suggest the likelihood of the same genetic factor here as is found among Afrikaners.

Other genetic disorders occurring among the general population of the Republic of South Africa include: the Aarskrog syndrome; the Bernard-Soulier syndrome; congenital anomaly; the Ehlers-Danlos syndrome; epidermolysis bullosa; the Holt-Oram syndrome; myotonic dystrophy; pseudoxanthoma elasticum; retinitis pigmentosa; and the Waardenburg syndrome;

Rabson (1986) suggests a genetic link in the causation of auto-immune diseases. Several adoptive parents have commented on problems encountered with unsuspected allergies in the children they have adopted.

Geneticists strongly recommend that at-risk persons obtain genetic counselling before starting a family. Special clinics are held at most of the larger hospitals or at blood transfusion service centres. It is in this respect that adult adoptees, in particular those among the Afrikaans-speaking community, are most at risk by not knowing their genealogical history.

On the basis of sound medical reasoning it can be recommended that a complete family history, drawn up by a medical practitioner, should accompany every infant or child to its adoptive home. This would provide valuable guidance for the adoptive parents and, in the event of any future illness or condition requiring medical attention, simplify the task of the medical practitioners involved.

One final comment in regard to family medical histories of adoptees has to do with those who give birth to a child who is born with, or later develops, one or other defect. This is particularly painful for the adoptee who can offer no explanation or defence in the event of being blamed by spouse or in-laws for being the carrier of a 'defective gene'.

ADOPTIVE PARENT RESPONSES TO ADOPTEES' NEED FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT ORIGINS

Adoptive parents face difficulties that are unique to their situation. The child, whom they consider and have made, their own, will one day confront them with a desire to know more about his or her other 'hidden' or figuratively 'buried' parent(s) (Humphrey and Humphrey, 1986). They have been ill-prepared to cope in the past. The injunction to make the child 'their own' has in most instances been taken literally - from a denial that the child 'was not their own', to other strategies ranging from delay in revelation of adoptive status or once-only explanations, to an escape from the problem through distortion of the truth. It is in this light that the following adoptive parent reactions must be interpreted.

Approximately half the adoptees in this sample approached one or other adoptive parent with their need to know more about or trace birth parent(s).

To what extent traditional role expectations involving emotional matters influenced parent-approach choices is not known and can only be speculated about, given the tendency of female adoptees in this sample to disclose 'a closer feeling towards their adoptive fathers'.

A total of forty adoptees (49%) discussed their need to know more about or trace birth parent(s) with their adoptive mother. Of these, twenty-four were able to include their adoptive father in these discussions or, more rarely, approach him initially, while sixteen could do neither.

The responses of those adoptive parents who were supportive when approached, were largely similar. More adoptive fathers (35%) than adoptive mothers (25%) reacted with anger and feelings of being threatened, together with varying responses along the continuum of acceptance/rejection. Adoptive mother and father responses are shown separately along this continuum, and not in rank order.

ADOPTIVE MOTHER RESPONSES - N = 40

1. Completely open, supportive and accepting.	14	35%
2. Sympathetic.	1	
3. Calm and factual.	1	
4. Tense, but accommodating.	1	
5. Patient, but somewhat upset.	2	
6. A little jealous, not loving.	1	
7. Afraid of rejection.	1	
8. No comments or reaction.	1	
9. Somewhat threatened and hurt.	10	25%
10. Became rude and dismissive.	2	
11. Over-reaction/hysteria.	2	
12. Denial of any knowledge whatsoever.	2	
13. Denial of adoptive status, despite evidence.	2	

ADOPTIVE FATHER RESPONSES - N = 24

1. Completely open, supportive and accepting.	7	35%
2. Hurt, but understanding.	5	
3. Noncommittal.	4	
4. Wished to be uninvolved.	1	
5. Felt very threatened.	2)
6. Was very angry as well as felt threatened.	5) 35%

A total of twelve adoptive parents were able to furnish more details and fifteen offered to help trace birth parents or birth family one day. Six adoptive parents stipulated that this matter should wait until the adoptee reached the age of eighteen, seven stipulated the age of twenty-one, and three wished them to be older than that before any action was taken.

The adoptees whose parents were completely open, supportive and accepting, reacted with relief and gratitude.

"I was emotionally overcome and realized again how wonderful my parents were. I then wondered what I'd done to deserve these wonderful parents."

"I developed a greater respect for them."

"Realized when I had my own children especially that they had been incredibly understanding."

"I became much closer to both of them."

And, where reactions were somewhat less accommodating:

"Relieved! It was a very difficult request to make and I was afraid it would be refused."

"It was as if they were acting and it was not true."

Where adoptive parents were not sympathetic and understanding, adoptees reacted with withdrawal, shock, hurt or anger and, in some instances, with rebellion

"Nothing, I just knew not to ever mention it again."

"Angry, hurt and frustrated!"

"I felt even more angry and alone, and got the idea that no-one wanted to understand me or help me. I longed even more for my real mother which aggravated my isolation."

"At the age of seventeen, confused and angry. My interest in my studies deteriorated so much that when at university, I had to repeat my second year. My religious life suffered too. I was just angry with life."

"I didn't talk about it any more."

"Rebellious."

"Shocked."

* * *

In the absence of a matched sample of non-adopted adults for comparison, it is impossible to draw any conclusions in regard to the presence of pathology in adulthood for this sample. It would appear that this is not higher than average and possibly lower than average for psychiatric illness and alcoholism or alcohol-related problems.

Problems that are singular to the adopted are the 'adopted child' label; feelings of indebtedness to adoptive parents; concerns about ignorance of medical and genetic history, and the need to know more about origins. The responses of the adoptees in this sample clearly show that these latter concerns were present in varying degrees.

To what extent insecurity in dating relationships occurs in the lives of adoptees is impossible to speculate upon without further research into this aspect of adoption. Might this insecurity not also be a feature in the lives of the children of some divorced or single parents, in view of the fact that their circumstances might also be interpreted as a 'figurative abandonment' by one or other parent? We also need to know whether the insecurity is carried through into the marital relationship and what effect this has on the marriage.

Further research is necessary to investigate to what extent meeting with the 'lost parent' and hearing explanations for that parent's early behaviour, ameliorates, or removes the insecurity.

CHAPTER 10ADULTHOOD AND SEARCHINGTHE ADULT ADOPTEE AS PARENT

Forty-nine adoptees in this sample (married, previously-married or single) have children who were born to them. Thirty (58,8%) of these said that the prospect of becoming a parent for the first time increased their curiosity about birth parents. Twenty-five (49%) also said the knowledge that they were about to become parents for the first time made them feel closer to their birth parents. Toynebee (1985:196) pinpoints some of the factors involved which might account for this:

"We all regard emotional and social background as vital to the development of human personality. We do not know how much genetic factors influence us, or what the balance is between nature or nurture. But I am now quite certain that the idea of the importance of blood ties and genes is common to most people, and they feel profoundly de-racinated if brought up with no knowledge of their blood origins."

Getting married and having children of their own very often seems to fill the void in adoptees' lives. Giving birth to a baby or the experience of becoming a parent gives many adoptees the certain knowledge of a blood-relation for the first time in their lives. It satisfies a deep yearning in many 'to belong to someone'.

One respondent said:

"I think that searching for birth parents can cause a lot of upset when basically it is only curiosity. I feel that my own children satisfy my need for love and belonging and I'll let the past rest. I must add that holding my very own little baby of my very own flesh and blood was the most wonderful feeling in the world and I and my daughters are very close and we are a very happy family unit."

Seven of the eleven English-speaking adoptees, who had more than one child, said that their concerns about being adopted decreased as a consequence of family increase, of having more than one child. Among the Afrikaans-speaking groups, only seven of the nineteen respondents with more than one child reported a decrease in their concerns, while the remaining adoptee replied that her concerns remained the same, i.e. something which troubled her. The difference between the two language groups again reflects the strong group solidarity and need to feel part of that culture. It seems that clan affiliation continues to play a role in Afrikaner culture and emphasis is still placed on descent and on blood ties between families.

THE ADOPTEE'S NEED TO KNOW MORE ABOUT ORIGINS : THE SEARCH

Researchers are divided on the question of who among the adopted search for birth parent(s) and also why they search. Triseliotis (1973) found a difference between those who merely wanted background information and those who wanted to meet birth parents. In his study, a positive self-image of themselves and their adoptive parents more often distinguished those who only wanted background information from those who wanted to trace their birth parent(s).

The study of Sorosky, Baran and Pannor (1975) showed that adoptee/adoptive parent relationships were unrelated to decisions to search. They, together with Picton (1982) and Depp (1982), found that decisions to search for birth parent(s) were an important component of the adoptee's quest for identity.

Aumend and Barret (1985:258) found significant differences between the seventy-one 'searching' and forty-nine 'non-searching' adoptees in their study. They contend as a result that "... research on and experience with non-searching adult adoptees, should not be generalized to searchers", and vice versa. They found non-searchers to have more positive self-concepts; more positive attitudes towards adoptive parents; more happier childhoods; tended to be placed and to learn about their adoptive status at an earlier age; were less concerned about background and knew less about their biological parents than searching adoptees. The results from my study provide no conclusive evidence on this matter, but suggest that the results were closer to those of Sorosky et al. (1975, 1978), Picton (1982) and Depp (1982).

South African adult adoptees now have the legal right to gain access to their adoption records and should they wish to trace birth parents, they may do so. In most states in America, Canada and Australia, adult adoptees do not have the legal right of access to adoption records. The question posed is whether it is the adoptive parents, or the birth parents, who are being protected at the expense of the well-being of those adoptees who choose to search (Broadhurst and Schwartz, 1979; Watson, 1979; Foster, 1979; and Small, 1979).

In my sample, fifty-six adoptees (68%) reported that they had found their curiosity about their birth parents increasing rather than decreasing as they grew older.

In reply to the question of when they had begun to think about the possibility of tracing their birth parents, forty Afrikaans-speaking (83%) and twenty-eight English-speaking (82%) adoptees responded.

Of the eight Afrikaans-speaking adoptees who replied that they were not searching, two have found blood-siblings, one is the adoptive mother of two small children, and two are very curious. Of the remaining three, the first commented on the close relationship between herself and her adoptive mother, but added that were her birth mother to trace her, she would not be rejecting. The second has very decided views on 'adoptees who search for birth parents':

"I think any adopted child who searches for his or her biological parents is ungrateful. He or she could have landed up in an orphanage instead of being adopted by loving parents."

The third adoptee wrote a long letter giving additional information. Despite problems in the adoptive home during her adolescence which led her to develop an obsession about tracing her birth parents, marriage, motherhood and maturity have given her an insight into and understanding of her circumstances. She is still curious, but not sufficiently so to send her off on what she terms 'a wild goose chase', explaining:

"If I were to go in search of them and found them in financial difficulties, or ill, or lonely, it would be extremely difficult to brush them aside as no problem of mine. And that could lead to relationship problems with my beloved mom and be the cause of troubles for my husband and child. After all, they are my first priority. I don't believe my mom has ever thought of me as someone else's child and we couldn't love one another more were we to be bound by ties of blood.

If it were possible, I would just like to let my birth mother know how grateful I am that she was able to make this tremendous decision for my sake, and reassure her that I think of her with compassion every year on my birthday. I also know that when we are all together on the other side of the grave, I will know her. Perhaps it is this knowledge that gives me a sense of resignation and peace."

Of the six English-speaking adoptees who are not currently searching or never contemplated doing so, one adoptee, who has an illegitimate child, says she has no interest in or curiosity about her birth parents. One is very curious, but not to the extent of prompting a decision to search; one was sufficiently informed by his adoptive parents to satisfy his curiosity; one adoptee was adopted intra-familially, and the relationship with her birth father and the extended family is close. One adoptee was told 'nothing' about either birth parent and is completely incurious. The remaining adoptee, while herself incurious, is being urged by her spouse to trace birth parents at the behest of her mother-in-law.

Sorosky *et al.* (1975:24) are of the opinion that certain 'events' can and do trigger off the decision to search, as a consequence of a "... greater sense of genealogical bewilderment". They list marriage, the birth of the first child and the death of adoptive parents in this regard. The time when thoughts about tracing birth parents emerged in my sample shows both age and event differences. Young adulthood was the time when this decision was most often taken.

Between age 15 and 19	13 responses
Between age 20 and 29	21 responses
Between age 30 and 39	3 responses
Between age 40 and 49	1 response
Age 50+	1 response

Some adoptees made the decision to trace birth parents on gaining independence. For others, the death of one or both adoptive parents was the catalyst, while for most it was marriage and subsequent pregnancies or the birth of the first child. The following responses indicate specific trigger events in the lives of those adoptees who responded to this question.

After leaving home for the first time	3 responses
After starting work for the first time	4 responses
After marriage	9 responses
During the first pregnancy	2 responses
After the birth of the first child	6 responses
After the birth of the third child	1 response
After difficult pregnancies/hereditary problems	1 response

REASONS GIVEN BY ADOPTEES FOR THE DECISION TO TRACE BIRTH PARENTS

It will be recalled that altogether sixty-eight adoptees in this sample have 'found' birth parent(s), siblings, ascertained the truth about their parentage, or are still 'searching'. Some gave no reasons why they decided to search.

Analysis of the remaining responses show a total of fifteen response categories. The most important reasons given were the need to discover origins or to put an end to 'genealogical bewilderment', the death of one or both adoptive parents and the need to know who their birth parents were and why they had been given up for adoption.

TABLE XXVI

REASONS GIVEN BY ADOPTEES FOR THEIR DECISION TO TRACE BIRTH PARENTS, PRESENTED IN RANK ORDER WITH NUMBERS FOR EACH CATEGORY

CATEGORY	REASONS	NUMBERS
1	Need to discover origins	12
2	Need to know birth parent's identity and reasons why	8
3	Need to replace parent figure after death of one or both adoptive parents	8

CATEGORY	REASONS	NUMBERS
4	Birth parents might die before contact can be made	5
5	Desire to share birth experience and children	4
6	Media publicity about adoption	4
7	Adoptive family discord	4
8	Maturity and ability to handle unpalatable facts	3
9	Simple curiosity	2
10	Discovered adoptive parent's revelation as untrue	2
11	No specific reason	2
12	The laws of inheritance and the adoptee	1
13	Psychological need for birth mother	1

WHAT ADOPTEES SAID ABOUT THEIR NEED TO FIND ORIGINS

"The constant pull to find my roots and birth rights. I only discovered that adoptees have no birth rights."

"I wanted to get to know them and rest my mind that I'd met them without my adoptive parents being hurt or know how I felt."

"I wanted to know 'who' I am and where I come from etc."

"Because it was always being said that I don't know who I am or where I come from."

"Feelings of loneliness - perhaps because of the unknown. You're no longer in a protective cocoon. You have to stand on your own feet from now on."

"I said I wouldn't have children before I was twenty-five years old and had found my own mother. I will turn twenty-five this year."

"It is just taken for granted that everyone would want to know who or what his parents are."

"This is a lifetime dream I definitely wanted to fulfil."

"I want to know where I come from and who I am."

"I can't really say why. It is simply something inside me that causes the urge to trace my birth parents to grow stronger."

"I wanted to know their histories before I got married. I wanted to know who I really am. It was as if I had no identity."

The question of identity is ineradicably bound to the background knowledge of one's family that every child absorbs on a daily basis. This knowledge is out of reach for the adopted for not even the most carefully tailored story told them by their adoptive parents can in reality totally fill the gaps in their storehouse of biographical information.

During the visit of the extended adoptive family, a discussion about 'who took after whom' caused one young adoptee of my acquaintance to remark plaintively, "You are all so lucky. You know who it is you take after. I don't know who any of my blood-relations are".

Sleightholm (in Redmond and Sleightholm, 1982:xiii) explains that the adoptee's need to search for origins is more than mere curiosity or the search for a substitute mother or father:

"It's an instinctive reaction and an overwhelming need. It's a step towards erasing those restless nights and hours spent in solitude trying to understand why that faceless parent who haunts your past chose to hand her child over to strangers.

It is often difficult to explain these feelings to people untouched by adoption. Aside from the drive to provide a sense of continuity between the past and the present, the search answers the fundamental dilemma of a mother's identity. She was responsible for your existence, and her biological realities are yours. Without that basic premise on which to build the future, some adoptees may have to contend with an identity crisis."

The need to know more about their origins and who they 'really are', is something that can become an obsession for some adoptees. For others, it can become a nagging awareness that they fit into the daily routine of their lives (Fisher, 1973; Howard, 1975; Ehrlich, 1977; Lifton, 1979; Redmond and Sleightholm, 1982; Toynbee, 1985; and Leitch, 1986).

Picton (1982:50), in his Australian study of forty-eight 'searching' adoptees, states that it would be wrong to infer that adoptees who search are motivated to do so because they are unhappy, unstable or from unsatisfactory adoptive homes. "The search for origins is much more complex than a simple search for an idealized 'happy reunion' with a 'lost parent ..." Picton discovered that the search for personal identity, together with a belief that this was a moral right, a normal thing to do, were the most important reasons given by adoptees for their search. Less evident were motives arising from pure curiosity; a wish to meet birth parents; or 'other' multiple reasons that had to do with medical matters, ethnicity, etc. The results of this study correspond with his findings.

DEATH OF ONE OR BOTH ADOPTIVE PARENTS

It is reasonable to suppose that because adoptive parents are on average older than their non-adopting counterparts, they will die earlier. Where this occurs, adoptees feel free to act on their need to search inasmuch as this action can no longer hurt the adoptive parents. The adoptive parent's death also leaves a void which adoptees need to fill. The following examples illustrate this.

"My original birth certificate was found among my Dad's files. I felt it could no longer hurt them by going to my place of birth."

"The reason was that both my adoptive parents were deceased and this couldn't hurt them and also because I hoped that my own mother and I could find each other, even only as friends."

"My baby daughter has no grandparents still living and I feel she will not have the experience of grandparent love. Every child would like to have a granny and grandpa."

"My adoptive parents are both deceased and I wanted parents again. I have no brothers or sisters - if I could put it like this - I wanted to belong to someone again whom I could love and trust, i.e. other than my husband and my children."

"I just felt lonely. I felt I must have a mother. My adoptive mother and mother-in-law are both dead now and I feel the love of my biological mother within me and it is now an obsession to trace her."

AWARENESS THAT BIRTH PARENTS MIGHT DIE BEFORE MEETING

Where one of the adoptive parents died relatively early, this event brought home the transience of life to some adoptees and this caused them to be afraid that their birth parents might also die before they could meet them. This was the case with four adoptees in this sample, while the fifth adoptee had a close brush with death which influenced his decision. He said:

"I was paralysed in a car accident. It was a temporary paralysis which I believe was a respite for me so that I could meet my birth parents before my life and theirs was over."

THE NEED TO KNOW 'WHO' AND 'WHY'

Eight adoptees expressed the need to know who their birth parents were and why they had been given up for adoption. Examples of their replies are:

"A longing to actually see my biological mother to see if I resembled her physically etc. I don't remember feeling any resentment that she did not keep me as a baby."

"No specific reason. Just a wish to know how she could have relinquished me."

"I just wanted to know what they looked like and why."

"Anybody would want to know what their parents looked like and want to know the reasons why they couldn't take care of us themselves."

"I wanted to try and understand."

A 'non-searching' adoptee made a similar comment:

"My adoptive parents were prepared to raise me. I owe my biological parents nothing except an explanation."

In my conversations with adopted persons, I have been struck by the fact that so many feel an unacknowledged sense of abandonment and sense of owing their adoptive parents gratitude for having been prepared to raise them - something they feel their birth parents were not prepared to do, notwithstanding any explanation about the difficulties facing unmarried mothers. One young man said, "Oh, I wouldn't go looking for her, after all she gave me away in the first place, didn't she?"

DESIRE TO SHARE BIRTH EXPERIENCE AND CHILDREN

The experience of pregnancy or of becoming a parent for the first time is for many adoptees (male and female) a time when they are drawn to that unknown woman who gave birth to them and then relinquished them for adoption. For women particularly, their newborn infant becomes a tangible link in the familial chain; a chain whose links they are ignorant of. The following comments illustrate this.

"I wanted to share the following with my mother - marriage, the birth of our daughter - show her the farm."

"After the birth of my first baby it was as if I couldn't get any peace. I simply had to know. I relived my own mother's experience - the birth of a baby girl. She had to relinquish, I could keep mine. It drove me crazy."

"I felt I'd like to be able to tell my baby daughter who her actual grandparents were. I would have liked to see their reaction. I would have liked to be able to tell them they now have a granddaughter."

"I would like to share my children with them and I really would like to know if there are any family likenesses."

It is not only the adopted who feel the pang of not knowing origins. Adoptive parents would in all likelihood look for some common feature in the new baby's appearance so that they too could play the game common to all new grandparents, that of family likeness. The new arrival would be welcomed with much joy, but at no time would they see the new arrival as proof of their own immortality except sociologically.

MEDIA PUBLICITY ABOUT ADOPTION

Articles in magazines and television programmes on adoption have kindled the interest of the adopted and layman alike. One adoptee referred to a magazine article about an adopted person who had traced birth parents, which had sparked off his interest. Three more adoptees inferred that media publicity of 'found' experiences among adopted persons made them realise that this was in effect feasible.

ADOPTEE FAMILY DISCORD

In two instances, family quarrels prompted the decision to begin 'searching' and in another it was the adoptive parents who urged the adoptee to try and trace her birth mother. She explains:

"I was married with two children when I met my present husband. My parents felt I should find my biological parents as I was doing exactly the same thing as my biological mother had done and they hoped that she would give me some insights."

More severe adoptive family discord led to the decision of this adoptee to search for parents who would be more accommodating:

"My adoptive parents and I were having more and more arguments and my father chased me away from home because I was going out with a young man he was jealous of."

SIMPLE CURIOSITY

Three adoptees disclosed that simple curiosity prompted their decisions to search for birth parents. One of these added the qualifier, "... and a possible awareness of what I had never had in my life."

MATURITY AND ABILITY TO HANDLE UNPALATABLE FACTS

For three more adoptees, maturity and a newly arrived at spirit of determination motivated their decisions.

"I felt I was able to handle any situation."

"I felt able to cope with the possibility of hearing bad things I might find out. The thought of meeting them did not scare me."

"Inner strength and the courage to face the reality of myself."

These three answers give some intimation of the trepidation felt by adoptees who have insufficient or erroneous information about their origins and birth parents.

The question that must be resolved by those adoptees whose fears about birth parents continue into adulthood, is whether they will be able to dismiss or rationalise these fears as irrelevant or whether they need to know the truth about themselves, however unpalatable. That the 'truth' must necessarily carry with it some aspect of social unacceptability or shame is the sad legacy of an adoption practice built around secrecy. This, I believe, has been the cause of much unnecessary heartache for all concerned.

REASON TO DOUBT VERACITY OF ADOPTIVE PARENTS' REVELATION

Two adoptees were prompted to begin their search as a result of chance discoveries that the information given them by their adoptive parents had been untrue. The following account was furnished by an adoptee who has since found his birth mother, to explain his decision to 'search':

"As a result of my present wife's visit to a fortune teller. She was told my birth parents are still alive (despite my adoptive parents telling me that both had died at my birth). My ex-wife confirmed that she knew both birth parents were still alive. She'd found out from an aunt of mine, but did not inform me at the time."

OTHER REASONS FOR THE DECISION TO SEARCH

Two adoptees replied that they had had no specific reason when they made their decision to trace birth parents, whilst another simply wrote:

"Something within me compels me to find my birth mother."

THE LAWS OF INHERITANCE AFFECT ADOPTEE

An adoptee who is over the age of fifty was prompted to start his search because of the laws of inheritance affecting the adopted. It would appear that his adoptive father might not have been aware that a will drawn up before the adoption was legalised, would not have included his adopted son. One can only surmise that this was the case.

"My adoptive mother had a daughter from a previous marriage and when my adoptive father died I was disinherited and my stepsister inherited everything. Because of some or other law, I had to give up. This left me very angry and I decided later to trace my own parents."

CONFIDING THE DECISION TO SEARCH

Having made the momentous decision to trace birth parents, these adoptees would have felt the need to confide their decision in someone.

Seven of these adoptees said that there had been no-one in whom they could confide. Another seven English-speaking adoptees made no response in this regard. Adoptees were most often able to confide in their spouse or in close friends. In only nine instances were they able to confide this decision in their adoptive parents. This could be due to sensitivity for adoptive parents' feelings, a belief that it would hurt the adoptive parents, i.e. where the adoptive parents were still alive or, alternatively, the adoptees might have felt constrained by a sense of guilt in that their behaviour was 'disloyal'. Further research into the question of the guilt experienced by adoptees who decide to trace birth parents will cast an interesting light on this subject now that the law allowing adoptees access to adoption records has come into effect.

Only one adoptee was so confident about the correctness of her decision that she was able to "tell anyone, anywhere" of what she intended to do. Another was able to tell only a total stranger. Twenty-nine adoptees could confide this only to their spouse or a very close friend. The remainder were able to discuss it with, at the most, two or three other persons. This reluctance to make public their intended action could have been because it was a matter about which they felt so deeply that they were afraid to expose themselves to insensitive or negative comment.

Social responses to the impending changes in the laws affecting adoptees giving them the right to adoption records were in some instances very revealing. Among the comments made by a variety of persons during the course of my research in relation to 'searching' adoptees, were the following:

"They should rather not, it is better to let sleeping dogs lie", implying that all adoptees have skeletons in their respective cupboards that could cause them pain.

Others were concerned for the birth mother:

"She has a right to her anonymity. They will only upset her husband and children who probably don't even know that she had had a baby and given it up for adoption."

"That is selfish behaviour. Why expose her to public shame and censure for having had an illegitimate baby, all over again?"

Comments in relation to the search for birth fathers were somewhat similar, but stressed the inevitable resentment of his wife and children with the advent of a new claimant to a share of father's love and financial resources. I do not know whether the adoptees in this sample who searched or are searching were exposed to similar comment by well-meaning family members or friends, but it is likely that many were.

STEPS TAKEN IN THE PROCESS OF SEARCHING

Respondents were asked how they had gone about tracing details of their birth name, the names and location of birth parents and who had helped them.

A sense of guilt or fear of wrongdoing permeated the responses to this question, despite the adoptee's felt need to trace birth parents. Responses to the question of how they went about obtaining details that would help them locate the 'lost parent' were surprisingly laconic. It was as if the respondents were being deliberately terse in order to protect their sources of information. The question can now be posed as to whether adoptees were aware that, although they might not have the legal right of access to records concerning their past, they might nevertheless have a moral right to their 'lost genealogy'? The results of a telephone survey conducted into social attitudes towards adoption and the adoptee's right

to trace birth parents in Port Elizabeth during the latter part of 1986 (Boult, 1987), revealed that 70,7 percent of the inhabitants of White households in this city believed that adoptees do have the right to trace their birth parents. Of the remainder, 14,9 percent believed they did not have this right for a variety of reasons, 11,6 percent were uncertain and 2,8 percent made no response to the question. The results of a survey conducted during 1986 cannot provide evidence of a change of attitude over a period of time, nor can these results be generalised to the rest of the country. What it possibly does show is that the general populace may have been more supportive of the adoptee in his or her quest than was known or suspected.

Adoptees began their search for birth parent(s) in a variety of ways. Fifteen adoptees were either given their original birth certificates, or came upon these themselves. Their adoptive mothers were able to furnish pertinent details for eight adoptees. A further eight respondents met with some success when they directed their enquiries to one or more of the following: the adoption agencies that had arranged the adoption; the Registrar of Adoptions; the staff of the home for unmarried mothers. Members of the extended adoptive family were sometimes able to supply helpful information. Letters of enquiry were also sent by some adoptees to newspapers, the editors of popular magazines, and government departments. Emotional support during the process of searching was obtained most often from spouses, close friends, ministers of religion and sympathetic social workers.

The impression gained from the responses in this section was that the attempt to trace birth parents was often a difficult task, during which the adoptee was more often assisted by concerned friends and sympathetic 'contacts' than by officials.

These findings agree with the accounts of adoptees in America (Fisher, 1973; Howard, 1975; Ehrlich, 1977; Lifton, 1979, and Redmond and Sleightholm, 1984). In Britain, Leitch (1986), himself an adoptee, wrote of his long search for the truth about himself, while Toynbee (1985) wrote about adoptees and their experiences in trying to trace birth parents.

Only a third of the 'searching' adoptees in my sample took immediate action to trace birth parents once their decision was arrived at. Both personal and public hindrances served to temper the initial enthusiasm of the remainder. For many, fear of what they might uncover in the way of unpalatable facts served as a brake on impetuosity as the following quotation illustrates:

"I sometimes have doubts and am afraid I'll uncover something unpleasant, or that I'll begin searching then lose my courage if it's going to be a struggle."

Others were uncertain whether they had the right to intrude on the privacy of their birth parents:

"I know my mother took up her marriage again and had other children. I didn't want to embarrass anyone who probably didn't know about me, and thereby cause any problems."

For most, the sheer enormity of the task proved disheartening. These adoptee confess that they did not know where to begin the search. Often this feeling of incompetence or of being overwhelmed was associated with feelings of consideration for their adoptive parents:

"I didn't know where to begin. How can you start when the surname is as outlandish as ...? I'm also so afraid of hurting my adoptive parents. They don't even know of my desire to search."

For some, the decision to trace birth parents resulted in success within a short space of time, others were not so fortunate, and the majority are still 'searching'. One adoptee commented:

"I was always hesitant because of what I might find.
The search lasted for fifteen years."

The decision to begin 'searching' was always accompanied by feelings of heightened emotional arousal. Fewer male adoptees than female were able to describe their feelings at this time. Positive feelings included excitement (15 responses), optimism and anticipation (4 responses), while some were simply happy (2 responses). Some adoptees felt a sense of determination accompanied often by tension (4 responses). For some there were feelings of relief that the process had begun, while one adoptee reported that he had felt 'relatively neutral' when told by his natal sister (herself an adoptee) that she had managed to trace their birth mother. Mixed feelings of anxiety, fear of the unknown or rejection were reported by ten adoptees. Examples of some of these responses are:

"Very determined, highly emotional. Relentless and ready to stoop to any means to get what I wanted."
(Male adoptee.)

"Excitement, anticipation coupled with fear of another rejection, but then I've been rejected so often, what would another one matter? It was well worth the risk to continue the 'search'."
(Female adoptee.)

"I was very optimistic. Perhaps a little frightened, but more determined to finally get the information I required and start living my life normally, without the constant question mark in the back of my mind."
(Female adoptee.)

"Can't describe my excitement. Cherished very great expectations."
(Male adoptee.)

"I'm so excited, I get a lump in my throat just thinking about seeing my name on my original birth certificate. It is a strange feeling and one that is growing stronger."
(Female adoptee.)

These quotations taken from some of the questionnaires reveal how vulnerable these adoptees felt. Theirs was, and is, more than just a fear of the unknown for it included a fear of rejection and, in the minds of some, the probability of a second rejection. In cultures where myths surrounding motherhood remain potent, the need of the adoptee to rediscover the original mother figure (however strong the bonds between the 'psychological mother' and adoptee) becomes understandable.

CHAPTER 11EXPERIENCES OF ADOPTEES WHO HAVE 'FOUND'

Of the twenty-nine adoptees (35%) in this sample who have 'found', twenty-six found either birth parents or siblings. One adoptee was found by her birth father and another was traced by his sister who was herself adopted by a different family. Although the latter has his birth mother's address and has seen where she lives, he has no desire to meet his birth parents. He confessed:

"During the past two Christmas seasons (1984 and 1985) and on my birthday, I experienced such a feeling of nostalgia and wondered why life deprives us of certain things, but I realize that this is a part of life."

The remaining adoptee only learned the truth about himself and his parentage at the age of forty-eight. He wrote of his feelings towards his deceased adoptive parents and of his acceptance of his true parentage and the reasons for the secrecy surround past events, saying:

"All is now well with my soul and I would love to meet them both again and declare my love and understanding."

Of these twenty-nine adoptees, eighteen reported (at the time of completing the questionnaire) that one or both adoptive parents were deceased. The adoptive parents of eight of these adoptees were both deceased at the time of the reunion. Seven adoptees had lost their adoptive father and three their adoptive mother by this time. Only two were unable to share their experiences of finding their birth parent or siblings, with their widowed mother and one could not do so with her adoptive father.

Two adoptees whose adoptive parents were still alive were unable to tell their adoptive parents anything of this event in their lives. Sixteen found their birth mothers, of whom two also met their maternal grandmothers. A warm relationship continues between one adoptee and her birth grandmother. Four found only their birth fathers. The birth father of one had had him pointed out to her when she was eleven, but recalls that she had not taken much notice. He contacted her again after she turned eighteen with a view to sharing his home with her. She felt that this was only because she was now self-supporting and declined. There was no further contact between them.

Five adoptees found both birth parents, of whom one discovered that her birth parents had been divorced before her birth and her birth mother had informed her ex-husband that their baby had died at birth, not that she had given their baby up for adoption. The second adoptee in this group discovered that his birth parents had subsequently married and had two daughters. He was delighted to discover birth parents and two natal sisters.

One adoptee was traced by his sister, as mentioned previously, and the remaining adoptee found half-brothers and -sisters and was told that their mother had died.

One of the adoptees who had 'found' was her birth mother's only child and one, his birth father's only surviving child. The remainder discovered half or natal siblings or a combination of the two. Seven of these adoptees grew up as only children. Four of them were delighted to have found' brothers and sisters.

One had not yet met her siblings, one was not sure whether there were siblings or not, and the remaining adoptee had ambivalent feelings towards what she referred to as "people who are in reality total strangers".

Thirteen of the nineteen Afrikaans-speaking adoptees who have 'found' described their childhood as 'happy'. Only one of the eleven English-speaking adoptees made the same response. This amounts to a total of forty-eight percent. Four Afrikaans-speaking and seven English-speaking adoptees refer to their childhood as 'average' or 'reasonably happy' (a total of 38%) and two from each language group report their childhoods as 'unhappy', which is fourteen percent of the total of those who have 'found'.

Fourteen of the adoptees who have 'found' in whatever capacity can be deemed to have experienced this as positive and rewarding. Eight are ambivalent, expressing reservations of one sort or another, and for the remaining eleven the outcome proved not to have come up to their expectations.

Sixteen adoptees plan to keep in touch with some or all of the members of their new-found family. One has had written contact with her birth mother and looks forward to meeting her.

Where the experience of the initial contact was perceived as negative or ambivalent, there was less likelihood of the adoptee planning to continue contact on a regular basis.

Twenty-four adoptees agreed that finding birth parents or siblings settled something 'deep within them', two were uncertain and two replied in the negative. This question did not apply to the adoptee who was 'found' by her birth father.

Eighteen of these adoptees were able to accept their birth parents as they are now. Six were unable to reconcile the reality with the image they had held onto for so long, while three were unsure of their own feelings towards birth parent(s). This question did not apply to the respondent who had been found by her birth father, nor to the respondent whose birth mother was deceased.

Discovery of birth parent(s) and subsequent acceptance or otherwise of them undoubtedly laid to rest the 'genealogical bewilderment' (to use Sants's term) in most of these adoptees. Those for whom the initial contact was sufficient, gave the following explanations:

"I would rather not become involved with 'strangers'. We occasionally correspond, but I do not love her in the same way as I love my adoptive mother, nor do I know her the way I know my adoptive mother."

"Just a card or letter occasionally - our worlds are so different."

"They live a different sort of life and I realize they couldn't offer me what my adoptive parents can."

"She is terribly demanding and expects me to give her of the time I'd prefer to spend with my parents. My children don't like her. She's also not a real grannie. She's impatient and they may hardly move in her presence. She's also an atheist and the sort of person who wouldn't even admit to a Christian upbringing. I simply don't like her. Perhaps she reminds me of my own weak points. She is stubborn like me. I shudder to think what would have become of me if I had grown up in her care."

Unresolved conflict arising from a sense of grievance or a negative portrayal of birth parent, could and did sometimes colour the expectations of the adoptee and the eventual interaction between adoptee and birth parent or birth family.

An adoptee who ran away from his birth father, owing to a misinterpretation of events during their first meeting when he was barely eighteen, said:

"After that first meeting nothing more happened and as my adoptive parents remind me, I'll only create problems for my children because what will I be able to explain."

Others commented:

"It is as if I nursed a grievance against them. It is as if something was holding me back."

"There is no love between us. I discovered that your mother is the person who has made you what you are. My birth mother has done nothing for me."

"Not if I have to. It does not really matter to me as they are like strangers to me. However, for their sakes I will keep a distant relationship with them as long as they do not try to want more than that from me."

Where the birth parent was perceived as rejecting, the adoptee used aversion as a defence mechanism, or simply grieved.

"I would have liked to meet my mother person to person, but she shies away from this. On the other hand I've developed an aversion to her. It is just something inside me I can't explain."

"They don't phone or write to me and unless I do the contact will be broken."

Sibling bonds were not always established among this group. A sense of living in different worlds and of the effort needed to establish a relationship with strangers met with varying degrees of success. Nine adoptees do not feel inclined to keep contact with siblings or are reluctant to do so. They commented as follows:

"I am not interested, too many of them."

"Too great a difference between the way we grew up."

"Completely different lifestyles and we do not move on the same wavelengths."

"I discovered a half-brother on my father's side whom I see occasionally. The rest leave me cold and I have no desire for their company."

"My wife insisted (that we do not see them) for our children's sake."

"I feel it difficult to think of them as sisters although in many respects they take after me. They feel more like casual acquaintances and meetings occur on a very casual basis where I'm concerned."

"I've tried to be a sister. It's almost eight years now. But I've never had the feeling that they are real brothers and sisters."

"Not from my side, but one sister feels the need to keep in touch periodically."

"I feel we all have our own lives. We met together once, and discovered we were all so different. Why pretend there is any bond between us when there isn't. It was like trying to have contact with strangers."

Notwithstanding their reluctance to forge siblings bonds, the majority in this group value their newly-discovered brothers and sisters and plan to have, or have had, regular contact.

With the exception of one who has established a close relationship with her maternal grandmother, very few of the adoptees in the pilot study or those who have 'found' in this sample, show any interest in establishing bonds with the extended birth families. It would appear that their first pre-occupation was to meet birth parents and put an end to all the unanswered questions that had troubled them for so long. Their interest in siblings was secondary to their main objective.

The extended family was of less interest to them. Their concern was limited to information about the extended birth families which could help them to locate themselves in a genealogical perspective. They appeared not to want to become burdened by obligations to the extended birth family. There is understandably a limit to the number of aunts, uncles and cousins that can be accommodated by individuals, as family relationships imply a mutual involvement even though contacts may be infrequent. This would apply more particularly to those who were married and had in-laws (in addition to their own adoptive family members) to accommodate in their social calendar.

Alternatively, some sense of loyalty could be operative in regard to the extended adoptive family, associated as this is with the adoptive parents and memories laid down over the years. These findings suggest 'the woman who gave birth to them' occupies a central role in the thoughts of those who are adopted, but that her family is of less importance. The relationships between adoptees and new-found members of their extended birth families requires further research so that the expectations of adoptees and, more significantly, the birth parent(s) and their families can be met.

ADOPTEE REACTIONS WHEN THEY FOUND BIRTH PARENT(S)

The meeting with birth mother or birth father was completely joyful and satisfactory for thirteen adoptees. For others, there was an initial euphoria which was all too soon ended by the practical aspects of adapting to and developing new relationships and commitments. Eight of these adoptees expressed ambivalence about the meeting, while for seven, disappointment or other more negative feelings coloured their responses to a meeting which had not come up to their expectations.

I will endeavour to publish anonymous verbatim accounts of adoptee meetings with birth parent(s) or siblings, together with the reactions of birth mothers and adoptive parents some time in the future as these contain valuable data for future research.

The unresolved question that faces researchers and adoptees alike is whether the dream or ideal that the latter have conjured in their minds is matched by the reality they encounter. Twenty-five of the twenty-nine adoptees who had found birth parent(s), siblings or, in one instance, the truth about his parentage, responded to the question regarding satisfaction with the outcome of their search. The following table shows that sixty percent were 'glad', thirty-six percent were 'indifferent' and four percent were 'sorry' that they had expended so much time and energy on their search in view of the outcome.

TABLE XXVII

ADOPTEE RESPONSES TO HAVING FOUND THEIR BIRTH PARENT(S)
OR BLOOD RELATIVES, ARRANGED ACCORDING TO LANGUAGE GROUP

LANGUAGE GROUP	GLAD	SORRY	INDIFFERENT	TOTAL
Afrikaans-speaking	10	0	6	16
English-speaking	5	1	3	9
Total	15	1	9	25
Percentage	60%	4%	36%	100%

A total of thirty-one adoptees responded to the question of whether they would advise other adoptees to attempt to trace birth parents or siblings. Fifty-two percent gave an unqualified 'yes'; forty-two percent gave a 'qualified yes'; and six percent answered 'no'.

TABLE XXVIII

ADOPTEE RESPONSES AS REGARDS ADVISING OTHER ADOPTEES
TO 'SEARCH', ARRANGED ACCORDING TO LANGUAGE GROUP

LANGUAGE GROUP	ADVISE IT	WITH QUALIFI- CATIONS	AGAINST	TOTAL
Afrikaans-speaking	11	7	0	18
English-speaking	5	6	2	13
Total	16	13	6	31
Percentage	52%	42%	6%	100%

Twenty-six adoptees responded to the question of their ability to handle any unpalatable facts they might have found in relation to their birth history. Twenty-one (81%) replied that they felt confident in this regard. Three (11%) were uncertain and two (8%) replied that they had been unable to do so at the time.

There was very little difference between the responses of the two language groups other than that the two negative replies were from English-speakers. Only one of the two English-speaking adoptees who replied in the negative furnished a reason for her response:

"Not very well. I was particularly shocked at the incest aspect between my father and mother. I was also alarmed at the socio-level of my parents. It was so much lower than that of my adoptive parents."

Five of the twenty-one adoptees whose adoptive parent(s) were still alive at the time were not able to divulge that they had found birth parent(s) or siblings to their adoptive parent(s). Of the seventeen who were able to do so, eleven revealed that this had improved their relationship with their adoptive parents, five said the relationship had remained the same, while only one said that it had worsened. In this last case, the adoptee (who is married), grew up as the only child of elderly parents who reacted with a sense of shock and outrage at her ingratitude in wanting to trace her birth parents. When she eventually traced and met with her birth mother, they barred her from their home and refused to greet her in public. She keeps in touch by means of letters (as they put the telephone down when she calls) to explain her reasons and reassure them of her love and gratitude. She had at the conclusion of this study in December 1986 not met with any sign of reconciliation.

It is possible that relationships between the majority of these adoptees and their adoptive parents were strengthened because the need to discover origins had at last been stilled in the adoptee. Adoptive parents would have been reassured by the fact that the child they loved was not going to desert them or reject them in favour of the newly-discovered birth parent.

Several adoptees commented on the friendship that developed between their adoptive parent(s) and their birth mother. This is not an unusual occurrence between people who love the same person (outside of the eternal love triangle, that is!). I have also had adoptive parents whose children have 'found' tell me of their own relief and pleasure in at last being able to thank the persons who were responsible for their happiness as parents over the years.

Of the thirty-seven adoptees who are or were searching, thirty plan to continue, while seven have for various reasons shelved or abandoned the idea. Examples of the responses of female adoptee's who will continue their search are:

"Yes definitely. It is a feeling within me that is slowly consuming me. It is like an empty space that must be filled. I'll never give up. I want to meet my mother whatever the circumstances. It is, at the moment, the most important thing in my life."

"Yes I think so. I've never been able to discuss this with my adoptive parents but I would like to begin searching for them one day. One has a deep desire to perhaps see and meet them (my mother) just once. I want to so badly."

"Yes. I won't be able to continue without knowing who and where they are."

"Yes. Something deep within me longs to find my mother. Until then I will know no peace."

"Because I so badly want to know where they are, what they do and whether they are 'good' people."

"I am going to look for my father. I don't know the precise reason for this but I want to meet him. This wish has only developed recently."

"I feel very strongly in trying to trace my 'roots'."

"I want that contact because I must see these people. They're part of me. I somehow feel incomplete if I don't meet them."

"I want to know who and what I am - look for something of myself in them."

"Because of the need to have a medical history and also to put my past into perspective."

"I want to know. I think it's only natural to want to know my roots. I just wish I knew how to search."

Male adoptee responses revealed the same unfulfilled yearnings contained in female adoptee replies, as shown overleaf.

"I feel that somewhere there is something owing to me (something material). I feel that somewhere there is something for me to inherit. (This adoptee lost the family farm when in his late forties, after his deceased adoptive father's will was read.)

"I know how I feel about my child and I believe they feel the same. I must find them. They will always remain my parents regardless of the circumstances." (Divorced adoptee who was adopted twice.)

"Yes, because only then will my soul be at rest and then I will know for a fact whether they are deceased or not."

"Yes, it is my greatest desire to trace my birth mother regardless of the circumstances. That which burns inside me will stop when I find her."

"I just want to be able to say I've found them and also tell them that I am not angry with them."

"It's because it's important to me."

"It would satisfy a deep yearning within me."

Nineteen Afrikaans-speaking and eleven English-speaking adoptees are determined to continue searching. One of those who has shelved the idea of searching suffered a most distressing experience. She confided:

"Up until three weeks ago, I wanted to trace my birth parents very badly, but somebody deceived me and the woman who was supposed to be my mother turned out not to be. Then something just died in me."

Several of the adoptees who found birth parent(s) report a great deal of hesitancy on the part of the birth parent during the initial contact. The responses of the latter included a need for reassurance that this was not a 'practical joke' or some other need for proof that this was indeed the child they had given up for adoption. Several birth mothers had not disclosed the fact of the adoptee's existence to their spouse or, more commonly, their own children. Where this was the case, the adoptee was requested to wait for contact until this matter could be dealt with.

Despite these often less than satisfactory meetings between birth parent(s) or siblings, ninety-four percent of the thirty-one adoptees who have 'found' or who are 'searching' in this sample advise other adoptees to search. Many, however, added the qualifier that it should only take place if no-one (in particular, the adoptive parents) was hurt in the process. Others stipulated that both birth parent(s) and adoptee should agree to the contact. A few stressed the importance of having a social worker pave the way and act as go-between.

Examples of unqualified encouragement for other adoptees who search are:

"Definitely. It brings that sense of peace and more importantly, solves the whole identity crisis. I now know who I am, the 'why's and where I'm going."

"I would advise it. It's such an incredible experience when you meet a blood sibling that you can't even remember. It's enriched my whole life. Probably altered my life a bit too."

"Yes they must because it's so important to have come from somewhere."

The final question in the questionnaire enquired whether the fact of wanting to trace birth parents or find out more about them had brought adoptees closer to their birth parents.

Thirteen Afrikaans-speaking and eight English-speaking adoptees disclosed that this was not so, whereas twelve Afrikaans-speaking and eight English-speaking adoptees replied that it had brought them much closer to their adoptive parents. Analysis of the responses regarding adoptee/adoptive parents' relationships that had not improved, reveal that in nine instances the adoptive parents had reacted with feelings of hurt or felt so threatened that they created a communication block. In seven instances it was the adoptees themselves who did not wish to discuss this deep personal need with their adoptive

parents. Three adoptees were not going to do so to spare the adoptive parents hurt. Two adoptees said that the relationship was already too poor in quality for them to want to share something so personal.

Where relationships were cemented and enriched, adoptees referred to a deeper appreciation of their adoptive parents' love, emotional support and understanding of their special needs.

"When I showed Dad her letters, it was all okay and now we are closer than ever."

"I think they realize that it is a deep longing I have to satisfy before I can feel a whole person."

"You realize how really fortunate you are and how tremendous your adoptive parents are. It is difficult to love other people's children - I couldn't - and I think you have to be a very special person to be able to love other people's problems."

"The revelations coupled with the tracing of birth mother caused one to have more compassion and love towards one's adoptive parents as well as gratitude because they accepted one unconditionally as their own."

"Yes. We see it as quite normal and my parents want to help me in this."

"Yes. There is so much more trust between us."

The evidence contained in the replies to questions 53 to 76 of the questionnaire show that adoptee responses to the outcome of their 'search' are as varied as is human nature itself. The majority of the twenty-nine adoptees who had 'found' reported themselves satisfied with the outcome.

The unresolved problem for adoptive parents is whether the adopted child will always hanker after the unknown parent(s), possibly to the detriment of the relationship between adoptive parent and child when the latter reaches adulthood.

The question adoptive parents will raise now that changes have been made in adoption law is whether theirs is to be merely a custodial parenthood. From the results of my study and the accounts of adoptees who have embarked on a search for their 'lost genealogy' (Redmond and Sleightholm, 1982; Toynbee, 1985), it would appear to be otherwise. The evidence from my research supports the findings of recent studies in this field quoted earlier, that adoptees are, in the main, not searching for the 'ideal parent'. The results of my study show that where a close and loving relationship exists between adoptees and their adoptive parents, the discovery of 'origins' (whether this includes a meeting or meetings with birth parent(s)) will not affect the feelings of the adoptee for his or her adoptive parents deleteriously. It can and often does strengthen the existing bond between adoptee and adoptive parents. Only in instances where the relationship is less than satisfactory for the adoptee will expectations of a closer, more satisfying relationship with the 'lost parent(s)' be entertained. Exceptions are where the adoptive parents are deceased. Here, the quality of the previous parent/child relationship will colour the expectations of the adoptee in relation to birth parent(s) or siblings. In general, it would seem that the more mature the adoptee, the more realistic he or she will be in regard to their expectations of relationships with birth parent(s) or siblings. It also appears likely that most adoptees would welcome the opportunity to discuss their needs and fears with an empathetic counsellor prior to, during, and after their meeting with birth parents.

CHAPTER 12SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Many adoptees are of the opinion that no-one who is not adopted can really understand what it is like. The aim of this study was to examine variables that have received attention in the past in literature on adoption and to focus on the subjective experience of adoption from the perspective of the adoptee who has now reached adulthood.

Unexpected results (the school experience and adolescent suicide attempts) showed that not even the most detailed questionnaire can ever substitute for in-depth interviews conducted by an empathetic and experienced researcher. Perhaps research in the human sciences will always be somewhat incomplete because of the problems inherent in the conduct of that research. Where problems of secrecy or sensitivity surround the subject matter of research, as is the case in adoption, problems are compounded. The excellent response rate of eighty-eight percent obtained for this sample can possibly be attributed to the fact that respondents had volunteered to participate. The way in which my sample was obtained precludes the kinds of generalization possible from a random sample.

The sample of eighty-two adult adoptees comprised more females than males, with the ratio 2,4:1. The majority of respondents had either 'found' or were 'searching' for one or both birth parents. There were forty-eight Afrikaans-speaking and thirty-four English-speaking respondents. This difference is more likely to have occurred because of sampling bias than because there are more adoptions among Afrikaans-speaking members in the society.

The age categories of the respondents ranged from eighteen to seventy and correspond with age categories for adult adoptees in other studies of a similar nature. The majority of the sample were married with children of their own. Eleven percent of the sample were divorced and single, divorced and re-married, or separated from their spouses. Twenty-six percent were unmarried.

Education levels for this sample of adoptees were considerably higher than for the country as a whole (excluding Africans). None of the data collected in this survey could clarify why this should be so.

The data suggest that most of the adoptive parents of the respondents in this sample were older on average than non-adopting parents and that 'inability to conceive' was the principal reason for the adoptions (67%). The data also suggest that the majority could be classified as middle class, in that the fathers of 12,5 percent of those who responded to this question were in the artisan class.

The 'age of placement' was the first variable examined. Here, literature on the pre- and postnatal period provided much food for thought as the whole question of 'foetal rejection' is highly controversial. I was able only to conjecture about the possibility of an association between foetal rejection and the experiences of two adoptees whose childhood and adult lives were marked by problems that were not primarily related to the adoptive home situation.

Such suggestive glimpses of possible evidence for 'foetal rejection' prompt calls for further longitudinal studies in this field. If 'foetal rejection' can and does occur among babies who will be placed for adoption, the adoptive parents should be alerted and advised accordingly of what steps should be taken to promote bonding and attachment.

The majority of adoptees in this sample (85%) were placed before the age of one year. Some researchers into adoption contend that separation anxiety occurs as early as six months of age and possibly even earlier. Analysis of the responses of the twenty adoptees who were placed after the age of six months did not establish a conclusive link between time of placement and attachment. Other factors in the adoptive home must be taken into consideration. Late placement occurred in the case of five of the eleven adoptees who experienced their childhood as unhappy, of whom two had been adopted twice. The experience of being adopted twice led to a great deal of insecurity for these two adoptees, some of it stemming from the fact that little or no explanation was given them to account for their changed circumstances.

Further analysis of the data in respect of attachment to the adoptive parents again showed inconclusive results. There was a difference between male and female adoptees in regard to the degree to which they could confide in their adoptive parents. Explanations for this finding possibly relate to age differences and a lack of flexibility in parental discipline toward female adopted children. Attachment was subjectively experienced as 'poor' by eighteen percent of the adoptees in this sample, characterised by poor relationships with one or both adoptive parents and siblings (if present).

Sixty percent recall their childhood as 'happy', while eighty-two percent could recall many happy memories associated with being an adopted child. Twenty-seven percent recalled their childhood as 'average' and thirteen percent recalled their childhood as 'unhappy'. Forty-five percent of the latter were placed after the age of six months. Incidences of child abuse (sexual, physical and emotional) were found among a small percentage of this sample.

The majority of the adoptees in this sample were informed of their status before puberty. Fifty-seven percent were informed by the age of five years and a further twenty percent were informed between the ages of six and ten. The remaining twenty-three percent were informed between the ages of eleven and twenty-six. A total of seventy-eight percent were informed by their adoptive parents that they were adopted. Seventeen percent were informed by others, two percent were aware of their status through having been fostered before their adoption. Two percent discovered this fact in adolescence and adulthood from documents.

The findings of this study suggest that the age of revelation was of less importance for the adoptees in this sample than was the manner in which it occurred. The evidence points to certain advantages in early revelation; the 'chosen baby story' and other ways of conveying adoptive parent love were valued by many of these adoptees during childhood. McWhinnie (1985) found it very effective to run counselling groups for adoptive parents when their children were between the ages of four and five, the time when children usually begin asking where babies come from.

Analysis of the responses regarding revelation of adoptive status showed a wide variety of ways in which adoptive parents dealt with this task. Content analysis of adoptee responses showed that thirty-six percent of the adoptive parents coped with revelation in a positive manner, forty-eight percent did so inadequately and sixteen percent did so negatively. Only two sets of adoptive parents can be said to have tailored the information according to their child's development or given them all the information at their disposal. It appears from the experiences of these adoptees that some adoptive parents found it difficult to reveal to their child that he or she was

in fact adopted. Whether this reluctance arose from the adoptive parents' unresolved problems associated with infertility is open to question. Not all of the adoptive parents who experienced problems in regard to revelation qualified in the strict sense of the word as infertile. Many of them already had children of their own before adopting. What caused these adoptive parents very real problems was acknowledging the existence of the 'other' parents in their child's life. McWhinnie (1985:15) states, "... the parents have usually told them of adoption but ... taken a particular stance about it ... usually ignoring the whole question of the other parents ...".

Revelation was largely the responsibility of the adoptive mother. It was also a once-only occurrence for thirty-eight percent of this sample. This was so more often for Afrikaans-speaking adoptees. Being adopted was part of bed-time story telling for only twenty-seven percent. A surprisingly large percentage of adoptees were told nothing about either birth parent, their birth history or their origins. Thirty-three percent were told nothing about their birth mother and fifty-six percent were told nothing about their birth father. Reticence in regard to revelation was encountered more often and more recently among the adoptive parents of Afrikaans-speaking adoptees. Urgent attention needs to be given to the sort of information adoptive parents required to help them cope with the task of age-graded revelation. McWhinnie (1985: 15) states that, "Group counselling programmes for adopters have not been developed to any great extent in the U.K. - apart from a few notable exceptions". Adoptive parent associations and counselling groups have been established in some of the larger cities in South Africa. Not all adopters are in a position to take advantage of this development. Many adoptive

families live in rural areas or the smaller towns. A suggestion to remedy this would be that all ministers of religion, teachers and medical practitioners be informed about adoption and adoption counselling during the course of their studies as they are usually the first to become aware of the problems in the family.

Lack of information about birth parents and origins was not an invariable trigger for adoptees to make the decision to search in this sample. Analysis of the timing of revelation yielded inconclusive results. Early revelation was not invariably associated with early speculation, but late revelation was found to be associated with immediate concerns about the implications of being adopted. Seventy-two adoptees recall wondering about being adopted. Of these, thirty-six percent began wondering between the ages of three and ten. Twenty-five percent began wondering between the ages of eleven and thirteen, 23,6 percent between the ages of fourteen and eighteen and the remaining 15,3 percent between the ages of nineteen and twenty-six. The modal age at which adoptees began to wonder about being adopted and about their birth parents was found to be twelve years.

Eighty-nine percent wondered about their birth mother and seventy-four percent about their birth father. The majority of these adoptees (82%) reveal that their thoughts more often concerned their birth mother. Of the seventy-three adoptees who revealed that these thoughts had been, fifty-three percent wanted to know why they had been given up for adoption, forty-four percent wanted to know what she looked like and thirty-four percent wanted to know what sort of person she was. There was no appreciable difference between the thought content in pre-puberty, adolescence or young adulthood. There were only two specific references to fantasies in these replies. It is not known in what form pre-pubertal thoughts occurred, i.e. realistic or fantasy.

Adoptee thoughts about birth father during pre-puberty, adolescence and adulthood differed quantitatively and qualitatively from those about birth mother. Thirty percent of the sixty-three responses in this category showed a concern as to why he had not married their birth mother.

Early revelation was found to be associated with early fears concerning adoption and birth parents. Thirty-five percent of adoptees had fears concerning their birth mother, of whom fifty-five percent had always known they were adopted. These were primarily fears about birth mother's moral character and of a second rejection were they ever to meet. Thirty-seven percent had fears about their birth father - his rejection of birth mother and his moral character. Almost twice as many Afrikaans-speaking as English-speaking adoptees had fears concerning their birth mother, which may reflect a possibly greater stigma against illegitimacy in this group.

Fifty percent of these adoptees recall childhood fears arising from their particular status. A sense of insecurity due to inadequate adoptive parent explanations of why they had been given up for adoption was probably interpreted by these children as rejection of self-as-worthy or -lovable and that there was no guarantee that this would not occur a second time.

Social attitudes to adoption, in particular those of the peer group, also contributed to these fears. Not even those adoptees whose childhood was recalled as happy, were immune to fears of a second rejection. However, these fears were not sufficiently acute in the majority of cases to affect the parent/child relationship seriously.

Seventy-seven percent of the adoptees in this sample entertained the possibility of meeting their birth mother one day and sixty-one percent, their birth father. Of these, fifty-five percent began to speculate on this during the pre-pubertal phase. This finding was not expected. Thoughts about birth parents and expectations of meeting them some time in the future were not contingent upon the relationship between adoptees and their adoptive parents.

Peer group attitudes to adoption caused forty percent of the adoptees in this sample to always, often or sometimes keep the fact of their adoption secret. The reasons for this were coded into eight response categories. Peer group teasing and taunts, together with fears of rejection and of being different, were cited most often as the reasons for their secrecy. Further research into peer group attitudes to adoption in the junior school environment is needed as this peer group rejection of those who are different was found to be consistent over time. We need to know how these peer group attitudes arise and among which groups of children, and to what extent this contributes to the school problems or negative self-images experienced by some adoptees. The curriculum of teacher training courses should include extensive information on adoption, fostering and divorce as these affect children, so that teachers are equipped to minimise the painful experience of peer group rejection and taunting of those who are different and vulnerable.

Adolescence was found to be associated with changes in both the nature and frequency of adoptee thoughts about their birth parents. Only twenty-three percent of these adoptees could share their thoughts about adoption with their parents during adolescence. It is during the early teen years that the adopted need factual information about their birth parents and the reasons why they had been given up for adoption. The results of this study show that a greater understanding of adoption

and the reasons why some people have to give up their babies for adoption, occurs during the adolescent years. Adoptive parents need to initiate discussion about adoption at this time. This should include the possibility of obtaining court records of the adoption and a possible future meeting with birth parents in adulthood. Free and frank discussion between parents and children is essential in the adoptive family. The adoptive parents should voice their fears of rejection and other thoughts they may have on the subject of possible future meetings with the birth parent(s). No evidence was forthcoming to show that these adoptees experienced more problems with regard to schoolwork in senior school than their non-adopted counterparts.

Seventeen percent of the adoptees in this sample attempted suicide during adolescence. Four adoptees did so more than once. One other adoptee often thought of doing so. No figures were available for adolescent para-suicides in South Africa, so no comparisons are possible with a national average. In the opinion of a well-known British adoption researcher and writer on the subject of adoption at the University of London, this percentage appears uncommonly high. Reasons for these suicide attempts were found to be (in rank order) sensitivity about being adopted and therefore different; inability to confide thoughts and fears to significant others; inadequate or negative information about birth parents; peer group taunts about being adopted; fears concerning birth mother; and fears arising from their status. The adoptive parents of the adoptees who attempted suicide in adolescence were not all aware of these attempts. Those who were, did not all seek professional help for themselves or the adoptee. There is a need for an adoption counselling service on a national basis with branches in all the larger centres to deal with all those who are involved in this emotionally burdened predicament.

Five of the adoptees who attempted suicide in adolescence were treated for psychiatric illness in adulthood. However, analysis of adoptee responses for evidence of pathology in adolescence and adulthood did not show evidence of the often held belief that adoptees have a higher incidence of behavioural and mental disorders than non-adopted persons.

Sensitivity about being adopted continued into adulthood for some adoptees. Eighteen percent found the 'adopted child' label distasteful or offensive.

Gratitude or feelings of indebtedness to adoptive parents does appear to be 'the special province of the adopted'. Such feelings were expressed by fifty percent of these adoptees. This was more evident among English-speaking (76,5%) than Afrikaans-speaking (31%) adoptees. No reasons can be advanced for this difference.

Fifty percent of the Afrikaans-speaking adoptees in this sample admitted to having had fears of falling in love with a blood-related sibling, while only 16,5 percent of the English-speaking adoptees had this problem. This fear, arising out of their unknown genealogy, possibly accounted for the finding that sixty percent of this sample experienced insecurity in their dating relationships. Almost twice as many Afrikaans-speaking as English-speaking adoptees feared, at some time or another, that their loved one would abandon them. These findings suggest a link between lack of knowledge concerning origins and a general sense of insecurity. Thirty-eight percent of these adoptees experienced some difficulty in their sex lives. The majority of these were women who attributed this to not wanting to be thought wanton or promiscuous as they imagined their birth mothers to have been.

Forty percent were unable to disclose their status when asked for a family medical history by medical practitioners. Lack of knowledge of one's genealogical past renders all adoptees and in particular the Afrikaans-speaking adoptee, particularly vulnerable in view of increasing evidence from geneticists that certain families are at risk for genetic disorders. The Afrikaner population, because of geographic isolation and other historical factors, is considered to be at risk for at least fourteen serious genetic disorders. Some of these medical conditions cannot be diagnosed with certainty in some instances in the absence of genealogical history. It should be compulsory that a bio-genealogical document accompany every adopted child to its new home. A copy of that document should be lodged with the Registrar of Adoptions in the event of the original being lost or damaged.

Forty-nine percent of the adoptees informed their adoptive parents of their need to know more about and/or trace birth parents. Thirty-five percent of these met with acceptance and support for their quest. Adoptive parent responses ranged from reluctant acceptance to rejection and anger. This finding suggests that most adoptive parents, particularly adoptive fathers, felt very threatened and feared losing their adopted children's love and loyalty.

Sixty-eight percent of these adoptees said their curiosity about birth parents increased rather than decreased as they grew older. Eighty-three percent revealed when it was that they began to actively consider tracing birth parents. These decisions were arrived at most often between the ages of twenty and twenty-nine, while marriage, pregnancy or birth of the first child proved the most common trigger. This finding is endorsed by Haniel (1982) concerning the adoptee in Israel. Yehudith Haniel is the former Director of Adoption Services and Services for Unwed Mothers, Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs in Israel.

In Israel, adoptees, eighteen years or older, may request from the Registrar of Adoptions, court records of their adoption subject to certain conditions. Haniel estimates that about fifteen percent of the 1 600 adult adoptees in that state had requested access to their records. She states (1982:3) that about two-thirds of these "... seem to have some adaptive problems whether in their relationship with their parents, in their social functioning, or in their self-image ... about 1/3 of the adoptees apply because of an intrinsic need to understand why they were given up for adoption and to receive information about their origins".

The adoptees in my sample gave as their reasons most often, (1) a need to discover who they 'really' are; (2) a need to know birth parent's identity and the reason why they had been given up for adoption, and (3) a need to replace the parent figure after the death of one or both adoptive parents. In only nine instances were adoptees able to confide this decision in their adoptive parents. Adoptees confided most often in their spouses or one or two close friends after they made the decision to trace birth parent(s). The exact steps taken in the search were forthcoming from only a few of those who were successful in tracing birth parent(s). This could be due to subjective feelings of wrongdoing. Twenty-nine adoptees in my sample had found one or other of the following: the truth concerning their parentage; birth mother; birth father; both parents; half or natal siblings and grandparents. Eighteen of these were able to accept their birth parents as they are now. Approximately half of the adoptees who found birth parents or siblings plan to continue the relationships.

An interesting finding was that adoptees who had 'found' were only interested in the extended birth family in a genealogical sense. Twenty-four adoptees stated that having 'found', settled something deep within them. Sixty percent of those who had made contact with birth parent(s) or siblings said they were 'glad', thirty-six percent were 'indifferent' and four percent were 'sorry' they had expended so much time and energy in view of the outcome.

Thirty-one adoptees responded to the question of whether they would advise other adoptees to search. Of these, only six percent said they would not do so. Forty-two percent gave a qualified response calling for conditions ranging from a concern for not hurting the adoptive parents or birth parents, to a need for adoptee maturity and a social worker to act as go-between. Fifty-two percent gave this their unqualified support, saying that the satisfaction of establishing a sense of identity was worth it at any price. Twenty-six adoptees responded to the question concerning their ability to handle any unpalatable facts they might have found in their birth history. Only two of these adoptees revealed that they had not been able, at the time, to cope with unpalatable facts in their birth history (of whom one gave reasons for this). Five of the adoptees whose adoptive parents were still alive at the time were not able to confide their 'found' experiences in them. Those who were able to do so, found the relationships with adoptive parents much improved by the sharing, with only one exception. It is possible that in this case the elderly parents involved were less able to adapt to change and saw the action of their only child as ingratitude and a personal rejection. Thirty of the thirty-seven adoptees who are or were searching, plan to continue. They give reasons that reveal a deep yearning for a knowledge of their roots, which is linked to the quest for self-identity.

People who are not adopted can only guess at the needs of some adoptees who live with an unresolved yearning for answers to the question of who and what they are. This study does not provide answers to why some adoptees have a deeper need to know than others or why some have no curiosity at all even when they know nothing about birth parents or their genealogical history. What this research study does show is that adoption is a process of continual adaptation to changing circumstances by all concerned. For the adopted child, the first challenge requiring adaptation occurs in the school situation after leaving the security of the adoptive home. Being aware of this hurdle the adoptee must face, will help adoptive parents give empathetic support to their child.

There is evidence of more social acceptance of adoption in the 'eighties, if the results of my 1986 telephone research survey in Port Elizabeth can be generalised to the rest of the country (Boult, 1987). Seventy-four percent said they would consider adoption if unable to have children of their own. The variables of age and education affected responses in that those over the age of fifty and those with the lowest educational levels were least in favour of adopting. The reason given most often by those in favour was simply because they loved children.

In response to the question in the telephone survey of whether adoptees had the right to trace birth parents on reaching the age of eighteen, seventy-one percent felt they did have the right. The variables of age and education again influenced responses. Those older than fifty years of age, the semi-skilled or those with standard six level of education were least in favour. More women (71%) than men (58%) felt adoptees had this right, while persons in the professions were more likely to say it depended on the circumstances.

This survey into attitudes to adopting and the adoptee's right to trace birth parents, reveals that prejudice to adoption, typified by remarks such as, "Ek maak nie ander mense se kinders groot nie" or "I couldn't. You just don't know what you're getting", still exists among certain sectors of the White community of Port Elizabeth.

While we do not know how much attitudes to adoption have changed, we are relatively safe in assuming that attitudes have become more tolerant among adults, if not younger children. This could be due to the public being better informed on this subject.

The South African broadcasting and television services have featured programmes on the subject of adoption in an informed and sensitive manner, as have magazines such as Huisgenoot, Fair Lady and Woman's Value. Newspapers also feature articles on adoption from time to time. Many of the popular television serials include the theme of adoption. Adoption researchers are also of the opinion that social attitudes to premarital pregnancy and illegitimacy have softened over the past two or more decades.

Although adoption is unlikely to become commonplace, it is hoped that it will be viewed increasingly as an acceptable form of parenting and not something to be shrouded in secrecy. While research on open-adoption (varying degrees of contact between adoptive and birth parents) is still in its infancy (Groth et al., 1987), more adoption agencies and persons experienced in adoption placement are advocating this as preferable to current practices.

Adoptive parents might not choose infertility, but they do make a deliberate choice to parent when they decide to adopt. This behaviour, according to Dutch zoologist Dr. C. Naaktgeboren (1982), must not be seen as evidence of divine or 'super' natural behaviour, i.e. above the level of animal behaviour, as 'adoption' does occur in certain animal species. He argues that the love for and care of children, whether natal, adopted or fostered, is 'natural behaviour' that can be traced back over centuries, whereas the legal provisions concerning adoption are the consequence of urbanisation.

The arguments of Dr. Naaktgeboren are apposite in view of the reported attitudes of (well-meaning) family and friends when a couple adopt. These often take the form of comments about the altruism and bravery of the adopting couple, that were it not for their unselfish behaviour the child would have ended up in an orphanage or worse. These comments arise out of ignorance. The demand for babies for adoption far exceeds the supply. This has been instrumental in promoting cross-racial and cross-cultural adoptions. Children with defects or certain disorders (who in the past were difficult, if not impossible, to place) are now being placed for adoption with persons who accept these handicaps. These children are often termed 'special needs' children (Martin, 1980). Neither the opening up of access to adoption records nor the dwindling supply of babies for adoption is likely to deter the couple who have a need for a child of their own to love. What is needed is help for these persons so that they can accept the existence of another set of parents and, in turn, help their adopted child assimilate the existence in his or her life of two sets of parents. This amounts to the 'acknowledgement' mooted by Kirk (1964, 1985) in his theory of adoption. The acknowledgement of difference must always be muted and positive in the

sense that adoptive parents and child are bound by the ties of love and not genes. Incidences of 'rejection of difference' will hopefully become few in number as adopters become more comfortable in their role as parents of a child who has another set of parents to incorporate in his or her self-image.

These results show that adoptee responses to being adopted are diverse in many respects, while showing considerable concordance in some aspects, notably an interest in their origins. Even the latter reveals diversity; adoptees vary in the degree of curiosity that they have concerning their birth parents and genealogical history.

There was no evidence in support of adoptive parent fears that revelation of as much of the child's history as they possess would adversely affect the parent-child relationship. The adult adoptee's search for his or her 'lost genealogy' should not be viewed as an abandonment or rejection of the adoptive family. This finding is supported by Haniel (1982).

The evidence from this sample shows that where the relationship with the adoptive parents was warm and satisfying, no amount of searching for, or meetings with, the birth parent(s) could alter this. Despite the small number of adoptees who had found birth parents, the results from this study showed that adoptees whose adoptive parents were deceased appeared most in need of replacing the 'lost parents', as were those whose experiences of being adopted gave rise to subjective feelings of dissatisfaction or unhappiness that had to do with the relationship in the adoptive home. The adult adoptees in this sample have been at pains not to hurt their adoptive parents or appear to be disloyal to them. They have, in the main, extended that caring to their birth mother and father as well.

The adoptive parents of some adoptees in this sample are unaware of their adopted children's need to trace their birth parents so as to fill the gaps in their storehouse of knowledge concerning their genealogy. Evidence is forthcoming that this is so for many adoptees who are 'searching'. It is hoped that this will not be so in any adoptive parent/child relationships in the future.

While it is true that no-one who is not adopted can possibly know what it is really like, it is hoped that the material obtained in the course of this research will point the way to a greater understanding of adoption. It is also hoped that further research into adoption will be forthcoming in view of the many unanswered questions posed by this study.

Considering our relative ignorance regarding the needs of adoptees, adoptive parents and birth parents and their families, in regard to 'searching' and 'found' experiences, more research needs to be done as a matter of some urgency in this field of adoption. This is so, for only then will those in counselling positions be sure that they are heeding the admonition of the father of medicine, Hippocrates, namely, to do the least harm.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Ackerman, C.J. 1985. Die Voorkoms en Oorsaaklike Faktore van Selfmoord by Adollesente met Besondere Verwysing na die Eietydse Suid Afrikaanse Skool adollesent: 'n Opvoedkundige- Sielkundige Verkenning Studie. Unpublished MA Thesis. University of Stellenbosch, R.S.A.
- Ainsworth, M.D.S. 1965. Further research into the adverse effects of maternal deprivation, in Bowlby, J., Child Care and the Growth of Love. Harmondsworth. Penguin Books. pp. 191-241.
- American Academy of Pediatrics, Committee on Adoptions. 1971. Identity development in adopted children. Pediatrics 47, No. 5, May.
- Andrews, R.G. 1979. A clinical appraisal of searching. Public Welfare Summer. 37, No. 3. pp. 15-21.
- Anglim, E. 1965. The adopted child's heritage - Two natural parents. Child Welfare, June. pp. 339-343.
- Anon. (no date). Talking about origins: an open letter to adoptive parents. The Association of British Adoption and Fostering Agencies.
- Anon. (1974. Editor's page. On adoption and identity. Child Welfare 53. No. 8. October. p. 543.
- Anon. 1986. Editorial. Familiële hipercholesterolemie - 'n geskiedkundige konsensus. South African Medical Journal 69. No. 6. pp. 337-338.
- Ashdown-Sharpe, P. 1975. A Single Woman's Guide to Pregnancy and Parenthood. Harmondsworth. Penguin Books.
- Aumend, S.A. and Barret, M.C. 1984. Self-concept and attitudes toward adoption. A comparison of searching and non-searching adult adoptees. Child Welfare 63. No. 3. May/June. pp. 251-259.
- Babbie, E. 1983. The Practice of Social Research. 3rd Edition. California. Wadsworth Publishing Company.
- Bacciagaluppi, M. 1985. Inversion of parent-child relationships: A contribution to attachment theory. British Journal of Medical Psychology 58. pp. 369-373.
- Bachrach, C.A. 1986. Adoption plans, adopted children and adoptive mothers. Journal of Marriage and the Family 48. May. pp. 243-253.

- Bailey, K.D. 1982. The Methods of Social Research. 2nd Edition. New York. MacMillan Publishing Company.
- Baran, A., Sorosky, A. and Pannor, R. 1975. The dilemma of our adoptees. Secret adoption records. Psychology Today 9. December.
- Baran, A., Pannor, R. and Sorosky, A.D. 1976. Open Adoption. Social Work 21. No. 2. March. pp. 97-100.
- Benet, M.K. 1976. The Character of Adoption. London. Jonathan Cape.
- Ben-Israel, N. 1982a. Adoption and Family Life in Kibbutz Society. Paper delivered at the International Congress on Adoption. Eilat. Israel. May.
- Ben-Israel, N. 1982b. Adopted Children growing up in Kibbutz Society. Jerusalem. Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, Department of International Relations. May.
- Berger, B. and Berger, P. 1983. The War over the Family: capturing the middle ground. London. Hutchison and Co.
- Berger, M. and Hodges, J. 1982. (in collaboration with Carla Elliot, Sarah Rabb and Frances Salo). Some thoughts on the question of when to tell the child that he is adopted. Journal of Child Psychotherapy 8. pp. 67-88.
- Besharov, D.J. 1984. Liability in child welfare. Public Welfare Spring. pp. 28-33.
- Birrer, C.F. 1974. Learning in Infancy: a reappraisal. Paper delivered at a study conference on Early Childhood Education at the University of the Witwatersrand. 8-12 July. The Nursery Association of South Africa. pp. 147-160.
- Blank, Joseph P. 1976. 19 Steps up the Mountain. The story of the De Bolt family. Philadelphia and New York. J.B. Lippincott Company.
- Blood, R.O. Jnr. 1972. The Family. New York. The Free Press.
- Boberg, P.Q.R. 1977. The Law of Persons and the Family. Cape Town. Juta.
- Bohman, M. 1970. Adopted Children and their Families: a follow-up study of adopted children, their background, environment and adjustment. Stockholm. Proprius.
- Botha, D. 1977. Maatskaplike groepwerk met aanneem ouers. Official half-yearly Journal of the Department of Welfare and Pensions 12. December. No. 2. pp. 1-5.

- Botha, M.C. and Beighton, P. 1983a. Inherited disorders in the Afrikaner population of Southern Africa. Part 1. South African Medical Journal 64. 8 October. pp. 609-612.
- Botha, M.C. and Beighton, P. 1983b. Inherited disorders in the Afrikaner population of Southern Africa. Part 11. South African Medical Journal 64. 15 October. pp. 664-667.
- Boult, B.E. 1987. Social Attitudes to Adoption: results of a telephone research survey in Port Elizabeth, Republic of South Africa. Unpublished Research Paper.
- Boulton, M.G. 1983. On being a Mother. A study of women with pre-school children. London. Tavistock Publications.
- Bowlby, J. 1971. Child Care and the Growth of Love. 2nd Edition. Harmondsworth. Penguin Books.
- Breault, K.D. 1986. Suicide in America: A test of Durkheim's Theory of religious and family integration, 1933-1980. American Journal of Sociology 92. No. 3. November. pp. 628-656.
- Broadhurst, D.D. and Schwartz, E.J. 1979. The right to know. Public Welfare Summer. 37. No 3. pp. 5-8.
- Burgess, L.C. 1976. The Art of Adoption. Washington. Acropolis Books.
- Campbell, L.H. 1979. The birth parent's right to know. Public Welfare Summer. 37. No 3. pp. 22-27.
- Campbell, W.G. and Bellou, S.V. 1978. Form and Style: Thesis, Reports, Term papers. 5th Edition. Boston. Houghton Mifflin Company.
- Carey, W.B., Lipton, W.L. and Myers, R.A. 1974. Temperament in adopted and foster babies. Child Welfare 53. No. 6. June. pp. 352-359.
- Churchman, D. 1986. The debate over open adoption. Public Welfare Spring. pp 11-14.
- Cohen, D. 1977. Adoption. Psychology Today. November. pp. 128-134.
- Coleman, J.C., Butcher, J.N. and Carson, R.C. 1980. Abnormal Psychology and Modern Life. 6th Edition. Illinois. Scott Foresman and Company.
- Crump, A. 1987. The 'nature' and status of women. South African Journal of Sociology 18. No. 1. February. pp. 22-29.

- Cummins, R.R. and Alwood, C.W. 1984. Suicide attempts or threats by children and adolescents in Johannesburg. South African Medical Journal 66. 10 November. pp. 726-729.
- Damboritz, A. and Shapiro, Z. 1982. The Report of the Commission reviewing the Adoption of Children Act. Translation of the report issued in Hebrew in October 1979 by the Ministry of Justice. Israel. Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. Department of International Relations.
- Davids, J. 1983. A Psychodynamic Perspective on the Disclosure of Adoption to Extra-familial Early Adoptees. Unpublished MA Dissertation. University of Cape Town.
- Day, C. 1980. General Register Office Study. In Hall, Tony (ed.). Access to Birth Records. London. Published by: The Association of British Adoption and Fostering Agencies. May. pp. 21-33.
- Day, C. and Leeding, A. 1980. In Hall, Tony (ed.). Access to Birth Records : the impact of section 26 of the Children Act 1975. London. Published by: The Association of British Adoption and Fostering Agencies. May.
- Dean, G. 1971. The Porphyria's: a story of inheritance and environment. 2nd Edition. South Africa. Pitman Medical.
- De Bruyn, M. 1976. Die Aannemingsproses met Besondere Aandag aan die Aannemende Ouers. Unpublished D. Phil. Thesis. University of South Africa.
- De Bruyn, M. 1982. Bespreking van aanneming met die kind in die middeljare. Social Work 18. March. No. 1. pp. 21-28.
- De Hartog, J. 1969. The Children: a personal record for the use of adoptive parents. London. Hamilton.
- Delmar, R. 1976. Looking again at Engel's Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State. In Mitchell, J. and Oakley, A. (eds.). The Rights and Wrongs of Women. Harmondsworth. Penguin Books.
- Depp, C.H. 1982. After reunion: perceptions of adult adoptees, adoptive parents and birth parents. Child Welfare 61. No. 2. February. pp. 115-119.
- Derdeyn, A.P. 1979. Adoption and the ownership of children. Child Psychiatry and Human Development 9. Summer. pp. 215-226.

- De Saxe, M., Kromberg, J.G.R. and Jenkins, T. 1984a. The Aarskrog (facio-digital-genital) syndrome in South Africa. South African Medical Journal 65. No. 8. pp. 299-302.
- De Saxe, M., Kromberg, J.G.R. and Jenkins, T. 1984b. Waardenberg syndrome in South Africa. South African Medical Journal 66. No. 8. pp 291-293.
- DiGuiglio, J.F. 1978. The "Search": providing continued service for adoptive parents. Child Welfare 58. No. 7. July/August. pp. 461-465.
- Dodge, J.A. 1972. Psychosomatic aspects of infantile pyloric stenosis. Journal of Psychosomatic Research 16. pp. 1-5.
- Dukette, R. 1979. Adoption 1979: Sleeping Beauty awakes. Social Thought Fall. pp. 5-13.
- Dukette, R. 1984. Value issues in present-day adoption. Child Welfare 63. No. 3. May/June. pp. 232-243.
- Ehrlich, H. 1977. A Time to Search. The Moving and Dramatic Stories of Adoptees in search of their Natural Parents. New York. Paddington Press.
- Eldred, C.A., Rosenthal, D., Wender, P.H., Kety, S.S., Schulsinger, F., Welner, J. and Jacobsen, B. 1976. Some aspects of adoption in selected samples of adult adoptees. American Journal of Orthopsychiatry 46. April. pp. 279-290.
- Evans, E.D. 1970. (ed.) Adolescents. Readings in Behaviour and Development. Hinsdale. Illinois. Dryden Press.
- Fahlberg, V. 1979a. Attachment & Separation. Michigan Department of Social Services. DSS Publication 429 (Rev. 10-79).
- Fahlberg, V. 1979b. Helping Children When They Must Move. Michigan Department of Social Services. DSS Publication (11-80).
- Feder, L. 1974. Adoption Trauma: Oedipus Myth/Clinical Reality. International Journal of Psychoanalysis 55. pp. 491-493.
- Felker, E. 1981. Raising other People's Kids. Michigan. William Eerdman's Publishing.
- Ferris, P. 1967. The Nameless. Revised edition. Abortion in Britain today. Harmondsworth. Penguin Books.
- Fisher, F. 1973. The Search for Anna Fisher. London. Michael Dempsey.

- Flynn, L. 1979. A parent's perspective. Public Welfare Summer. 37. No. 3. pp. 28-33.
- Foster, A. 1979. Who has the right to know? Public Welfare Summer. 37. No. 3. pp 34-37.
- Gallagher, U.M. 1975. What's happening in adoption? Children Today. November/December. pp. 11-13, 36.
- Garbo, N. 1977. To Love Again. New York. McGraw-Hill.
- Garmonsway, G.N. 1969. (with Simpson, J.) Penguin English Dictionary. 2nd Edition. Harmondsworth. Penguin Books.
- Gill, D. 1977. Illegitimacy, Sexuality and the Status of Women. Oxford. Blackwell.
- Giovacchini, P. 1981. The Urge to Die. Why Young People Commit Suicide. New York. MacMillan Publishing.
- Gold, E.R. 1986. Long-term effects of sexual victimization in childhood: an attributional approach. Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology 54. No. 4. August. pp. 471-475.
- Goldblatt, A.L. and Beighton, P. 1979. Gaucher's disease in the Afrikaner population of South Africa. South African Medical Journal 71. 10 February. pp. 209-210.
- Goldstein, J., Freud, A. and Solnit, A.J. 1979. Beyond the Best Interests of the Child. New York. The Free Press.
- Goode, W.J. and Hatt, P.K. 1952. Methods in Social Research. Tokyo. McGraw-Hill.
- Gordon, T. 1975. P.E.T. Parent Effectiveness Training. New York. A Plume Book. New American Library.
- Gordon, T. 1980. P.E.T. In Action. New York. Bantam Books.
- Gore, E. 1976. Child Psychiatry Observed. A guide for social workers. Oxford. Pergamon Press.
- Gray, C., 1986. Special report. Adoption. Mother and child. The search goes on. Fair Lady. 8 January. Cape Town. Nasionale Koerante.
- Gray, F. and Anderson, J. 1981. Transfer of health information in cases of adoption. Nursing Times. March 26. pp. 563-566.
- Grotevant, H.D. 1977. Similarity in adoptive and biological families. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology 35. pp. 667-676.

- Grotevant, H.D., Scarr, S. and Weinberg, R.A. 1978a. Patterns of interest and similarity in adoptive and biological families. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology 35. March. pp. 88-90.
- Grotevant, H.D., Scarr, S. and Weinberg, R.A. 1978b. Inheritable? Psychology Today 11. March. pp. 88-90.
- Groth, M., Bonnardel, D., Devis, D.A., Martin J.C. and Vousden, H.E. 1987. An agency moves towards open adoption. Child Welfare 66. No. 3, May/June. pp. 247-257.
- Grove, S.S. and Kromberg, J.G.R. 1985. Bernard-Soulier syndrome in two Afrikaner families. South African Medical Journal 67. No. 26. pp. 1050-1052.
- Groves, R.M. and Kahn, R.L. 1979. Surveys by Telephone. A National Comparison with Personal Interviews. New York. Academic Press.
- Haniel, Y. 1982. The Intermediary Agent as a Factor in the Adoptee's Search for His or Her Natural Parents. State of Israel. Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. Jerusalem.
- Harrington, J.D. 1979. Legislative reform moves slowly. Public Welfare Summer.37. No. 3. pp. 49-57.
- Harrington, J.D. 1984. Adoption and the State Legislatures. Public Welfare Spring. pp. 35-47.
- Harrington, J.D. 1986. Adoption and the State Legislatures 1984-1985. Public Welfare Spring. pp. 18-25.
- Haslam, M.T. 1982. Psychiatry Made Simple. London. Heinemann.
- Hayden, M.R., Hopkins, H.C., Macrae, M. and Beighton, P.H. 1984. The origin of Huntington's Chorea in the Afrikaner population of South Africa. South African Medical Journal 58. No. 5. pp. 197-200.
- Heart Foundation of South Africa. Focus on Familial hypercholesterolaemia. Summaries of papers presented at Consensus workshop. 17-18 February 1986. South African Medical Journal. 16 August 1986.
- Heim, A. 1983. Thicker than Water? Adoption: Its Loyalties, Pitfalls and Joys. London. Secker and Warburg.
- Hjelle, L.A., and Ziegler, D.H. 1976. Personality Theories. Basic assumptions. Research and assumptions. International Student Edition. Tokyo. McGraw-Hill.
- Howard, M. 1975. I take after somebody; I have real relatives; I possess a real name. Psychology Today. December. pp. 33-37.

- Humphrey, M. 1969. The Hostage Seekers. A Study of Childless and Adopting Couples. London. Longmans, in association with: The National Bureau for Co-operation in Child Care.
- Humphrey, M. and Humphrey, H. 1986. A fresh look at genealogical bewilderment. British Journal of Medical Psychology 59. pp. 133-140.
- Husain, S.A. and Vandiver, T. 1984. Suicide in Children and Adolescents. New York. S.P. Medical and Scientific Books.
- Iremonger, L. 1984. Orphans of the Heart. London. Secker and Warburg.
- Jackson, L. 1968. Unsuccessful adoptions: a study of 40 cases who attended a child guidance clinic. British Journal of Medical Psychology 41. pp. 389-399.
- Jaffee, B. 1974. Adoption outcome: a two-generation view. Child Welfare 53. No. 4. April. pp. 211-224.
- Jaffee, B. and Fanshel, D. 1970. How They Fared in Adoption: A Follow-up Study. New York. Columbia University Press.
- Janson, M. 1985. Sake van die Hart uit Huisgenoot. Cape Town. Tafelberg.
- Jenkins, T., Nicholls, E., Gordon, E., Mendelsohn, D., Seftel, H.C. and Andrew, M.J.A. 1980. Familial Hypercholesterolaemia - a common genetic disorder in the Afrikaans population. South African Medical Journal 57. No. 23. pp. 943-947.
- Johnstone, S.H.B. 1972. Applicants Considered Unsuitable to Adopt a Child, with Special Reference to Social Work Service. Unpublished MA Dissertation. University of Potchefstroom.
- Joubert, C.P. 1957. Enige wanopvattinge insake adopsie en Erfopvolgingwet No. 13 van 1934. The South African Law Journal 74. pp. 431-441.
- Kadushin, A. 1980. Child Welfare Services. 3rd Edition. New York. MacMillan Publishing.
- Kellmer-Pringle, M.L. 1967. Adoption - Facts and Fallacies. A review of research in the United States, Canada and Great Britain between 1948 and 1965. London. Longmans, in association with the National Bureau for Co-operation in Child Care.
- Kenkel, W.F. 1966. The Family in Perspective. 2nd Edition. New York. Appleton-Century-Crofts.

- Kiester, E. Jr. 1974. Should we unlock the adoption files? Today's Health. August. pp 54-60.
- Kirk, H.D. 1955. Values Related to Adoptions. An Aspect of the Adopted Child's Heritage. A Research Report. Chicago. Illinois. Child Welfare League of America.
- Kirk, H.D. 1959. A dilemma of adoptive parenthood: incongruous role obligations. Marriage and Family Living. November. pp 316-328.
- Kirk, H.D. 1964. Shared Fate. A theory of adoption and mental health. New York. The Free Press.
- Kirk, H. David, Jonassohn, K. and Fish, A.D. 1966. Are adopted children especially vulnerable to stress. A critique of some recent assertions. Archives of General Psychiatry 14. March. pp 291-299.
- Kirk, H. David. 1981. Adoptive Kinship. A Modern Institution in Need of Return. Toronto. Butterworths.
- Kirk, H. David and McDaniel, S.A. (no date.) Adoption policy in Great Britain and North America. Journal of Social Policy 13(1). pp. 75-84.
- Kirk, H. David. 1985. Shared Fate. A theory and method of adoptive relationships. 2nd Edition. Brentwood Bay. Ben-Simon Publications.
- Kirk, H. David. 1985. Adoptive Kinship. A Modern Institution in Need of Reform. Revised edition. Brentwood Bay. Ben-Simon Publications.
- Klaus, M.H. and Kennell, J.H. 1982. Parent-Infant Bonding. St Louis. C.V. Mosby Company.
- Kornitzer, M. 1952. Adoption in the Modern World. London, Putnam.
- Kornitzer, M. 1971. The adopted adolescent and the sense of Identity. Child Adoption 66. pp. 43-48.
- Kowai, K.A. and Schilling, K.M. 1985. Adoption through the eyes of adult adoptees. American Journal of Orthopsychiatry 55(3). July. pp. 354-363.
- Krementz, J. 1984. How it Feels to be Adopted. London. Victor Gollancz.
- Krugman, D.C. 1967. Differences in the relation of parents and children to adoption. Child Welfare. May. pp 267-271.
- Laing, R.D. 1970. Knots. Harmondsworth. Penguin Books.

- Landman, W.A., Anderson, W.W. en Mev. S.H. van Wyk. 1967. 'n Inleidende Onderzoek na Enkele Aspekte Aangaande die Aanneming van Kinders, South Africa. University of Port Elizabeth. Publikasie Reeks. Nr. 6.
- Lane, A.B., Dunn, D.S. and Jenkins, T. 1985. A genetic profile of the South African Ashkenazi Jewish population. South African Medical Journal 68. No. 13. pp. 935-939.
- Lawder, E.A., Lower, K.O., Andrews, R.G., Sherman, E.A. and Hill, J.G. 1969. A Follow-up Study of Adoptions: Post Placement Functioning of Adoption Families. New York. Child Welfare League of America.
- Lawton, J.J., Gross, S. and Gross, Z. 1964. Review of psychiatric literature on children. Archives and General Psychiatry 11. December. pp. 635-644.
- Leeding, A. 1980. The local authority experience. In Hall, Tony (ed.). Access to Birth Records. London. Published by: The Association of British Adoption and Fostering Agencies. May. pp. 9-20.
- Leitch, D. Family Secrets. 1986. Harmondsworth. Penguin Books.
- Lifton, B.J. 1979. Lost and Found. The Adoption Experience. New York. Dial Press.
- Lombaard, S.F. 1971. 'n Evaluasie van die Maatskaplike Onderzoek, Keuring en Voorbereiding van Aannemende Ouers deur die Christelike-Maatskaplike Rade van Noord-Transvaal. Unpublished MA Dissertation. University of Pretoria.
- Lotz, B.P. and Van der Meyden, K.M.M. 1985. The ante-natal ultrasonographic (sic) detection of the Holt-Oram syndrome. South African Medical Journal 67. No. 20. pp 812-817.
- Maas, H.S., Mech, E.V., Carlson, P.V., Yarrow, L.J. and Brieland, D. 1965. Perspectives on Adoption Research. New York. Child Welfare League of America.
- Madsen, D. 1983. Successful Dissertations and Theses. San Francisco. Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Mandell, B.R. 1973. Where are the Children? A Class Analysis of Foster Care and Adoption. Massachusetts. Lexington Books.
- Marcus, R.H., Marcus, B.D. and Levin, S.E. 1985. The upper limb-cardiovascular syndrome (Holt-Oram syndrome) in a South African family. South African Medical Journal 67. No. 25. pp. 1013-1014.

- Martin, C.D. Beating the Adoption Game. 1980. California. Oak Tree Publications.
- McKee, L. and O'Brien, M. (eds.). 1982. The Father Figure. London. Tavistock Publications.
- McWhinnie, A.M. 1967. Adopted Children. How they Grow Up. London. Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- McWhinnie, A.M. 1985. Genealogical Certainty - Adopted Adults Need For This. Paper delivered at the Third National Adoption Conference. Carleton University. Ottawa, Canada. May 9-11.
- Mech, E.V., Carlton, P.V., Yarrow, L.J. and Brieland, D. 1965. Perspectives on Adoption Research. New York. Child Welfare League of America. March.
- Morris, M.B. 1987. Children's perceptions of last-chance parents: some implications of current trends toward late childbearing. Child Welfare 66. No. 3. May/June. pp. 195-205.
- Mouton, G.E. 1976. Die Aanneming van Kinders met Besondere Verwysing na die Inpassing by die Aannemende Ouers. Unpublished D.Phil. Thesis. University of the Orange Free State.
- Muller, L.M., De Jong, G. and Van Heerden, K.M.M. 1985. The antenatal ultrasonographic detection of the Holt-Oram Syndrome. South African Medical Journal 68. No. 5. pp. 313-315.
- Mussen, P.H., Conger, J.J. and Kagan, J. 1974. Child Development and Personality. 4th Edition. New York. Harper & Row.
- Naaktgeboren, C. 1982. Adoption. Between God and Nature. Paper presented at the International Congress on Adoption, Eilat, Israel. May.
- Nelson, M.M., Berman, P.A.M., Davidson, J.S. and Petersen, E.E. 1984. Prenatal diagnosis of Cystic Fibrosis in South Africa. South African Medical Journal 66. No. 18. pp 688-690.
- Newborg, D.L. 1979. Legal developments in New York State regarding the sealed adoption record controversy. Child Welfare 58. No. 4. April. pp. 277-283.
- Norvell, M. and Guy, R.F. 1977. A comparison of self-concept in adopted and non-adopted adolescents. Adolescence 12. No. 47 Fall. pp. 443-448.

- Ombolet, W. and Van der Merwe, J.V. 1985. Sinusoidal fetal heart rate pattern associated with congenital hydrocephalus. South African Medical Journal 67. No. 11. pp. 423-425.
- Oswald, A.H., Goldblatt, J., Sampson, G., Clokie, R. and Beighton, P. 1985. Retinitis pigmentosa in South Africa. South African Medical Journal 68. No. 12. pp. 863-866.
- Page, R. 1984. Stigma. Concept on Social Policy. London. Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Pakati, E.R.V. 1982. To Tell or Not to Tell: How Adoptive Families in the Zulu Culture deal with Non-Familial Adoptions. Paper presented at the International Congress on Adoption. Eliat. Israel. May.
- Pannor, R. and Evans B.W. 1967. The unmarried father: an integral part of casework services to the unmarried mother. Child Welfare. March. pp. 151-155.
- Pannor, R., Baran, A. and Sorosky, A.D. 1978. Birth parents who relinquished babies for adoption revisited. Family Process 17. September. pp. 329-337.
- Pannor, R. and Baran, A. 1984. Open adoption as standard practice. Child Welfare 63. No. 3. May/June. pp. 245-250.
- Pardeck, J.T. and Pardeck, J.A. 1987. Bibliotherapy in foster care and adoption. Child Welfare 66. No. 3. May/June. pp. 267-278.
- Parkes, C.M. and Stevenson-Hinde, J. (eds.). 1982. The Place of Attachment in Human Behaviour. London. Tavistock Publications.
- Pfuhl, E. 1978. The unwed father: a non-deviant rule breaker. The Sociological Quarterly 19. Winter. pp 113-128.
- Picton, C. 1982. Australia. Adoptees in search of origins. Adoption and Fostering 6. No. 2. pp. 49-52.
- Pringle, M.L.K. 1967. Adoption - Facts and Fallacies. London. Longmans, in association with: The National Bureau for Co-operation in Child Care.
- Rabson, A.R. 1986. Recent ideas on the causation of autoimmune disease. South African Medical Journal Supplement 11 October.
- Raubenheimer, J. 1970. Aanneming met Spesiale Verwysing na 'n Groep Blanke Kinders in Suid Afrika. Unpublished MA dissertation. University of Stellenbosch.

- Raubenheimer, J. 1974. Die Aard van Sorgbehoewendheid by 'n Groep Blanke Aangenome Kinders. Unpublished D. Phil. thesis. University of Cape Town.
- Raubenheimer, J. 1976. Adopted children in need of care. Official Halfyearly Journal of the Department of Social Welfare and Pensions 11. June. No. 1. pp. 11-17.
- Raubenheimer, J. 1977. Historiese oorsig oor die ontstaan en ontwikkeling van aanneming. Official Halfyearly Journal of the Department of Social Welfare and Pensions 12. June. No. 1. pp. 1-5.
- Rautman, A.L. 1959. Adoptive parents need help, too. Mental Hygiene 33. pp. 424-431.
- Raynor, L. 1977. Twenty-one plus and adopted. Adoption and Fostering 87. pp. 38-46.
- Raynor, L. 1980. The Adopted Child Comes of Age. London. George Allen and Unwin.
- Redmond, W. and Sleightholm, S. 1982. Once Removed. Voices From Inside the Adoption Triangle. Toronto. McGraw-Hill Ryerson.
- Rondell, F. and Michaels, R. 1965. The Adopted Family. Revised edition. New York. Crown Publishers.
- Rowe, J. 1959. Yours By Choice. A Guide for Adoptive Parents. London. Mills and Boon.
- Rowe, J. 1970. The realities of adoptive parenthood. Adoption and Fostering. No 59. pp. 23-29.
- Rowe, J. 1982. Yours by Choice. New Edition. A Guide for Adoptive Parents. London. Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Sants, J.H. 1964. Genealogical Bewilderment in children with substitute parents. British Journal of Medical Psychology 37. pp 137-141.
- Schechter, M.D. 1960. Observations on adopted children. Archives of General Psychiatry 3. pp. 45-57.
- Schechter, M.D., Carlson, P.V., Simmons, J.Q. and Work, H.H. 1964. Emotional problems in the adoptee. Archives of General Psychiatry 10. February. pp. 37-46.
- Schlebusch, L. 1986. Short-term precipitants of parasuicide in adolescents. South African Medical Journal 70. 2 August. pp 165-167.

- Schoeman, L. 1985. Artikel 20 van die nuwe Wet op Kindersorg 74 van 1983 - die gevolge van aanneming. Tydskrif vir Hedendaagse Romeins-Hollandse Reg 48. No. 2. May. pp 218-226.
- Schultz, A.L. and Motulsky, A.G. 1971. Medical Genetics and Adoption. Child Welfare 1. No. 1. January. pp. 4-17.
- Scott, E. 1980. Adoption. A First Book. New York. Franklin Watts.
- Seftel, H.C., Baker, S.G., Sandler, M.P., Forman, M.B., Joffe, B.I., Mendelsohn, D., Jenkins, T. and Mieny, C.J. 1980. A host of hypercholesterolaemic zygotes in South Africa. South African Medical Journal 281. 6 September. pp. 633-636.
- Seglow, J., Pringle, M. and Wedge, P. 1972. Growing Up Adopted. (A report by the National Children's Bureau), Britain. National Foundation for Educational Research in England and Wales.
- Shapiro, M.E.Z. 1982. Adoption in Literature. A Comparative Study of the Adoptive Relationship in Selected Literary Texts. State of Israel. Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. May.
- Slomnika, B.I. 1982. Law of Child Care. Great Britain. Macdonald & Evans.
- Small, J.W. 1979. Discrimination against the adoptee. Public Welfare Summer. 37. No. 3. pp. 38-43.
- Smith, C.R. 1984. Adoption and Fostering. Why and How. London. Macmillan Publishers.
- Smith, I.E. 1963. Readings in Adoption. New York. Philosophical Library.
- Sokoloff, B. 1977. Should the adopted adolescent have access to his birth records and to his birth parents? Why? When? Clinical Pediatrics. November. pp 975-977.
- Sorich, C.J. and Siebert, R. 1982. Towards humanizing adoption. Child Welfare 61. No. 3. pp. 207-216.
- Sorosky, A.D., Baran, A. and Pannor, R. 1975. Identity conflicts in adoptees. American Journal of Orthopsychiatry 45(1). January. pp. 18-27.
- Sorosky, A.D., Baran, A. and Pannor, R. 1978. The Adoption Triangle. The effects of sealed records on adoptees, birth parents and adoptive parents. New York, Anchor Press/Doubleday.

- Sorosky, A.D., Baran, A. and Pannor, R. 1984. The Adoption Triangle (with a new Introduction). New York. Anchor Books.
- South African Medical Journal. 1986. Editorial. Familiële hipercholesterolemie - 'n geskiedkundige konsensus. 69. No. 6. pp. 337-338.
- South African National Council for Child Welfare. 1972. A Guide to Adoption Practice in South Africa. Johannesburg. January.
- Spencer, M.E. 1979. The terminology of adoption. Child Welfare 58. No. 7. July/August. pp. 451-459.
- Spiro, E. 1961. Effect of adoption in South Africa. The South African Law Journal 78. pp. 318-338.
- Steinberg, K. 1958. The nationality of adopted children under South African Law. The South African Law Journal 75. pp. 318-324.
- Swart, A.L., Hesseling, P.B., Hayden, M.R., Louw, M. and Herbert, J.S. 1987. Gaucher's disease in the Cape Coloured population of the RSA, including a family with 5 affected sibilings. South African Medical Journal 71. 24 January. pp. 97-99.
- Tizard, B. 1977. Adoption, a Second Chance. New York. The Free Press.
- Toussieng, P.W. 1962. Thoughts regarding the etiology of psychological difficulties in adopted children. Child Welfare. February. pp. 59-65, 71.
- Torrington, M., Botha, J.L., Pilcher, G.J. and Baker, S.G. 1984. Association between familial hypercholesterolaemia and church affiliation. South African Medical Journal 69. No. 3. pp 762-767.
- Torrington, M., Pilcher, G.J., Baker, S.G. and Botha, J.L. 1986. Familial hypercholesterolaemia - the need for adequate counselling and family tracing. South African Medical Journal 69. No. 6. pp. 170-173.
- Torrington, M., Weymar, H.W., van der Merwe, P.L., and Brink, A.J. 1986. Progressive familial heart block. part 1. Extent of the disease. South African Medical Journal 70. No 6. pp. 353-355.
- Toynbee, P. 1985. Lost Children. The story of adopted children searching for their mothers. London. Hutchinson.
- Triseliotis, J. 1973. In Search of Origins. The Experiences of Adopted People. London. Routledge & Kegan Paul.

- Triseliotis, J. (ed.). 1980. New Developments in Foster Care and Adoption. London. Routledge & Kegan Paul..
- Van Delft, W.F. 1981. Seksuele opvoeding en die aangename kind. Social Work 17. June. No. 2. pp. 100-108.
- Van der Merwe, N.J. and Rowland, C.J. 1969. Die Suid Afrikaanse Erfreg. Pretoria. J.P. van der Walt en Seun.
- Van Zyl, A.M. 1986. Selfmoord en selfmoordpogings by kinders en adolessente. The S.A. Journal of Continuing Medical Education 4. No. 9. September. pp 52-56.
- Veenhoven R. 1974. Is there an innate need for children? European Journal for Social Psychology 74. pp 495-501.
- Viljoen, D.L., Beighton, P., Mabin, T., Woods, K. and Bonafede, P. 1984. Pseudoxanthoma elasticum in South Africa - genetic and clinical implications. South African Medical Journal 66. No. 21. pp 813-816.
- Wadsworth, B.J. 1984. Piaget's Theory of Cognitive and Effective Development. 3rd Edition. New York. Longman.
- Watson, K.W. 1979. Who is the primary client? Public Welfare Summer. 37. No. 3. pp. 11-14.
- Watson, K.W. 1986. Birth families: Living with the adoption decision. Public Welfare Spring. pp. 5-10, 42.
- Wertlin, R.A. 1986. Adoption Worker's views on sealed records. Survey shows workers favor limited access. Public Welfare Spring. pp. 15-17, 42.
- Wieder, H. 1977. The family romance fantasies of adopted children. The Psychoanalytic Quarterly 46. pp. 185-200.
- Wiendieck, G.E. 1973. On the Appeal Function of Suicide Attempts. University of the Witwatersrand. (Unpublished paper).
- Winship, I.M. 1985. Ehlers-Danlos syndrome in the Western Cape. South African Medical Journal 67. No. 13. pp. 509-511.
- Winship, I.M. 1986. Epidermolysis bullosa in South Africa. South African Medical Journal 69. No. 12. pp. 935-939.
- Witmer, H.L., Herzog, E., Weinstein, E.A. and Sullivan, M.E. 1963. Independent Adoptions. A Follow-up Study. New York. Russell Sage Foundation.
- Wolff, S. 1974. The fate of the adopted child. Archives of Disease in Childhood. pp. 165-170.

- Yarrow, L.J. 1965. Theoretical implications of adoption research. Child Welfare. February. pp. 65-72.
- Zeilinger, R. 1979. The need versus the right to know. Public Welfare Summer. 37. No 3. pp 44-47.
- Zur Nieden, M. 1951. The influence of constitution and environment upon the development of adopted children. Journal of Psychology 31. pp. 91-95.

PUBLICATIONS OF THE GOVERNMENT OF THE UNION OF SOUTH AFRICA

Debates of the House of Assembly. Vol. 8, 20 January 1923-1925.

Unie van Suid Afrika. Verslag van die departement Volkswelsyn vir die Boekjare 1937-1939. Pretoria. Government Printer.

Report of the Department of Social Welfare for the period 1 October 1937 - 31 March 1949. Pretoria. Government Printer.

Annual Report of the Department of Social Welfare 1942. Pretoria. Government Printer.

Unie van Suid Afrika. Memorandum oor die beleid en werksaamhede van die Departement van Volkswelsyn vir die tydperk 1 Januarie 1943 tot 31 Desember 1943. Pretoria. Government Printer.

Unie van Suid Afrika. Memorandum in verband met die beleid en werksaamhede van die Departement van Volkswelsyn vir die tydperk 1 January 1944 tot 31 Desember 1944. Pretoria. Government Printer.

Annual Report of the Department of Social Welfare 1946. Pretoria. Government Printer.

Annual Report of the Department of Social Welfare 1947. Pretoria. Government Printer.

Report of the Department of Social Welfare for the period 1 April 1949 - 31 March 1951. Pretoria. Government Printer.

Report of the Department of Social Welfare for the period 1952-1959. Pretoria. Government Printer.

PUBLICATIONS OF THE GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Report of the Department of Social Welfare for the period 1959-1962. Pretoria. Government Printer.

Department of Social Welfare and Pensions. Report for the period 1962-1964. Pretoria. Government Printer.

Department of Social Welfare and Pensions. Report for the period 1964-1966. Pretoria. Government Printer.

Department of Social Welfare and Pensions. Report for the period 1966-1970. Pretoria. Government Printer.

Department of National Health and Population Development. No. R. 1985. Regulations made under the Child Care Act, 1983. Pretoria, Government Printer.

Statutes of the Republic of South Africa - Children. Children's Act, No. 33 of 1960. Pretoria. Government Printer.

Statutes of the Republic of South Africa - Children. Child Care Act, No. 74 of 1983. Pretoria. Government Printer.

Central Statistical Services. Population Census. 1985. Reports 02-80-10 and 02-85-04. Pretoria. Government Printer.

House of Assembly Debates (Hansard) Third Session - Seventh Parliament. 9-13 May 1983. Pretoria. Government Printer.

PERIODICALS

Fair Lady, 6 January 1986. Cape Town. Nasionale Koerante.

Fair Lady, 2 April 1986. Cape Town. Nasionale Koerante.

Huisgenoot, 27 Februarie 1986. Kaapstad. Nasionale Media Bpk.

Woman's Value, June 1986. Cape Town. Nasionale Koerante.

Gevra: inligting oor aanneming

EK doen tans navorsing vir my MA-graad oor die kwessie van aanneming en sal graag inligting hieroor wil inwin van aangenome persone sowel as aannemende en biologiese ouers (en grootouers).

My navorsingsprojek sal toegespits wees op die aangenome persoon se behoefte om sy of haar biologiese ouers op te spoor, en die effek wat dit het op aannemende en biologiese ouers. Daar is ook baie min kennis beskikbaar omtrent die effek wat dit op hulle het om 'n kleinkind af te gee vir aanneming of dalk jare later op te spoor.

Volkome vertroulikheid word aan alle respondente verseker. - Mev. Brenda Boulton, Posbus 404, Port Elizabeth 6000, ☎ (041) 51-1356.
(Na bl. 8)

Huisgenoot, 27 Februarie 1986

I am researching adoption for my master's degree in sociology through the University of Port Elizabeth, and would like to appeal to your readers for assistance.

My research focuses on the adoptive person's need to trace birth parents and the effect of this on both adoptive and birth parents. In addition, I am researching the effects of adoption on grandparents. I should be grateful if adoptees, adoptive parents, birth parents and grandparents would write to me, in either English or Afrikaans. Complete and unconditional confidentiality is assured for all respondents.

★ Brenda Boulton
Box 304
Port Elizabeth
6000

FAR LADY, 2 APRIL, 1986

THE ADOPTION TRIANGLE

Reader Brenda Boulton is engaged in research for her Master's degree in Sociology, and is conducting a study on "the adoption triangle".

The study will look at an adopted person's needs to know more about birth parents and the effect this may have on adoptive and birth parents. The study will also concentrate on the effects on grandparents.

Mrs Boulton would like to hear the personal views and experiences of people involved in adoption. Complete and unconditional confidentiality is assured: personal names and details will be altered or omitted from the report.

Any adopted person, adoptive parent, birth parent or grandparent is invited to write to Mrs Boulton, in English or Afrikaans, at PO Box 304, Port Elizabeth 6000, or telephone her at (041) 51-1356.



APPENDIX B

QUESTIONNAIRE

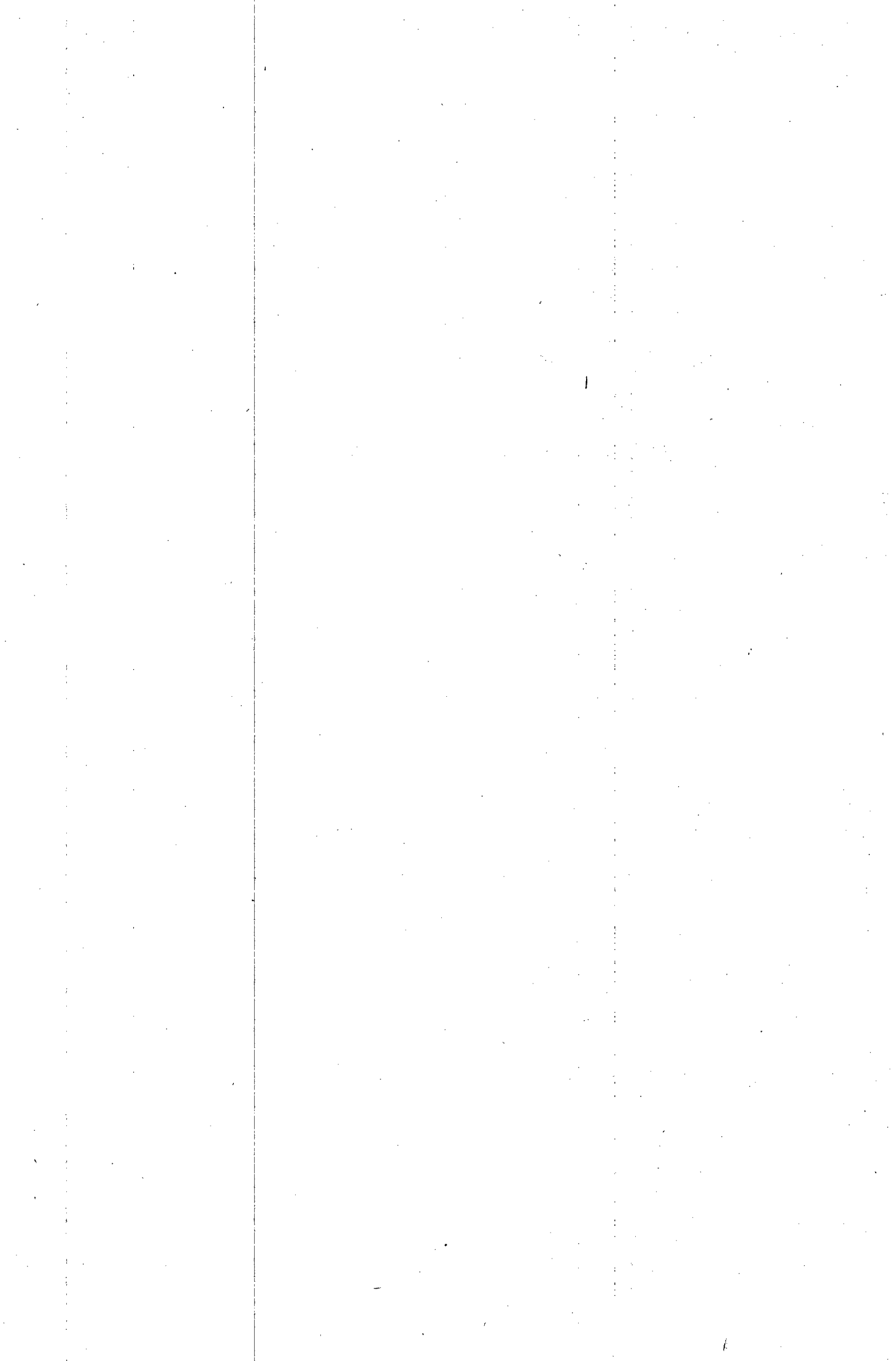
CONFIDENTIAL

TITLE

"ADOPTION : THE NATURE OF AND EFFECT ON INTEGRATION
THE SOUTH AFRICAN EXPERIENCE"

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY

RESEARCHER : Mrs Brenda E. Boulton
P O Box 304
PORT ELIZABETH
6000



THIS QUESTIONNAIRE IS DIVIDED INTO 9 SECTIONS

- SECTION A. Covers personal details.
- SECTION B. Questions concerning the family into which you were adopted.
- SECTION C. Concerns "how much" and "what" you were told concerning your birth parents.
- SECTION D. Concerns your adoptive experience during childhood.
- SECTION E. Concerns your school experience.
- SECTION F. Concerns your adolescence.
- SECTION G. Concerns your experience as an adult adoptee.
- SECTION H. Question for those of you who are or were ever married.
- SECTION I. Questions to be answered by those who are searching for birth parent(s) and/or those who have found birth parent(s).

Please tick the appropriate answer or write your answer where necessary.

Thank you. I value your co-operation.

with best wishes,

Brenda Beault

SECTION A : PERSONAL DETAILS

1. Sex male female

2. Date of birth

3. Marital status single married divorced separated living together

4. Where do you live?

Cape Province	
Orange Freestate	
Transvaal	
Natal	
Other (Specify)	

5. Have you any children? yes no

6. If you have children please fill in the following details:

	Own	Adopted	Step	Sex	Age
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					
6					

7. Educational qualification attained?

Standard 8 or lower	
Standard 9 or 10	
Diploma	
Degree	
Post graduate qualifications	

8. Have you changed jobs since 1983? Yes No

9. If yes, how many times have you changed jobs since 1983 ?

Once	
Twice	
Three times	
Four times	
Five times	
More than this	

SECTION B

THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS CONCERN THE FAMILY INTO WHICH YOU WERE ADOPTED.

10. Adoptive father, as at present is alive deceased

11. If deceased, how old were you when he died? Years

12. If alive, what is his age? Years

13. What is his present marital status?

Married	divorced	separated	widowed
---------	----------	-----------	---------

14. If divorced or separated how old were you when this occurred? Years

15. Occupation? _____

16. Country of residence? _____

17. Adoptive Mother, as at present is: alive deceased

18. If deceased, how old were you when she died? Years

19. If alive, what is her age? Years

20. What is her present marital status?

Married	divorced	separated	widowed
---------	----------	-----------	---------

21. If divorced or separated, how old were you when this occurred? Years

22. Brothers (in adoptive family)

	natural born	adopted	step	age
1.				
2.				
3.				
4.				
5.				
6.				

23. Sisters (in adoptive family)

	natural born	adopted	step	age
1.				
2.				
3.				
4.				
5.				
6.				

24. If your adoptive parents were divorced, who obtained custody of the children?

25. Did you get along with your adoptive brothers and sisters? Please specify.

SECTION C

BIOGRAPHICAL DETAILS ABOUT BIRTH PARENTS

26. What were you told about your birth mother? _____

27. What were you told about your birth father? _____

SECTION D

THE ADOPTIVE EXPERIENCE DURING CHILDHOOD.

28. At what age were you placed with your adoptive family?

WEEKS	
MONTHS	
YEARS	

29. Have you always known you were adopted? Yes No

30. If not, at what age were you told? Years

31. How was the fact of your being adopted explained to you?

32. Who disclosed this information to you?
 Adoptive mother adoptive father both other

33. If other, please explain, _____

34. Was this a once only explanation? yes no

35. If not, was being adopted part of childhood story time? yes no

36. How old were you when you started wondering about being adopted? Years

37. Did you ever think about your birth mother? Yes No

38. If yes, what were your thoughts? _____

39. Do you remember ever having any fears about your birth mother? Yes No

40. If you did have any fears about your birth mother, what was the nature of these fears?

41. Did you ever think about your birth father? Yes No

42. If yes, what were your thoughts? _____

43. Do you remember ever having any fears about your birth father? Yes No

44. If yes, what was the nature of these fears? _____

45. Did you think more about your birth mother or your birth father?

birth mother birth father

46. Did you recall any other fears associated with being an adopted child? _____

47. What pleasant memories do you recall about being an adopted child? _____

48. Were you ever afraid that your adoptive parents would give you away?

sometimes never

49. What part did religion and going to church play in your adoptive family life?

50. Did you ever think about the possibility of meeting your birth mother one day?

often sometimes never

51. If yes, what age were you when you began thinking about this Years

52. Did you ever think about the possibility of meeting your birth father one day?

often sometimes never

53. If yes, what age were you when you began thinking about this? Years

54. Did you ever wonder whether you had any blood-related brothers and sisters?

often sometimes never

55. How would you describe your childhood? happy average unhappy

56. If you remember your childhood as unhappy, can you say why this was so? _____

57. If you remember your childhood as happy can you say why this was so? _____

58. Did you feel closer to your adoptive mother or adoptive father or was there no difference? _____

59. Which adoptive parent could you confide in?

adoptive mother adoptive father both neither

60. Can you give reasons for this? _____

61. Did you have contact with your adoptive grandparents? Yes No

62. Were these your adoptive mother's parents? _____

63. Were these your adoptive father's parents? _____

64. What was your relationship like with your grandparents? _____

65. Did you have regular contact with adoptive aunts and uncles? Yes No

66. What do you remember about your relationship with your adoptive aunts and uncles?

67. What do you remember about your relationship with your adoptive cousins? _____

76.4 Learning problems _____

76.5. Failing a standard _____

76.6. None of these _____

76.7. Any other problems _____

77. What were you good at in junior school? _____

78. If you did experience a problem or problems, did your adoptive parents consult any of the following?

Your class teacher	
Your headmaster	
School psychologist	
Social worker	

Private psychologist	
Psychiatrist	
Minister of religion	
Family doctor	

79. Did you ever accompany your parents to see any of the above? Yes No

80. If yes, which person or persons? _____

81. Can you remember whether you felt better after seeing any of these? _____

SECTION F

ADOLESCENCE

82. How would you describe the frequency of your thoughts about your birth parents when you became a teenager? same as before fewer more

83. If the answer is more, did the content of your thoughts stay the same change slightly change completely.

84. If there was any change, what was different? _____

85. Was there anyone in whom you could confide your thoughts during adolescence? Yes No

86. Who was this person?

Your adoptive mother	
Your adoptive father	
Close female friend	
Close male friend	
Other	

87. If other, what was this person's relationship with you? _____

88. Did your interest in being adopted begin during adolescence? Yes No

89. If yes, what were these interests? _____

90. Did you begin to think about the possibility of meeting your birth parents? Yes No

91. Did you want to know more about the circumstances that led to your being adopted? Yes No

92. Did you want to know more details about your birth mother, birth father or both?

Birth mother

Birth father

both

93. If birth mother, why was knowing about her more important to you? _____

94. If birth father, why was this so? _____

95. If you had no real curiosity about any of the above, could you say why this was so?

96. Could you discuss your curiosity and thoughts about wanting to meet with your birth parents one day with one of the following?

- Adoptive mother _____
Adoptive father _____
Both adoptive parents _____
Neither adoptive parents _____
Some other older person _____
School friends _____
Other _____

97. If you had been able to discuss this with your adoptive parent(s) what was the reaction of your adoptive mother? _____

98. What was the reaction of your adoptive father? _____

99. If sympathetic and understanding, could they remember any details that you were not aware of? _____

100. If sympathetic and understanding did they offer to help you trace your birth family one day? Yes No

101. Did they advise you to wait until you reach: age 18 age 21 older than that

102. How did you feel after their sympathy and understanding? _____

103. If they were not sympathetic and understanding, what was your reaction? _____

104. Did you experience any problems with regard to schoolwork in senior school? Yes No

105. If yes, what was the nature of these problems? _____

106. If you were at boarding school did you ever run away from school?

Yes No

107. If at day school, did you ever play truant from school?

often sometimes never

108. Did you ever experience any indecision about your future career?

Yes No

109. Did you experience any problems with regard to personal relationships during adolescence?

Yes No

110. Could you get along with your adoptive mother
Could you get along with your adoptive father
Could you get along with your adoptive brother(s)
Could you get along with your adoptive sister(s)

Yes	No
Yes	No
Yes	No
Yes	No

111. What was your relationship with your friends at this time? _____

112. As a teenager, did you ever get into difficulties with the authorities?

Yes No

113. Were you very depressed as a teenager?

only sometimes often never

114. Did you ever try to commit suicide as a teenager?

Yes No

115. If yes, was it:

only once more than once

116. If you tried to commit suicide more than once, what were the reasons for this?

117. Did your adoptive parents ever seek professional help for you?

Yes No

118. What was the outcome of their seeking professional help? _____

119. If female, did you go through a phase of wanting a baby very badly?
 Yes No
120. If female, did you ever think that your adoptive mother was jealous of you?
 Yes No
121. If yes, did you think this could be to do with fertility?
 Yes No
122. Did you ever act seductively towards your adoptive father?
 Yes No
123. Did you ever have a teenage pregnancy?
 Yes No
124. If yes, what happened to your baby? _____

125. If male, did you ever get your girlfriend pregnant?
 Yes No
126. If yes, did you marry the girl involved?
 Yes No
127. If the answer is no, how did you feel after this? _____

128. As a teenager, would you say that you had more sexual partners than other teenagers?
 Don't know Think so Definitely not No sex experiences

129. What do you know about the law as it affects adopted persons?

something

nothing at all

130. Do you know anything about the laws of inheritance as these affect the adopted person?

Yes

No

131. If you do not know anything, would you be interested to know more about the law as it affects the adopted person?

Yes

No

132. Do you know that you should make a will when you reach the age of eighteen?

Yes

No

SECTION G

ADULTHOOD

1. Do you still hear yourself referred to as an adopted 'child'?

Yes No

2. If yes, what are your feelings about this? _____

3. Do you feel a great deal of indebtedness to your adoptive parents?

Yes No

4. If so, does this make your feel guilty about 'owing' them?

often sometimes never

5. If you often feel guilty about 'owing' them, does this feeling leave you angry and resentful?

often sometimes never

6. How would you describe your personality profile as an adult? _____

7. Have you experienced depression? often sometimes never

8. Have you ever received medical treatment for depression?

Yes No

9. Have you ever been treated for psychiatric illness?

Yes No

10. Have you ever had a problem with alcoholism?

Yes No

11. At social gatherings could you easily say in conversation that you were adopted?

Yes No

12. Do you have any trouble making and keeping friends of the opposite sex?

Yes No

13. Have you ever been afraid your boyfriend/girlfriend would abandon you?

 Yes No

14. Have you ever been worried about the possibility of falling in love with an unknown halfbrother or halfsister?

 Yes No

15. If you are unmarried, do you think this may have something to do with the fact of being adopted?

 Yes No

16. Are you heterosexual, homosexual or lesbian? _____

17. If homosexual or lesbian, do you think this has anything to do with your being adopted

 Yes No

18. If yes, please explain? _____

19. Have you experienced any difficulties in your sex life?

 often sometimes not aware of any

20. If male, do you identify with your adoptive father?

 Yes No

21. If male, do you ever feel anger towards your birth mother?

 Yes No

22. Have you as an adopted person, ever been uncomfortable when a doctor asks for your family history?

 Yes No

23. If you felt uncomfortable when a doctor asks for your family history, why was this so? _____

24. Have you ever been concerned about the hereditary and genetic aspects of illness and birth defects?

 Yes No

25. Have you ever been afraid to marry and have children?

Yes

No

26. If yes, did this have to do with being adopted?

Yes

No

27. If yes, what were your concerns or fears? _____

SECTION H

MARRIAGE

28. If you are married, or were ever married, could you share your thoughts about being adopted with your spouse?

Yes

No

29. Do, or did, your in-laws know you were adopted?

Yes

No

30. If they do not, or did not know, why is this? _____

31. If your in-laws do know that you were adopted, what was their reaction to this knowledge? _____

32. If you had any fears about inherited diseases or defects did these become stronger after you were married?

Yes

No

33. Did the first pregnancy increase your curiosity about your birth parents?

Yes

No

34. Did the knowledge that you were about to become a parent for the first time make you feel closer to your birth parents?

Yes No

35. If you have had more than one child, did your concerns about being adopted increase or decrease?

Increase Decrease

36. Have you ever had any difficulty in telling your own children that you were adopted?

Yes No Not applicable

37. Have you experienced any problems with infertility?

Yes No

38. If you have adopted children, what was the reason for this? _____

SECTION I

THE SEARCH

39. Have you found your curiosity about your birthparents growing more or less as you grow older? More Less

40. At what stage in your adult life did you seriously begin to think about possibly tracing your birth parents? _____

41. What was the reason for this? _____

42. Could you discuss this with anyone, and who was this person? (eg. spouse, friend)

43. How did you go about tracing details of your birth name, and names of birth parents?

44. Who helped you?

Adoption agency

social worker

adoptee's association

minister

Other

45. If other, please explain

46. If you were able to get hold of the details, did you go about your search for birth parents right away?

Yes

No

47. If no, what were the reasons for this?

48. If yes, what were your feelings at this time?

49. What was the outcome of your search?

53. Did finding your birth parents settle something deep within you?

Yes

No

54. Were you able to accept your birth parent(s) as they are now?

Yes

No

55. If not, please explain why this was so? _____

56. Were you able to tell your adoptive parents anything of this experience?

Yes

No

57. If not, could you explain why not? _____

58. How did this affect your relationship with them?

the same

improved

worse

59. Do you plan to continue the relationship with your birth parents?

Yes

No

60. If no, why is this? _____

61. If yes, do you plan regular visits if possible or simply keeping in contact by letter or telephone? _____

62. Did you discover any brothers or sisters?

Yes

No

63. Did you meet any brothers or sisters?

Yes

No

64. Were they half-brothers and sisters or full-brothers and sisters? _____

65. Were you aware of any sexual attractions between yourself and your half-brothers or half-sisters?

Yes

No

66. Do you have any plans to keep regular contact with your newly-found brothers or sisters?

Yes

No

67. If the answer is no, why is this? _____

68. Are you glad, sorry or indifferent now that you have found your blood relations?

69. Would you advise other adoptees to search/not bother to search after your experience?

70. If you discovered facts about your birth history that caused you pain, could you handle this experience? _____

71. If you have not been able to trace your birth parent(s) do you intend to continue with your search if possible?

Yes

No

72. If yes, could you please explain why? _____

73. If no, could you please explain why? _____

74. Has the fact of your wanting to trace your birth parents, or find out more about them brought you closer to your adoptive parents?

Yes

No

75. If no, why is this so? _____

76. If yes, why was this so? _____

77. Any other comments you would like to make:

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR GIVING ME OF YOUR TIME AND CO-OPERATION.

Should you wish to give your name, please sign here

