A study on telling and searching in adoption.

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LA THÈSE A ÉTÉ MICROFILMÉE TELLE QUE NOUS L'AVONS RÉCEVE
A STUDY ON "TELLING" AND "SEARCHING" IN ADOPTION

by

A. Evelyn Adele Glass and Erwin William Novac

A thesis presented to the University of Windsor in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
MASTER OF SOCIAL WORK
in
School of Social Work
University of Windsor

Windsor, Ontario, 1964

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THESIS COMMITTEE

Professor Robert G. Chandler  Chairperson
Professor Valentin Cruz  Member
Dr. Norman J. King  Member
What determines the character of a man? Whence does he get his strength to endure, to abide by his principle, and to reject the concept of the impossible in human affairs? It is my conviction that a man is the end product of his ancestors, proximate and remote, that he is endowed at birth with a heritage of character but that this character may be influenced by tortuous circumstances.

(The Honourable John Dierenbaker)
Abstract

The objectives of this research project were two-fold:
1. to establish a descriptive profile of the nature of adoption revelation and the "telling" experiences of adopted adults who have initiated a search for family of origin, and
2. to determine if in adoptee's search for biological family is related to the manner in which he or she learned of his or her adopted status.

The sample was comprised of fifty adopted adults who were members of the Parent Finders organization in the Windsor/Essex and London/Elmsted regions. All of the respondents had either completed or were in the process of conducting a search for their families of origin.

The review of literature included a comprehensive discussion of issues relating to both adoption practice and present adoption policy in Ontario. Of particular importance to professional practice was an examination of previous research and theories that have addressed the relationship between identity development and connection to one's genetic past, the effects of inadequate or delayed adoption revelation upon the adoptee's psycho-social adjustment, and the psychological barriers that may lead adoptive parents to
simulate a biologic relationship with the adopted child rather than accepting and sharing in the unique aspects of his adopted status. Policy related issues were incorporated into an extensive review of the impact of sealed adoption record legislation upon all members of the adoption triangle.

It was the intent of the researchers to utilize a scientific approach in gathering data which may provide insight into the complexities of adoption revelation and which may help to dispel some of the common assumptions about adoptees who search for information about and/or contact with members of their biological family.

The dual purpose of the study was reflected in a two-pronged approach to data analysis. Firstly, the adoption revelation experiences of the respondents were delineated in terms of such factors as: receipt of information about one's adopted status and origins, the source of information, the age at which adoption was revealed, the nature and manner in which the information was given, and the nature of one's relationship with adoptive parents. Five hypotheses were developed in order to test for association between these factors and the adoptee's search for family of origin.

Testing of the hypotheses failed to produce evidence of statistical significance between a search for biological family and any of the above-mentioned variables. The data did reveal, however, that information about the adoptees'
background was largely unavailable to adoptive parents and, in turn, to the adopted individuals; that, although the respondents generally had positive relationships with their adoptive parents, a pattern of evasiveness and discomfort continued to prevail with respect to sharing the details of adoption; and that the adoptive parents' attitude toward the child's history and background had a direct impact upon the adoptee's integration into the adoptive home, his feelings of similarity and belonging, and his satisfaction with his adopted status.

These findings reiterated the importance of reconsidering the adoptee's history and heritage, and led the researchers to call for greater attention to detailed information-gathering at the time of the child's relinquishment into adoption and for sharing of this information with the adoptive parents. The findings also led to recommendations regarding the assessment of adoptive applicants, and the provision of both pre-placement and post-placement adoption services.
Acknowledgements

This study owes a great deal to the many individuals who have contributed their time, expertise, support, and encouragement.

We extend sincere appreciation to the thesis committee: to Professor Robert G. Chandler for his direction and confidence, to Professor Valentin Cruz for his experience and patience, and to Dr. Norman J. King for his thought-provoking ideas and much appreciated attention to detail.

Thanks are due to our families, who have so splendidly encouraged all of our educational endeavors, and to our friends who, in their own ways, have all offered support.

We would like to express particular gratitude to Judy Beqoqert of Windsor/Essex Parent Finders and Mary Beth Hoy, London/Middlesex Parent Finders. Mrs. Beqoqert's commitment and suggestions were essential to getting this project "off the ground" and Mrs. Hoy's co-operation helped to see the study to fruition.

Lastly, and most importantly, we need to personally thank each of the adoptees who participated in the study and who, in doing so, gave so much of themselves. It is to these individuals that the greatest debt is owed as, without them, this study would not have been possible.
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Introduction

The aim of this study is to examine the process through which adopted individuals learned of their adopted status and to attempt to determine if such is related to a search for family of origin.

The research objectives are two-fold. Firstly, the study shall seek to draw a characteristic profile of the nature of adoption revelation and the "telling" experience, as reported and perceived by adopted adults who have initiated a search for biological family. The study is particularly concerned with such factors as: whether the adoptee was told of his adoption, when, how, and what he was told, and who did the telling. The second objective centers around the question of whether or not "searching behavior" may be related to the manner in which adoption was revealed and whether an adoptee's search for his family of origin may be associated to his revelation experience.

The rationale that underpins the researchers' interest in this area of study is that of serious concern as to the adequacy of adoption policy and the effectiveness of adoption practice, both in the past and at present.

In accordance with the principles of Roman law, adoption policy was traditionally based upon the
premise that adoption creates a new family unit. Complete severing of all connections between the child and his biological family has also been viewed as a necessary adjunct to ensuring the adoptive family's independence and legal rights. The notion that the child's past is forbidden not only accentuates the finality of the act of adoption itself, but emphasizes the concerns for anonymity and confidentiality that have traditionally underscored adoption legislation. It is these very concerns that have served to entrench the adoption process in secrecy.

The nature of present adoption legislation in Ontario and all other Canadian provinces seems to reflect a continuing adherence to these traditions. Sections 80 and 86 of the Child Welfare Act of Ontario, 1980, for instance, clearly stipulate that all records pertaining to adoption must be sealed upon finalization of the adoption and opened only upon court order. The law further states that the adoptive child then becomes the child of the adopting parents, "as if that child had been born to" them.

These statutes have been severely criticized by adoptees who claim that the law annihilates their birthright and denies them their civil liberties by prohibiting access to information about their backgrounds. The right to knowledge of one's heritage has also gained increasing support from mental health professionals who have pointed to the emotional and psychological necessity of a sense of connection to one's origins.
Neither of these arguments, however, have had significant enough impact to lend impetus to legislative reform. To date, adoption records in Ontario remain sealed and adopted individuals have no legal right to access to information concerning the details of their early history, their genetic and social backgrounds, or the identities of their biological families.

The most disconcerting corollary of this issue lies within the fact that, in the face of such legislative restraint, adoptees become almost totally dependent upon their adoptive parents to provide them with information about their beginnings.

This situation is obviously complicated if the adoptive parents are themselves ignorant of the facts. Research has indicated, however, that the amount of information available is usually irrelevant in determining the adoptive parents' ability to reveal the details of adoption. The manner in which "telling" is handled has, indeed, been found to be much more closely related to such complex factors as the adopters' attitude toward the child's background and illegitimacy, the degree to which the parents have resolved their feelings about infertility, their acceptance of, lack of, acceptance of their role as adoptive rather than biological parents, and the extent to which they are actually committed to and comfortable with adoption revelation itself.
Adoption practitioners have long stressed the need for adopted individuals to learn about their adoption at a young age and preferably to be given as much information as possible about their origins and background. The adopted child's awareness of these details is considered essential to the development of his personal identity and particularly to an understanding of himself as an unique individual whose personal characteristics have been both inherited through geneology and acquired from his upbringing.

The "hows", "whens", and "whats" or telling are nevertheless controversial questions for which adoption practice and research have offered no clear guidelines. It would appear that this professional ambiguity serves only to exacerbate the difficulties commonly experienced by adoptive parents with respect to "telling", and may further emphasize the reservations that they may already have.

The scope of this study does not allow for an examination of the specific conditions which contribute to poorly planned, mismanaged, or inadequate adoption revelation. The researchers concur, however, that the adoptive parents' attitudes and comfort in "telling" may indeed be central to the type and extent of information that is offered and the manner in which it is imparted to the adoptee. The researchers further suspect that the nature of adoption revelation has a bearing upon the adoptee's perception of his adoptive experience and his understanding of himself in relation to his adoptive status.
In drawing from the theoretical perspectives of Saitis (1964) and Bowen (1978), we are of the opinion that an adoptee's quest for his family of origin is, for the most part, an expression of a normal need for self-actualization and the solidification of personal identity. Insofar as the adopted individual's perception of self may in fact be coloured by that which he has learned or not learned about his background, it is quite conceivable that certain forms of adoption revelation may precipitate a search for family of origin.

Through studying the revelation experiences of adopted adults, and through examining the relationship between "telling" and searching for biological family, the researchers hope to be able to further understanding of the adoptive situation and to identify areas in which both legislative reform and changes in practice are indicated.

A comprehensive overview of the nature and scope of issues relevant to this research topic are included in the following review of literature. The strategies employed in the research design and methods of data collection and analysis are also outlined in detail in the ensuing chapters. The research findings are presented in a systematic fashion from which conclusions and recommendations have been drawn.
Review of Literature

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE ADOPTION OF CHILDREN

In order to understand contemporary adoption policies and practices, it is necessary that one have at least a basic knowledge of the development of adoption throughout the ages. The following historical review shall serve as a brief exposition to aid the reader in conceptualizing the major developments in adoption philosophy.

The adoption of children dates back to the time of Greek mythology and ancient history. The earliest recorded adoption is the story of the birth of Sargon I, who reigned Babylon in the 2nd century. (Schapiro, 1956, p. 14) Other mythical and biblical figures have included Cephus, the adopted child of the king and queen of Corinth, Moses, the son of the Egyptian Pharaoh's daughter, and Hercules, the child of Zeus. During these times, adoption served to provide a family heir and gratify the unfulfilled maternal strivings of childless women. (Watson, 1989, p. 11)

Roman law also provided for adoption, not only to ensure the continuity of family lines, but to guarantee the continuing political power of certain nobilities. (Infausto, 1991, p. 3) The Roman tradition of adopting to procure a family successor set the tone for the establishment
of inheritance rights in countries under civil law, such as
Napoleonic France. (Costin, 1973, p. 360)

In England, however, the practice of adopting for
inheritance purposes was not permitted. This was largely due
to the influence of rural traditions which dictated that
the property and rights of a parent could only be passed to
a biological child born during wedlock. (Watson, 1975, p. 71;
Klibanoff and Klibanoff, 1973, p. 161)

Prior to the sixteenth century, Pinchbeck and Hewitt
(1969) point out that illegitimacy was accepted, and that
children born out of wedlock were often afforded the same
opportunities as those born within marriage. The
introduction of Elizabethan Poor Law, however, marked a
dramatic change not only in moral and religious attitudes,
but in social and economic values. The shame of
illegitimacy combined with the states' reluctance to care
for unwanted or wayward children is graphically illustrated
by the Poor Law of 1572:

First, concerning bastards begotten and born out
of lawful matrimony (an offence against God's law
and Mans Law), the said bastards now left to be
kepte at the charge of the Parishes WHERE THEY BE
borne, to the great burden of the same Parishes
and in derailing of the reliefe of the impotent
and ague true poore of the same Parishes, and to the
evil example and encouragement of lewd lyfe... (Pinchbeck and Hewitt, 1969, p. 205)

At this time, English law specifically stipulated that
dil "dependent" children were to be apprenticed, indentured,
or placed in orphan asylums until adulthood. (Fink, 1974;
Ferguson, 1963) As a result, illegitimate children were cared for and viewed as "public property" who were free for the taking to whomever would claim them. The practice of trading children as chattels gained particular popularity with workhouse bosses who were able to exploit the youngsters for economic gain. It is clear that although "indenturing a dependent child presumably enabled him to learn a trade and thus become self-supporting, in actual practice, it was a form of slavery." (Ferguson, 1963, pg. 188)

These traditions and practices prevailed throughout the following three centuries as England continued to focus on industrialization and economic growth. Gradual financial recovery, however, was soon accompanied by a changing social order and greater social consciousness which led to increasing concerns as to the interdependence of the individual and the state. (Finx, 1974, pg. 22-24) The plight of indigent children became a particularly worrisome social issue which resulted in increased philanthropic pressures to introduce legislation reflecting a more humanitarian view with regard to their care and protection. As a result, in 1827, Parliament enacted the first adoption statutes in England's history. (Kirk, 1980, pg. 135)

The adoption institution in North America predominately patterned its legislation after English common law. With no precedent for adoption, it mirrored the practices of indenture and apprenticeship where in the early 1600's,
children were gathered up from inner city streets and slums, placed on trains, and taken to interested farming families in mid-western towns. Infausto (1969) describes the scene as follows:

Either an indenture was made out or the arrangement remained entirely informal. More often than not, the farmer would work the child through harvest time and then abandon him. (p. 2)

As in England, philanthropists soon began to call attention to the exploitive nature of this practice. Advocates against such "farming out" strongly argued that the indentured child should be cared for and treated in every way as if he were the natural child of the parents. (Kadushin, 1960, p. 407) It was in 1820 that the first legislation was passed in Upper Canada to protect children and in 1841 that the first Children's Aid Society was founded in Toronto. (Marcus, 1979, p. 8-9)

By the late 1920's, formal adoption legislation was introduced throughout Canada and the United States. The application of legal principles to family relationships was the first step towards standardizing adoption practices and clarifying rights and responsibilities within the adoptive relationship.

An understanding of contemporary North American adoption policy and practice necessitates an appreciation of the philosophies that have served to define the adoptive relationship over the years. Lawler, et al., state that
although the concept of adoption was originally intended to serve the needs of adults, a growing awareness of the needs of the child and the effects of family dynamics soon led to the development of a more child-oriented focus. Adoption practice in North America specifically grew from a former emphasis upon supplying children to adoptive applicants to a concern for understanding and assessing both the child and his adopters in order to bring about healthy family functioning. (Lawler, et al., 1969, pg. 11)

This emphasis on the child and the family had a definite impact upon adoption practice and was, in time, integrated into child welfare policy. In this regard, a statement by the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies reads that:

"Our social welfare policy has moved toward seeing the provision of services as a right, child welfare agencies have moved to see the right of the child to the best possible home as of paramount importance. (1970, pg. 3)"

Accompanying this view was the contention that the adoptive family should be offered every opportunity to lead a "normal" family life. The right to privacy and freedom from interference were considered essential in promoting the normalization of the adoptive home.

At present, then, adoption policy appears based upon two interrelated notions. Firstly, that the pre-adoptive child has a right to quality care and permanency and, secondly, that permanency is best achieved through legal recognition of a family unit that has been created through non-biological means."
Inherent in the creation of this new family unit is the implication that all connection with the child's past be severed. This in turn necessitates not only a need for anonymity of the original parents, but restrictions with regard to any future claim that they may have upon the child. In so ensuring the exclusivity of the adoptive relationship, all evidence of the child's origins may be circumvented and the idea that adoption is a "second birth" perpetuated.

Thompson (1973) thus states that the basic premise of both adoption legislation and practice is that which revolves around "the myth that once the adoption was legalized, there would be a "real" family and the child would be the same "as if born to" the adopting parents." (pp. 13) Sorosky, et al. furthermore claim that one of the primary purposes of contemporary adoption is to "fulfill childless couples' desires and give them a tight family unit that conceals their infertility and denies the existence of another set of parents." (1970, pp. 97)

To date, it remains socially accepted that the most feasible means of ensuring noncontinuance of any relationship between natural parent and child, is through statutory provisions that presumably safeguard the confidentiality and anonymity of the adult parties involved. (Anderson, 1977, pp. 142) It is indeed this principle that has led to the legalized practice of "sealing records" at
the time of adoption; namely, the permanent removal of all
documents from public view which may identify the child's
original parents and the specific circumstances that led to
the adoption. It is generally assumed that the
confidentiality so provided offers privacy which facilitates
the adoptive process. The notion of the "need for
confidentiality", however, extends far beyond practical
purposes. In many ways, it reflects the moral judgements of
a society that continues to view illegitimacy and unwed
parenthood as socially unacceptable. The objectives of sealed
adoption records thus appear largely geared towards offering
moral protection to the adults involved. As summarized by
several authors, sealed record policy aims to:

1. Enable biological parents to place the child for
   adoption without public knowledge or acknowledgment
   of their failings.

2. Prevent public disclosure of potentially embarrassing
   or stigmatizing personal facts about the parties
   involved.

3. Remove the stigma or illegitimacy from the child's
   public record.

4. Assist the adoptive family in establishing itself as
   a social unit without outside interference or
   extraneous claims against their rights to parenthood.

5. Protect the birth mother from any possible subsequent
   intrusion on her life by the child she has
   surrendered.

6. Protect the vulnerabilities of adoptive parents who
   may fear that the adopted child will turn against
   them or leave them for biological parents.
The tremendous need for protection from real or imaginary public prejudice has elicited some diverse responses from members of the adoption triangle, adoption agencies, concerned mental health professionals, various governments, and even the courts. This cloak of secrecy seems to have developed in response to the more immediate emotional and anticipated concerns of the parties involved, but with little empirical evidence delineating its long-term effects. In studying the effects of sealed records in adoption, Sorosky, et al., identified that:

The shift toward closed adoptions occurred in a gradual, continuing pattern without critical evaluation of the changes. There was no attempt to assess the psychological burden of secrecy imposed upon adoptive parents and adoptees, nor were the feelings of loss and mourning of the birth parents carefully considered. (1976, p. 97)

The same researchers find it difficult to understand why a process as final and irreversible as the traditional relinquishment and adoption of children was so little questioned by professionals.

The fact remains, however, that most social policies tend to reflect the social and economic concerns and social atmosphere of the particular times in which they are established. At present, it is no longer acceptable to adopt a child for the purposes of providing a family heir or to exploit children under the guise of apprenticeship. Quite simply, the practical considerations that led to these practices are not relevant in today's more resourceful and
sophisticated society. Present adoption policy does seem to emphasize, however, the great value that our contemporary world places upon the right to independence in family affairs and the need for privacy that necessarily accompanies this right.

Part of the following review is comprised of an examination of the effects of present adoption policy upon all members of the adoption triangle. Prior to such a discussion, however, it is imperative that one have a clear understanding of the current adoption laws in Canada and elsewhere.

THE SEALED RECORD CONTROVERSY IN ADOPTION

Legislative Regulations. Adoption, as defined in contemporary terms, is the method through which the rights and responsibilities of parentage are transferred from a child's biological parents to adoptive parents. Inherent in this process is a far-reaching legal mechanism that permanently alters not only the status and roles, but the social and legal identities of the parties directly involved. Here Judge Mackinnon, Associate Chief Justice of Ontario, points out that:

The exclusion of the history of the blood and physical relationship between the natural parents and the child from further consideration could not have been expressed in clearer legislative terms. (In C.J. v. M.J. et al. 1981, 34O.L.(2d) 44, 44 R.F.L. (2d) 342).
In this regard Section 86 of the Child Welfare Act, Revised Statutes of Ontario, 1980, c.66, specifically states that:

1) For all purposes, as of the date of the signing of an adoption order,

a) the adopted child becomes the child of the adopting parent, and the adopting parent becomes the parent of the adopted child; and,

b) the adopted child ceases to be the child of the person who was his or her parent before the adoption order was made and that person ceases to be the parent of the adopted child as if the child had been born to the adopting parent.

The impact of this "as if born to" principle is pivotal in any discussion of adoption policy. It indeed rests the case upon which the parties' identities are re-defined at the time of the adoption itself, and serves as the limiting factor in terms of the adopted child's rights in the future. In effect, this rationale represents philosophical and legal justification for the annihilation of the child's past and birthright. This in turn, necessitates the removal of all claims by the birth parents who, by virtue of their relinquishment of the child, become non-entities in the eyes of the law. The adopted child, then, becomes the "child" of the adoptive parents, who are awarded all of the rights and statuses previously held by the biological parents.

The pervasiveness and permanency of the "as if born to" principle is further reinforced by the official closure of all documents relating to both the child and his birth parents prior to the adoption. The sealing of such records
effectively expunges the child's history, thus implying that the past is secret and forbidden, and that the child's life "began" at the point of adoption.

As such, Section 30 of the Child Welfare Act of 1980, stipulates that:

(1) ...the documents used upon application for an adoption order SHALL BE SEALED UP and filed in the office of the court and shall not be open for inspection except upon an order of the court or the written direction of the Director.

The 1980 Act does make provisions for the release of "identifying information", under certain stringent conditions and in exceptional instances. The "rules" in this regard were established in conjunction with the creation of the Adoption Disclosure Registry of Ontario in June of 1978.

It is interesting, and perhaps ironic, to note that the Registry was founded as a result of public pressure and lobbying with regard to the need for an official avenue for information release, unaccounted for by previous Acts. Back in January, 1978, for instance, then Minister of Community and Social Services, the Honourable James Taylor, Q.C., decided to form the Committee on Record Disclosure to Adoptees "to study the issues, review present policies and recommend a province-wide policy on this matter." (Taylor, 1978, p4-1) The comprehensive report of the committee proposed policy changes in five major areas, including categorizing the information in adoption applications into
that which is identifying and non-identifying. The committee recommended, with minor limitations, that non-identifying information should be made available to adoptive parents, adult adoptees and birth parents upon request. Although the committee recommended against unrestricted access to identifying information, it did propose the creation of an Adoption Registry where exchange of the information was to be made possible for members of the adoption triangle. As expressed in the report:

The registry is a system whereby adult adoptees, adoptive parents and biological parents may register their wishes for personal contact or information giving... It (the Registry) would be widely publicized in Ontario and other areas. (Taylor, 1976, pp. 20-21)

Further, the committee proposed that a mediator would facilitate contact "upon receipt of similar, unsolicited requests by both parties" involved. (Taylor, 1976, pp. 21)

The mediator would also have the authority to establish contact with an unregistered birth parent if certain conditions were met.

The Ontario government and the Legislature, however, rejected the committee's recommendation with regard to the distinction between identifying and non-identifying information. The legislature also refused to "widely publicize" the system and instituted conditional clauses regarding its operation. The resulting legislation appears to be a reluctant attempt at appeasement which in no way meets the lobbying groups' demands for direct access to
personal information. Indeed, the state has insisted upon honouring the so-called "spirit" of the adoption contract and has departed from this position only insofar as it is able to exert bureaucratic control over those who argue Constitutional rights.

Section 81 of the Child Welfare Act firstly requires, for instance, that there be evidence of mutual intent or desire for release of information on the part of both the adult adoptee and the birth parent. Specifically:

(2) An adopted child who is eighteen or more years of age and a person who was a parent of an adopted child at the time of the child's birth...may apply to a society to be registered in a voluntary disclosure registry that shall be maintained by the Director.

Upon which: (5) The Director shall...examine the registry to determine,

(a) where the applicant is an adopted child, if a person who was the child's parent at the time of the child's birth is named in the registry; or

(b) where the applicant is a person who was a parent of an adopted child at the time of the child's birth, if the adopted child is named in the registry.

Mutual intent is, however, superceded by a further requirement for consent on the part of the adoptive parents, regardless of the adoptee's age or status as an adult. Here the Act specifically stipulates that the Director:

(6) b) obtain from any living person who was the parent of the child after an adoption order with respect to the child was made, consent to the disclosure of information...
In discussing this system, Kirk (1981) writes that "state-operated register mechanisms stipulating that three parties must be in agreement before a reunion can be effected constitute means to hinder rather than advance the program of institutional reform." (pg. 136) Marcus (1979), on the other hand believes the registry begins to counteract the wall of silence that has surrounded adoption in the past. She states:

The legislation gives adopting parents power to veto over disclosure, but it is a step forward. Some proviso is expected in handling the consent of adopting parents in cases where they are elderly or infirm. Adult adoptees, who are free to make their own decisions in other areas of life, are not likely to be satisfied with any consent apron strings attached to this type of legislation; nor are birth parents who wish to experience the healing of reunion contact. Nevertheless, the Ontario legislation is a hard-won breakthrough. (Marcus, 1979, pg. 77-78)

Regardless of the value of the registry, deeply ingrained in the above statutes is the subtle notion that postadoptive access, in any form, poses a threat to the stability of the adoptive relationship. Also inherent in the statutes is the distinct implication that "interference" brought about by the possible resurrection of birth parents, was not part of the adoption bargain.

It is important to note that the proposed Child and Family Services Act, 1983, makes no changes to the existing statutes with respect to either record disclosure or the related issue of post-adoptive access. The current draft Act does, however, reiterate the state's historical acceptance of the exclusivity of the adoptive relationship.
Confirmation of the "right" for adoptive parents to be "free from interference" by biological families appears entrenched in a philosophical transition that occurred during the early 1920's. Kilken (1983) points out that in Ontario's premier Adoption Act of 1921, there was:

no reference whatsoever to the confidentiality of adoption application materials or to any powers of a judge or government official to make orders with respect to the disclosure of such materials. (p. 308)

Revisions to the Act in 1927, however, specifically alluded to the need to seal adoption records and stipulated legal means for which to do so. It was at this time that there first appeared statutes specifying that "the papers used upon an adoption application shall be sealed up and not open for inspection..." (The Adoption Act, 1927, Ontario, c.53, s.9(3))

Although over the past decade there have been attempts to revise these longstanding statutes, the influence of past tradition remains both prevalent and pervasive. Here it is enlightening to note that the 1982 Consultation Paper which preceded the Draft Child and Family Services Act of 1983, was unsuccessful in arguing for certain changes. With regard to the effect of an adoption order, the Consultation Paper specifically recommended that the "as it turns to" concept be replaced by a statement of the legal relationship between the adoptive parents and the child. It was thought that a legal definition of the adoptive relationship would add
greater objectivity to the adoption process and help to
temper the definitive flavour of the "as if born to"
principle. The paper stated that "unfortunately, the present
"as if born to" parasociology may take on greater
psychological and social implications than intended,
especially for older children who enter adoptive
relationships with memories of their past lives." (The
fact that this recommendation was withdrawn in the draft
legislation would seem to emphasize the laissez-faire
attitudes that have traditionally underscored adoption
reform.

Parts of the Consultation Paper itself seem to reflect
this continuing adherence to the status quo. In reference to
post-adoptive access, for example, the paper explicitly
pointed out that "under present legislation, the biological
family has no right to access once the child is accepted,
even if an access order existed prior to the adoption."
(p. 146) Following a discussion of the pros and cons of
this issue, the paper (1982) concluded that "an access order
without the adoptive parents' consent would result in stress
and disruption and may, in fact, endanger the adoptive
relationship." (pg. 147) As a result, it was recommended
that "the legislation not permit the court to grant orders
of the biological family access to the child after
adoption." (The Children's Act: A Consultation Paper,
1982, pg. 147)
As stated in the preface of Part VIII of the Draft legislation, this recommendation was "overwhelmingly supported" and Section 138 of the proposed Child and Family Services Act now states that:

1. Where a child is placed for adoption by a society or licensee, every order respecting access to the child is terminated...and;

2. Where a child has been placed for adoption...no person shall,
   a) visit or communicate with the child...or,
   b) interfere with the child

As evidenced here, the major philosophy of adoption legislation continues to be one which stresses the sanctity of the adoptive relationship. A landmark judgement in the case of Ferguson v. Director of Child Welfare, et al., made by County Court Judge Killeen in January, 1983 and later upheld by the Ontario Court of Appeal, says it all. The Court ruled that the secret conditions of the adoption of Elizabeth Ferguson, thirty-five years prior are:

Inviolable, unless she can demonstrate life-and-death circumstances so exceptional that her mental and physical health is at risk...Mrs. Ferguson's healthy and continuing natural curiosity to know about her origins carries no weight, now measured against the other two sides of the adoption triangle...The unwed mother who gave her up for adoption must never be confronted. And the sacredness of her adoptive parents' contract must be guaranteed for life. [Toronto Star, December 10, 1983, pg. 8-1]

Judge Killeen based his decision on the principle that Mrs. Ferguson did not establish the existence of any "exceptional circumstance" in her desire for disclosure under Section 60(1) of the Child Welfare Act, 1980.
The concept of "compelling circumstances" first appeared in Canadian jurisprudence in Ontario in 1974 when an Ontario Court of Appeal utilized this principle in ruling upon an application of a natural mother to withdraw her consent to the adoption of her son. (see Nichols 1974, 18 R.F.L. 127 at 131 C.A.) The concept was first applied to adoption disclosure in Manitoba in 1980. (see Adoption of E.A. 1980, 17 R.F.L. (2d) 140) This particular ruling established a standard which placed the onus for proving "compelling need" upon the applicant (usually the adult adopted) as opposed, for instance, to placing the same onus upon the state to prove that disclosure would be deleterious.

When simply read, section 60(1) contains no explicit criteria within its terms for the exercise of discretion by a judge or minister. Miss Gutierrez, counsel for the Ministry in the Ferguson case of 1983 pointed out, however, that the exercise of discretion in disclosing adoption information is essential to ensuring the "best interests of the child" and honouring the spirit of the adoption contract. Whereas she agreed that it was well within the Court's mandate to release identifying information from sealed files, she argued that:

(Judge Rillieux) should read INTO s.60(1) a "compelling need" standard identical to the one now used by the Ministry, on a DISCREETICABLE POLICY basis, when it decides whether or not to release information from its files to an adoptee about his origins. (Ferguson v. Director of Child Welfare, et al., 1983, 40 C.R. (2d) pp. 304) (emphasis added)
In attacking the governments discretionary powers, Mr. Wilson, counsel for Mrs. Ferguson, questioned the validity of applying the standard of "best interest of the child" to an adult and criticized the criteria upon which "compelling need" was determined. Mr. Wilson argued that:

the evidence and common sense show that a healthy, concerned adoptee is undoubtedly in a better state of mind to receive and handle information about his birth parents than one who now receives such information under the "compelling need" test employed by the Director— an adoptee who, for example, is under psychiatric care and who has some pathological concern or obsession about his origins. (Ferguson v. Director of Child Welfare, et al., 1983, 40 O.R. (2d) p. 303)

In response to these opposing arguments, Judge Killeen harshly criticized the Ministry for the illegal and undemocratic methods it apparently employed in selectively dispensing information to adoptees over the years. In his address, Judge Killeen stated that:

to a fair and disinterested observer, the present application of these unwritten and largely secret criteria would hardly seem to be consistent with the most basic principles of democratic government. As it seems to me the present application of these criteria can only lead to the uncertain, unpredictable and irrebuttable administration of an important part of a public statute of this province. (Ferguson v. Director of Child Welfare, et al., 1983, 40 O.R. (2d) p. 299)

Judge Killeen nevertheless agreed in principle with the "compelling need" test and ruled against Mrs. Ferguson's application because it failed to satisfy this rule. He further determined that the Ontario Adoption Disclosure Registry was expressly enacted to deal with the question of
disclosure between members of the adoption triangle and, as such, felt it inappropriate for the Court to circumvent the Registry's responsibilities. Killeen did state, however, that the Registry appeared to be passive and largely ineffective. He specifically claimed that:

I am satisfied that...the registry system will fall into desuetude through its obvious structural inadequacies and at least one result of that could be a sharpened sense of frustration on the part of members of the adoption triangle who might well come to feel that their legitimate interests are being ignored or unduly downplayed. [Ferguson v. Director of Child Welfare, et al., 1983, 40 C.F.R. (2d) pg. 320]

In his assessment of the Ontario Registry, Kirk (1981) states:

when there is a stipulation that birthparents as well as adoptive parents have to consent to activate an adoptee's search, then the procedure will in many instances make that search either long delayed or impractical. [pg. 137]

The issues surrounding the complexity of record disclosure continues to be formally debated at this time in Ontario. In respect to The Child and Family Services Act: Draft Legislation, a Standing Committee on Social Development conducted hearings from January 23 to March 2, 1984. It is here that a number of submissions were made by interested groups and individuals regarding all aspects of the proposed legislation. One of the primary areas of concern to the Committee was an examination of the effectiveness of present adoption disclosure procedures.
The result of Judge Killeen's decision has been to lay
the responsibility of developing the mechanics of any form
of record disclosure on the Voluntary Adoption Registry
system. Accordingly, the following submissions were made,
as reported in the minutes of these hearings.

Doug Barr, executive director of the Children's Aid
Society of Metropolitan Toronto, in part, recommended that:

1. Non-identifying information be made available to
   adult adoptees upon request. (Similar to a
   recommendation made by the 1976 Committee on Record
   Disclosure);

2. The adoptive parents veto on reunions be abolished;

3. A two party consent system be instituted aided by an
   active agency search for the missing party who has
   not registered and who would have the authority to
   refuse a reunion. (Standing Committee on Social
   Development, February 10, 1984, pgs. 27-29)

In Mr. Barr's presentation he refers to a study
conducted by his Society which found that, in general,
reunions between adult adoptees and their birth parent(s)
were viewed as positive experiences. The study's concluding
remarks are as follows:

If the 1970's was a decade which recognized the
adoptees' need to know their origins it is hopeful
that the 1980's will be the decade when the right
to actual reunion will be more fully understood
and accepted as a natural phase of the lifelong
process of adoption, thus leaving people free to
establish the kind of relationship that can evolve
in the dignity that such a human experience
deserves. (Stoneman, et al., 1980, pg. 31)

Ms. Wendy Redmond, former President of Parent Finders,
Hamilton, Ontario and the author of a recent book on the
experiences of adoptees who have searched for their families
or origin, agrees with the Metro C.A.S. recommendation to dispense with the consent of the adoptive parent for a reunion to be effected. She cites the following reasons:

1. The adult adoptee is reduced to childhood status if having to ask for parental permission;

2. The decision he or she has made as an adult is a private one.

3. Non-adopted adults need not consult their parents in making decisions which affect their daily lives, so why must adopted people be obliged to do so? (Standing Committee on Social Development, Feb. 9, 1984, (pp. 18)

In substantiating their position the group from Parent Finders Inc. refer to another Metro Toronto C.A.S. study, entitled "The Adoption Rectangle". The following quote from this report emphasizes the need for changes based on empirical evidence:

Legislation usually follows practice, and such changes will only occur when adoption services expand their horizons and honestly face the implications of what is being learned about the adoption process and the psychological tasks involved. (Thompson, et al., 1985, pp. 25)

The last set of recommendations were from Mrs. S. Keller, founder of the Birth Parent/Adoptive Parent Group. Mrs. Keller suggests that the present legislation governing the disclosure registry be amended to include:

1. The removal of written consent of adoptive parents thereby allowing for more potential matchups between birth parents and adoptees without fear of veto;

2. That the registry provide to adopting in search the same information provided adoptees;

3. That the registry actively search and assist in reunions between birth parent and adoptee;
4. That counselling be available for those who request it;

5. That the public be made more aware of the registry's existence;

6. That the adult adoptee be given access to all and any identifying information and his original birth records on request; and

7. That adoption policy in the future should include open records and that, going into it, both birth parents and adoptive parents be made aware of this, and that only in a case deemed to have compelling reason may the birth parent have the option to keep the record sealed. (The Standing Committee on Social Development, Feb. 2, 1984, pg. 30)

The authors of these recommendations represent all members of the adoption triangle, as well as the professional sector. A further review of the available minutes reveals that no dissenting views were submitted to the Standing Committee, either orally or in writing. The only contrary positions were, in fact, put forth by the government representatives who comprised the committee itself.

In March 1984, Mr. Alan Robinson, Chairman of the Standing Committee, submitted its recommendations to the Ontario Legislative Assembly. Based on the submissions made and its own internal decision-making, the following constitute, in part, those recommendations:

1. That sections 148 and 154 should give further consideration to post-adoption access with reference to the adoptee's immediate family;

2. That consideration should be given to sibling post-adoption access, especially where the adopted children know each other;
3. That subsection 156(2) express non-identifying health-related information contained in adoption records be readily available to adoptees;

4. There was no consensus whether to retain the adoption disclosure registry consent of the adoptive parent. The Committee was evenly divided on the issue of three party consent;

5. That subsection 157(7)(b)(i) should be modified to waive authorization when an adoptive parent is (a) deceased, (b) mentally incompetent, or (c) cannot be located. (Robinson, 1984, pgs. 7-8)

The Ministry of Community and Social Services intends to introduce an actual bill in the legislature in the near future. It will be of interest to note if the public hearings conducted by the Standing Committee on Social Development will have an impact on the legislation or if the law will remain silent on the adoption records issue.

Adoption Practices Outside Canada. Not all jurisdictions handle adoption information as practiced in Ontario. The policies are quite different in Finland, Israel and Scotland where adult adoptees have had access to birth records for quite some time. Marcus (1979) notes that since Finland's adoption legislation came into force in 1925, the Save the Children agency has "systematically preserved as much information in adoption files to be ready to answer questions in the future." (pg. 17)

In both Finland and Israel reports indicate, however, that only a small percentage of adoptees request information about themselves and an even smaller percentage follow through to make contact with a birth parent. (Battzezal,
1971, pgs. 19-27; Edgar, 1976, pg. 19). The situation is similar in Scotland where less than two percent of adult adoptees take advantage of the 1930 statute which allows them to contact the Register House in Edinburgh to receive a copy of their original birth certificate. (Edgar, 1976, pg. 19) It is thus apparent that, even when information is readily available, it is not automatically sought.

Dr. John Triseliotis (1973) conducted a study in Scotland with seventy adopted persons who requested information from December 1969 to November 1970. He concluded that of those adoptees who were reunited with their birth parents and of those who merely sought and received background information, the majority (eighty percent) felt that the results of their enquiry were "helpful" or of "some help" to them. The remainder of the adoptees were either uncertain of the value of the search or relieved it had only added to their restlessness and unhappiness. (Triseliotis, 1973, pg. 139) These later adoptees, however, were characterized by Triseliotis as generally unhappy and insecure, angry at their natural and adoptive parents and of the system of adoption as well. (Triseliotis, 1973, pg. 141) Similar findings on the success and degree of satisfaction of reunions between adoptees and birth parents have been reported by Sorosky et al., 1978; Lictor, 1978; and Jones, 1976).
The classic work of Dr. Triselliotis has become a tremendous supporting influence on the adoptee's right to know his origins. So significant was the impact of this research that an English task force on adoption referred to it in making the recommendation to Parliament that "an adult adopted person should have an automatic right to a copy of his original birth certificate." (Report of the Department Committee on the Adoption of Children, 1972, p. 66). It further recommended that this document be made available to the adoptee upon request at the age of eighteen. In 1975, these recommendations were enacted in England and Wales, thus ending a sealed record practice which had been in existence since 1927. (The Children Act, 1975, pgs. 17-18)

The adoption picture in the United States is similar to that in Canada, where most states will allow access to adoption records upon petition to the courts for "good cause" or if a "compelling need" is demonstrated. As in Canada, a judicial enigma lies within defining what constitutes the exceptional circumstances however. (Kadushin, 1980, p. 455; Harrington, 1980, p. 30; Frøeersen, 1977, p. 147) Prager and Rotstein state that judicial interpretations of the meaning of "exceptional circumstances" have been limited. They have further stated that a desire to learn one's natural heritage is sufficient in satisfying the "good cause" rule. (1973, p. 136) According to Baran et al. (1974), "attempts
to gain access for good cause have been rare and have never been successful, except in unusual cases where matters of health or inheritance or other such practical considerations have been at stake." (pg. 533)

In a precedent setting decision, Superior Court Judge Gruccio concluded, however, that according to his interpretation of the statutes of New Jersey, "good cause" included the adoptee's psychological need to know. (Mills v. Atlantic City Dept of Vital Statistics, 372 A. 2d 649, 1977) Harrington (1980), in discussing this case, summarized the judicial guidelines developed by Judge Gruccio in conjunction with his judgement. In part, the guidelines suggest that:

1. When adult adoptees request access to their own birth records, the burden of proof should shift to the state to demonstrate that good cause is not present. When consent by the birth parent is already on file, access should be automatic.

2. When consent of the birth parent is not on file, the birth parent should be contacted discreetly through the agency which handled the adoption and consent should be requested. If consent is denied, the issue should rest with the court. (Harrington, 1980, pg. 37)

The impact of this decision, however, has been limited. When Judge Killeen (1983), for example, reviewed precedents for the Ferguson case he criticized the judgement stating it "amounts to blatant and, in a Canadian setting at least, impermissible judicial law-making." (pg. 316)

Nonetheless, there appears to be a growing tendency in state legislatures to permit adult adoptees to obtain
identifying information about their birth families. Marcus notes that up to 1979 Alabama was the only American jurisdiction which allowed access to both the original birth certificate and the court decrees. Original birth certificates only are available to adult adoptees in Kansas and Florida, while Virginia and South Dakota statutes limit inspection by an adult adoptee to the relevant court records. (1979, pg. 60)

Joseph Harrington (1981), who has written extensively on the legislative and judicial aspects of adoption, brings this record up to date. He notes that original birth certificates are now also released in Alaska, Pennsylvania, and Montana. Two-party registry systems exist or have been given legislative approval in Maine, Michigan, and Nevada. Further, an intermediary system has been instituted in Connecticut, Minnesota, North Dakota, Nebraska, and Tennessee. (Harrington, 1980, pg. 29-31) Despite this trend, Harrington concludes that:

The two principles of anonymity of the birth parents and confidentiality of court adoption proceedings, have been an integral part of adoption in this country since the 1930's and have not been abandoned, despite legislative efforts to do so. Ever in states—Connecticut, Minnesota, North Dakota and Nebraska—whose legislatures have permitted adoptees to learn the identity of their birth parents have done so only on condition that the birth parents consent. In other states, the birth parents' anonymity is perpetual unless they agree to end it. (1979, pg. 63)

A cogent analysis of the obstacles to adoption—report in the U.S. have been provided by Chang (1979), who further suggests that little basis to be expected from either
legislatures or the courts in bringing any through-going reform of the institution of adoption. (pg. 375) From a Canadian perspective, Kirk surmises that "much of (cur) social structure, including the structure of legislative and judicial arrangements, is inhospitable to the reform aspiration emanating from the adoptee movement." (1961, pg. 139)

By comparing adoption policies in other countries one notes that viable, alternate solutions to sealed record policies are currently practiced elsewhere. Also, what is of interest is the apparent unaccounted loss of influence that England has historically had on the development of adoption in North America.

The Canadian Perspective. Moving closer to home, one notes that Ontario is not the only province that has grappled with adoption reform legislation. A Royal Commission was established in British Columbia in 1975 to study the concept of a reunion registry among other reforms. (Fifth Report of the Royal Commission on Family and Children's Law, Part VII Adoption, 1975) In Nova Scotia the legislature amended its "Vital Statistics Act" in 1975, to allow an adoptee access to his original birth documents and records upon his attaining the age of majority. (Vital Statistics Act, R.S.N.S., 1967) The Manitoba Law Focic Commission tabled a report on the "Confidentiality of Adoption Records" in 1979 which recommended the
establishment of a Central Registry to disclose identifying information to adult adoptees and their birth parents upon receipt of their written consents. (pqs. 30-31) This recommendation was enacted by the Manitoba legislature in 1980. Marcus (1979) indicates that similar child welfare legislation was being proposed in Prince Edward Island in 1979. (pg. 91) In Saskatchewan, a 1975 report entitled "A Proposal for the Release of Adoption Information" reiterated the registry concept which was implemented by their Social Services Ministry in 1982 on an "internal, unlegislated" basis. (Toronto Star, Dec. 10, 1983, pg. A-1)

To date, voluntary registry systems, whereby members of the adoption triad can register their consent to a reunion, have been instituted in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Quebec, as well as Ontario. Quebec and Saskatchewan seem to have the most open-minded disclosure laws in Canada. In Saskatchewan,

Adoptees have the right to request a search for their birth mothers and the government is required to do so. A social worker acts as an intermediary but if a mother refuses to meet her child, the matter ends right there. (The Fifth Estate, Nov. 15, 1983, pg. 24)

In April 1984, a Quebec judge ordered the Department of Social Services to actively search for Pauline Guileault's birth mother based on this adult adoptees lone request. (The case has not yet been published in Quebec's legal reports at the time of this writing.)
Although each province has developed its own particular policies and practices, Ontario is the only province which requires three party consents for a reunion.

According to statistics compiled by the Ministry of Community and Social Services, there have been a total of 50,000 adoptions in Ontario over the last twenty years. (Standing Committee on Social Development, Feb. 2, 1984, pg. 32) Given that every adoption triangle is made up of five individuals: two adoptive and two birth parents, plus the child, this figure represents a total of 250,000 potentially living parties.

Although there has been a steady decline in adoptions over the last ten years, the records also show that in 1983, there remained a considerable 1,619 adoptions in Ontario alone. (Ministry of Community and Social Service Adoption Statistics, Dec. 1983)

Perhaps even more relevant in terms of the effects of sealed record policy, is the number of adult adoptees and birth parents registered the The Ontario Adoption Disclosure Registry. Since its inception in 1979, the Registry has received a total of 3,078 applications from adoptees and 1,343 from birth parents. (Standing Committee and Social Development, March 1, 1984, pg. 17-18)

Roughly calculated, the figures for registering adoptees closely approximates the number of average adoptions per year. From this perspective, the decree of
interest of adoptees for record disclosure is obvious. The degree of apparent interest of birth parents is not as numerically striking. It is significant, however, that when combined, the two figures represent approximately 45% of adoptees and birth parents mutually consenting to disclosure. On the other hand, it is also significant to note that, since 1979, only 167 reunions have been effected by the registry, representing less than 4% of those registered. (Standing Committee on Social Development, March 1, 1984, pg. 13) This statistic would seem to graphically illustrate the passivity of the system. This is based on two peculiarities found only in Ontario. Firstly, any one of the adoption triangle members, either by failing to register or failing to consent may block a matching. Secondly, the government does not publicize the system. This is why Judge Killeen (1983) called the Ontario registry system "passive" and predicted it would fall into disuse. (pg. 294-320)

The intended and unintended effects of sealed records policy are the very issues that serve to enliven the policy in controversy. Simply stated, the intended effects were, firstly, to preserve the sanctity of the adoptive relationship through ensuring freedom from interference and, secondly, to protect the privacy, confidentiality, and anonymity of birth and adoptive parents. The unintended effects, however, are those which have had most serious ramifications, for adoptees in particular.
There is little justification in claiming that adoption policymakers purposely sought to deny adoptees and birth parents their rights to freedom of information. This is the argument, however, that these two groups have utilized in their criticism of Canadian adoption legislation.

A comprehensive review of the positions of each of the involved parties in the adoption triangle will be presented in the following. As shall be demonstrated, there appears to be validity in the arguments of each group. It is perhaps this very fact that complicates the issue and prevents the creation of a solution that will be satisfactory to all.

The Adoptive Parents' View. Inherent in sealed record statutes is a philosophy that emphasizes the need for confidentiality with respect to the details of the adoption and the identities of the adult parties involved. This philosophy is based upon the assumption that assurances of anonymity not only protect the birth parents, but offer the adoptive parents a sense of security and freedom from interference or competition.

Sealed records indeed appear, at least partially, geared towards protecting the vulnerabilities of adoptive parents who fear that their child may seek out natural parents or actually leave them upon discovering the identities of their "real" parents.
The fear of failure that such suspicions promote is profound and pervasive. As stated by Sorosky, et al., (1975):

Adoptive parents are generally very insecure and uncomfortable when it comes to dealing with their child's conception and hereditary background. Their fear of being abandoned by the adopted child seems to relate to unresolved feelings of separation and loss associated with infertility and their resulting childless state. (pg. 24-25)

Adoptive parents can nevertheless be reassured by the research which has proven that these fears are largely unfounded. (Depp, 1962; Simpson et al., 1961; Sorosky et al., 1978) The team of Sorosky, Baran, and Panhor (1974a, b, 1975, 1976, 1978) found, for instance, that of 50 reunions between adoptees and birth parents in California, there was no proven harm to the adoptee's relationship with his adoptive parents. They concluded that:

Although we view the adoption reunion as a highly explosive experience, our findings would not indicate that it is necessarily traumatic or destructive to either the adoptee or birth parent. Furthermore, the reunion does not appear to have any serious effect on the existing relationship between the adoptee and adopting parent in most of the cases studied. (Sorosky, et al., 1974, pp. 205)

Triseliotis' research in Scotland also led to the conclusion that an adoptee wish to search for birth parents was not necessarily a rejection of the adoptive parents. He states that:

most of the adoptees interviewed clearly and definitely stated that though they knew they had a set of biological parents, it was to their adoptive mother and father that they responded to.
as true parents and for whom they had real feelings. (1973, pg. 161)

Here in Ontario, similar findings have been reported in a study conducted by the Children's Aid Society of Metro Toronto. In examining 22 reunions, these researchers state:

All of the adoptive parents (who responded) agreed with the adoptees' assessment of their relationship as having remained close or it became even closer than it had before the reunion. (Stoneman, et al., 1980, pg. 16)

It has furthermore been the experience of therapists at Browndale, a treatment facility for children and adolescents in Southwestern Ontario, that the:

the adoptive parent who is able to support and give his blessing to his adopted child's right and need to know his natural parents finds that his own relationship with the child is enriched and enhanced. The adoptive parent who feels the need to deny this child this right contributes to the alienation of his child from himself. (Brief from Browndale, 1977, pg. 2)

These and other writers have stated that there is no need or justification for adoptive parents to feel threatened by searches for birth parents. Contrary to popular belief, most adult adoptees seek contact in an attempt to fill gaps in their heritage and to gain an understanding of themselves and their beginnings so to complete their identities, not because they desire a new set of parents. (Lilton, 1984; Kadushin, 1980; Scheppers, 1975; Prager and Rothstein, 1973) In completing this argument, Kirk has stated that adoptive parents fears are unwarranted.

The fact is that raising a family whether by birth or adopted, amounts to babysitting, or rather, a kind of custodial care.
No one can guarantee their children's loyalty. That's the gamble taken by all of us who raise children. (1984, pg. 144)

Despite these reassurances and potentially enlightening outcomes, adoptive parents remain fearful of any changes in existing policy and law. (Small, 1979; Sorosky, et al., 1979) It is clear from the several public hearings held in California, British Columbia and Ontario in recent years, that some adoptive parents have indeed been powerful voices against legislative change. (Kirk, 1981, pg. 147)

Margaret Birch, then Minister of Social Development and an adoptive parent, reportedly led the fight against a policy of full disclosure during the 1978 Ontario hearings. In explaining her position on a subsequent C.E.C. broadcast of The Fifth Estate, she stated:

We seem only to hear of those very successful reunions. We hear very little of those where there is a rejection, where it's very difficult for a natural parent to accept a child, whom to all intents and purposes they had given up and put to the back of their mind for many, many years... (Nov 15, 1983, pg. 27)

Support in opposing the opening of sealed adoption records is also evident in the literature. Arguments in this regard include the moral obligation to honour the spirit of the adoption contract, claims that releasing identifying information may cause those wishing to relinquish in privacy to resort to abortion, and fears that open records may deter prospective applicants from pursuing adoption.
Zeilinger (1979) bases his dissenting view on the opinion that no one, adopted or not, actually has the "right" to know one's origins. He states that:

Beyond the scant information available on a birth certificate, no person has a legal or inherent right to any information respecting their backgrounds and origins save what their parents voluntarily choose to impart. A parent who wishes to deny such information to a child could not and would not be compelled to do so by the state.

(pons.49)

Andrews (1979), Foster (1979) and Zeilinger (1979) forcefully point out that the liberalization of sealed record practices would result in changing the status of adoptive parents to that of long-term foster parents. As a further consequence "the perennial and endemic fear of adoptive parents, namely, that they will lose their child to biological parents, will be enhanced and transformed into reality". (Zeilinger, 1979, pg.46)

Although acknowledging that greater openness about the adoption process promoted by the adoptee movement is clinically sound, Andrews (1978) believes the sanctity of the adoption contract must be preserved. She states:

If the adoption contract is attacked and in effect nullified by legislative acts, both biological and adoptive parents will have good reason to feel that for them adoption has become legal fraud.

(pg.327)

From the perspective of the adoptive parent, it is apparent that there are opposing views regarding this emotional controversy. As will be demonstrated in the following, conflicting arguments also pervade discussions of the position of birth parents and adoptees.
Birth Parents: Anonymity or Connectedness? In describing the birth parents' position with respect to sealed record legislation it is again useful to turn to the philosophies that underscore the statutes. Of all members of the adoption triangle, birth parents are indeed most obviously implicated in the moral judgments that have traditionally accompanied calls for privacy in adoption proceedings.

Regardless of individual circumstances, illegitimacy and unwed parenthood has long been considered a rather distasteful social "problem". As such, tradition has dictated that it be dealt with as expeditiously and unpretentiously as possible.

Although the stringent moral code of past decades has given way to more open-minded views in recent years, remnants of past practices and attitudes seem extremely resistant to change. As such, birth parents have continued to be forced into obscurity. Statements by sealed record proponents graphically illustrate the present societal and legal position:

Unwed mothers should have the chance to build a new life without remaining vulnerable to possible embarrassment and recrimination, and may not dare to be confronted with their shame decades later. (Means, 1978, p.c.3)

And:

I can think of nothing more cruel to the young woman relinquishing a child than to hold out to her the hope that sometime in the future she will be able to reunite with her child. To hold out such a hope encourages her to remain fixated on
her guilt and confusion over placement and to remain buried in the trauma of this event.
(Foster, 1979, pg.37)

The presumptions here could not be more clearly stated. Birth parents, in the eyes of these authors and apparently in the eyes of policy-makers, are those who, regardless of misfortune or design, have made a grave social and moral mistake. Although perhaps well-intentioned, the " forgiveness" offered to them through promises of confidentiality somehow seems condenscending.

On the other side of the coin, it has recently been argued that, although all legal responsibility was removed from the birth parent with the signing of the adoption order, a moral responsibility remains. This obligation is one that accompanies the onus of giving birth: namely, that there are certain moral censures attached to motherhood, the least of which is acceptance of basic responsibility for parentage and, as such, acceptance of the child's right to know who his natural parent is. Here, Gaylord (1976) states:

Although a confrontation might be disturbing to the natural parents, should the child have to make the sacrifice because the natural parents wish to remain anonymous? ...Having inflicted a unique status on the adopted child, have natural parents at least a moral obligation to do what they can, if asked, to relieve their children's distress about not knowing about their origin? (pg.42)

Brown (1976) takes this position a step further. He believes that "very few natural parents would deny their relinquished child the right to know them if they knew and
understood it was in that child's or adult's interests to know them." (pg. 2)

While Andrews (1978) argues the sanctity of the "adoption contract", the adoptee movement questions its inviolability. Since there has seldom, if ever, been legal wording with reference to "confidentiality", "privacy" or "anonymity", the understanding of whether or not a "contract" actually exists is currently being questioned. In 1977, for example, the Children's Home Society of California conducted a survey with members of the adoption triangle, which in part, queried birthparents as to whether the adoption agency had made any kind of "contract" with them, guaranteeing that their identity would never be revealed. Their findings, as discussed by Kirk (1981), reveal that over the years more and more birth parents reported that no contract or agreement existed regarding anonymity. (pp. 132-134) By challenging the existence of alleged "past promises", previously silent birth parents are beginning to voice their dissatisfaction with policies that apparently have little basis in reality.

Research involving birth parents indicates that in many cases, they do not want or need the "protection" that has been given to them. The team of Borosky, Baran and Farber (1978), for instance, studied the feelings and attitudes of birth parents after they had relinquished their children for adoption. They found that:
Fifty per cent of the birth parents interviewed said that they continued to have feelings of loss, pain, and mourning over the child they relinquished. An overwhelming majority experienced feelings of wanting the children to know they still cared about them and had an interest in knowing what kind of persons they grew up to be. Eighty-two per cent said they would be amenable to a reunion if the adoptee wished it when he reached adulthood. (pg.335)

In a further study these researchers examined the outcomes of reunions. In those cases where a reunion had already taken place they conclude that "for the majority of birth parents, the experience provided an opportunity to resolve old guilt feelings and to erase years of questioning about the fate of their relinquished child". (Sorcsky, et al., 1975, pg.902)

In yet another publication, Pannor, et al. reported on the attitudes of members of the adoption triangle to the sealed adoption record. When birth parents were asked to discuss their feelings about the adopted child searching for his birth parent "seventy-seven per cent felt the child should have a right to search if he so wished and many indicated that they would be responsive to his finding them". (1976, pg.4) When asked to reveal their attitudes regarding the sealed record issue seventy-six per cent, in general, expressed a need for changes in the present system in order to make information more accessible to birth parents and adoptees and specifically, sixty-seven per cent favoured the actual unsealing of these records. (Pannor, et al., 1976, pgs.4-8)
As evidenced here, many birth parents have become more verbal about their own needs. Some, in fact, have formed organizations through which their concerns may be shared with other birth parents and the public in general. These groups advocate for the unsealing of birth records and the development of adoption practices that would allow for a continuing flow of information between birth and adoptive parents, through an agency, if necessary. Lee Campbell, founder of Concerned United Birthparents, aggressively advocates for legislative reform:

"It is not uncommon for assumptions, let them be positive and sanction openness... The punitive measures of our laws must be stricken from the books." (1979, p. 29)

In this regard, Dukette identifies one of the core issues of the sealed records controversy. She suggests that genuine openness may have great benefits for adoption if it is sought within a respect for the welfare of all parties or the adoption triangle. (1975, p. 551) One solution to meet the needs of the adoptees but also protect the rights of birth parents is the current trend in Canada and the United States for open-record statutes which include clauses that give birth parents the right to consent to or deny the revelation of their names to the child they relinquished for adoption.
The Adult Adoptee Perspective. Every year, an estimated 1,200 adopted children in Ontario will attain majority status. They will have achieved the right to vote, to marry without parental consent, and to enter into legally binding contracts. In short, they will have earned the right to be regarded as independent individuals and ascribed with full adult status in every respect, except one. These adult citizens will be deprived of the right to direct access to information concerning their biological parentage, their genetic legacies, their family history, their ethnic background, and their original name—all in accordance with Ontario adoption policy, which is sanctioned by law, and which was implemented in the "best interests" of the adoptee as a child.

Even more forcibly than birth parents, ther, many adoptees have begun to seriously challenge the legal and moral premises of the adoption "contract." They not only contend that sealed record legislation denies them their constitutional rights, but have banded together in an attempt to effect legislative change.

Concerns in this regard formed the impetus for the creation of a national movement of adult adoptees whose primary purpose is to promote greater public understanding of adoption and its effects upon all members of the adoption triangle. (Thompson, 1979, p.4,13) The movement originated thirty years ago when an adoptee, Jean M. Eaton, using the
pseudonym Kittson, wrote about her own experience searching for and reuniting with her birth mother. (Paton, 1954) Continuing her work in this area, in 1968 she wrote "Orphan Voyage", which is the same name of an organization she established that assists other adult adoptees similarly activated in such a search. Paton forcefully advocates for access to sealed records as a right of every adoptee, if so desired. In New York, Florence Fisher, author of "In Search of Alma Fisher" (1973), founded the Adoptee Liberty Movement Association. Known as ALMA, its motto is "The truth of his origin is the birth right of every man". In Canada the adoptee activist movement is led by Parent Finders, founded in Vancouver in 1974 by three adoptees: Joan Vanstone, Gary Crowley and Shannon Blomberg. Similar to the above organizations, Parent Finders operates a reunion registry which allows for matching up of information supplied by both parties seeking a reunion. The movement is augmented by others adoptees who have written movingly of their own searches and feelings. (Linton, 1979, 1975; Freedman, 1977; Howard, 1975; Dalsheimer, 1973)

Foster (1979), Neilliger (1979) and Andrews (1978) argue that it is only a miniscule minority of unhappy adoptees who need to know their origins, yet claim that the controversy these adoptees create may have procrust and tragic effects. In this regard, Lloyd (1979) has published an article in which he opposes the enactment of that which
he refers to as the "Universal Adoption Record Disclosure laws". In it he states:

It appears that only a minority of adoptees demonstrate good cause to violate past guarantees of confidentiality. Fewer adoptees genuinely benefit from the records and subsequent encounters with birth parents. Meanwhile, the constitutional liberties of family members are trampled. (pg. 307)

Zeilinger (1979) contends that the need to search must not be equated with a legal right. He states that "sealed record statutes should not be changed precipitously since it is axiomatic that hard (legal) cases make bad laws". (pg. 45) Although adult adoptees have argued in courts throughout the United States that their constitutional rights have been violated under the First and Fourteenth Amendments few have been successful; indeed confirming the complexities of such cases. (Harrington, 1981, 1980, 1979; Anderson, 1977; Burke, 1975; Prager, Rothstein, 1973)

The overriding principle governing the adoption process in both Canada and the United States is the "best interests of the child". Without denigrating the honourable intentions of the legislation, as the need for child protection is a matter that defies argument, there seems to be certain conditions and consequences attached to the adoption of children. In the case of the adoptee, the consequences are epitomized by the conditions of the adoption "contract" made on his behalf. The fact that the minor child has no voice in striking the adoption bargain is irrelevant in the eyes
of the law, however. The fact that children invariably attain adult status and presumably gain certain rights, privileges, and freedoms, is also immaterial in the case of the adoptee. In this regard, Lupack (1979) states:

In the final analysis, the paramount consideration in adoption must be the best interests of the adoptee... Adoption legislation assumes that what was in the adoptee's best interest as a child is also in his best interests as an adult, while confidentiality is probably in the best interests of the child adoptee, it is questionable whether insistence upon confidentiality remains in his best interests once he has reached adulthood. (pg. 217)

Insofar as the adoption contract continues to be viewed as sacred and inviolable, adoptees will continue to be denied status as adults, and will always be considered as perpetual children. (Smail, 1979; Patch, 1968) In this regard Smail (1979) draws an analogy:

If we were to delete the word "adoptive" from proposed open records legislation... and insert the word "Jew", "Black", "Indian", "Catholic", or "Woman" in its place, more people might understand why many adopted citizens object so strongly to (sealed record policies). (pg. 43)

Adoptees take issue with the fact that they are the only group in society who are denied their genealogy by law, the only citizens who are issued a birth certificate that represents little more than legalized fraud. (Smail, 1979, pg. 43) As well, adult adoptees are the only senators who require parental consent to seek personal information about themselves and their beginnings as evidenced by the practices of the Ontario Voluntary Adoption Registry. Smith (1976) states that:
Today's sealed record controversy cannot be dismissed as simply the expression of a few vocal dissidents; it must be viewed as a moot issue. In this debate open-mindedness is essential and such open-mindedness has to include consideration of the possibility that adult adoptees may be right in demanding elimination of secrecy. (pg. 74)

Now, when not only an adult adoptee desires to know but the necessity of his knowing is openly declared, changes reflecting the needs and wishes of all members of the adoption triangle is required. (Sorich and Siebert, 1982; Ecrqman, 1982)

Baran, Sorosky and Pannor (1975) recommend, based on their studies, that:

1. Openness and honesty should replace the secrecy and anonymity that are part of the present procedures.

2. Original birth records should be unsealed for all adult adoptees; background and identifying information should be made available.

3. Appropriate boards should be established to aid any adult adoptees or biological parents who wish to meet.

4. Adoption agencies should reinstitute and maintain contact with all parties in the adoption triangle for as long as necessary, providing current information on all parties to any adult member of the triangle who request it.

5. Adoption should be regarded as a lifelong process, and family counselling should be available over the life span. (pg. 98)

The sealed adoption record controversy is a complex and emotional charged issue. It involves so diverse a group of participants who represent such a kaleidoscope of opinions and desires that consensus for change is greatly limited. As indicated by Ontario's proposed Child and Family Services
Act of 1983, few changes to sealed record policy and legislation are expected in the near future. Policy-makers and legislators can nevertheless be charged with several ongoing responsibilities to all members of the adoption triangle. Specifically: the need to continually assess whether existing adoption practice provides sufficient protection for the child and other persons involved; whether the public social policy on which these practices rest is directed towards the welfare of the child and his family in the present and the future; whether it reflects current knowledge from behavioural sciences; and whether this policy is constructively related to and consistent with the rights and freedoms of all other members of the community and society.

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES: A SEARCH FOR IDENTITY

As mentioned previously, an adult adoptee's search for his family of origin is, in most cases, not due to a failing adoptive relationship but rather a much more complex search for identity. What is of concern here is a sense of continuity with one's own life history and of connectedness to one's heritage that are central to a secure sense of self.

We all engage in a lifelong process of discovering, developing and maintaining our identities by continually questioning who we are and where we belong. Triseliotis (1983) writes that:
Personal identity is the result of multiple psychological, social and cultural influences which combine towards the building of an integrated and unified self. (p. 23)

The achievement of a firm sense of self, then, is derived not only from appraisals made of oneself by oneself, but of others in our world. Through daily social interactions and relationships every individual assimilates the positive and negative feedback he receives from significant others which is then incorporated into his own self-definition. The most powerful source of such feedback is from the immediate and extended family.

Much of what most of us know and feel about our genetic background is drawn from and strengthened by a membership in a continuous family. Jewett (1979) writes that our experiences are caught, clarified, and reported by the family, and retrievable as memories. In addition to providing sameness and continuity to our immediate, individual life histories, a family provides a connection to our heritage, our biological and historical roots.

Children who are adopted, however, have two families from which to draw their sense of identity - a biological family and an adoptive family. The problem for adopted children is that their need to know of their origins, or ability to maintain connections with it, has often been met with strong resistance. This resistance to share information about the child's background may lead to insecurity and guilt feelings in the child. Lifter states that:
The main message to the adoptee...is that he must suppress his urgent need to know (about his past)...He has no choice but to adapt to a pervasive sense of separateness and half-life. (1979, pg.10)

For some of the adopted children who lack knowledge of their natural parents or have only vague memories, the result is a confused conception of their genetic ego and identity formation. This phenomenon was first described by Wellish (1952) as "genealogical bewilderment". Sants (1964), who expanded on this concept, states that for the genealogical bewildered child the resulting state of confusion and uncertainty about his natural parents fundamentally undermines his security and thus affects the establishment of a stable concept of self. (pqs. 133-134)

If the child senses that facts are being withheld from him, Sants feels the child will conclude "that these facts are indicative of a tainted heritage" thus arousing guilt feelings. (1964, pg. 141)

Colon (1973) writes about his own life as a foster child, and describes his successful effort to get reconnected to his natural family. The goal of his paper entitled, "In Search of One's Past: An Identity Trip", was to show that a person's identity is profoundly related to and affected by his sense of connection to his family of origin. He raises questions about the foster-care system and, by implication, questions adoption agency policy. In a subsequent article, Colon asserts that:
The desire to know one's biological origins and parentage results from a deep felt psychological and emotional need, a need for roots, for existential continuity, and for a sense of completeness. To know who one's biological parents are or were, to know where one's skin colour, facial features, body build, temperament, and talents come from is a powerful human desire to achieve a sense of wholeness about oneself or himself. (1978, pg. 302)

The unique feature of an adopted child's experience is that in a deep sense they do not really know who they are. Frisk (1964) conceptualized that the lack of family background knowledge prevents the development of a healthy "genetic ego", which is then replaced by a "hereditary ghost". He states that "When the genetic identity is obscure one does not know what is passed on... which breeds feelings on insecurity and inferiority." (Frisk, 1964, pg. 16)

Many of the authors agree that adolescence is the stage during which many adoptees begin to have questions about their genetic backgrounds. The intense feelings of uncertainty about themselves that they experience at this time cause many adoptees to wonder about their birth parents and about their own conception and birth and why they were given up. Erikson (1966) viewed the development of a person's identity in a psychohistorical context, which related to his sense of genealogy in the life cycle through which everyone must pass. He stresses that adolescence is a crucial time in identity formation and that it can be a particularly difficult task for those individuals who don't have a connection with the past.
The team of Scrosky, Baran, and Faunce concur that adolescent and young adult adoptees are more susceptible to experience difficulties in identity formation. They state that:

Many adoptees are preoccupied with existential concerns and a feeling of isolation and alienation due to the break in the continuity of life-through-the-generations that their adopter represents. For some, the existence block to the past may create a feeling that there is a block to the future as well. This becomes evident when we observe how frequently marriage, the birth of the adoptees' first child, or the death of his adoptive parent triggers an even greater sense of genealogical bewilderment and a desire to search for the birth parents. (Scrosky, el al., 1976, p. 25)

An illuminating description of the genealogically deprived is given by Hans Anderson (1958) in his story of "The Ugly Duckling". Anderson illustrates the plight of a swan who is deprived knowledge of his swan's genealogy by being raised in a duck's family. Because of his physical differences he is rejected by his family. Feeling sad and confused he wanders aimlessly encountering further rejection and hardships until one day he comes across a group of swans. It is only then that his tremendous need to feel that he belongs is truly gratified. The implication of the story is that if the swan and his family were aware of and shared information regarding his biological roots a greater degree of understanding and growth within the family may have occurred.
The overriding message presented by researchers who have written about adoptees in search of their identity is that the need to know of their origins is very fundamental. The following excerpts clearly reiterate and emphasize the importance of knowing one's background:

To be able to integrate the aspects connected with heredity and genetics, adoptees must get to know their own biological parents. (Frisk, 1964, p. 9)

Brown (1974) writes:

You cannot give value to a person in the here and now. The value has to be attached to the fact that he is part of a biological chain, part of a continuance, and the word that came to mind was the word "roots". (pq. 3)

McCoy (1961) discusses one potential pitfall when facts are withheld:

To deny that an adopted child has a right to his heritance...is to tell him that he didn't exist, or his existence was worthless, until he came to the adoptive family and became their child. (pq. 15)

Cohen (1978) identifies the need for continuity and how it may be accomplished:

The critical issue is the maintenance of the child's and the biological families' emotional bondedness so that the child grows up, at the very least, emotionally connected to his biological family and, if possible, with tangible connections as well. (pq. 289)

From the above, it becomes evident that in order for adoptees to formulate a healthy, integrated sense of identity and self, there is a need for not only "sameness" and "continuity" within their adoptive families, but a need to be "connected" and to have "roots" to their families of
orign. This would seem to imply that a lack of contact between adoptees and their biological families may have detrimental effects. A physical separation does not necessarily serve to counteract an earlier identification with family, however. In this light Sants (1964) suggests that:

to graft a child from his natural family to an adoptive family can never be completely carried out; roots in the natural family can never be severed without a trace. (pg. 140)

Colin (1970) lends support to this concept when he states that:

physical separations or death need not be experienced as permanently irretrievable losses. One's memories of those lost others can keep their very much alive and they, therefore, remain a significant part of one, which indeed they are. (pg. 122-123)

In order to gain a theoretical understanding of how the concept of self develops in adopted and non-adopted children it is necessary to consider the earliest months of a child's life. Studies of infancy, and maternal care have been notably surveyed by Bowlby (1951) who suggests that early attachment behaviors are evident between a baby and his mother through a set of signs and signals that they share. Klein (1948) further contends that the infant has an awareness of his mother from the earliest weeks and that by about the third or fourth month has developed a sense of trust or distrust in relation to her. This premise was later substantiated by Desmond et al. (1961) who found that
an attachment between mother and child begins during the very first moments of the child's life when he is awake and has his eyes open. Klein (1948) concluded that these early experiences in an infant's life permanently prescribed the extent to which the "self" feels accepted or rejected and are the earliest roots of the child's concept of self. Klein's view on the origins of self have been furthered by theoretical principles developed by Dr. Murray Bowen as to the importance of one's generational past.

Bowen's theory on family systems is based on the premise that no one exists in isolation, but that we are all connected to significant others in our world, primarily within the family. He asserts that:

The total fabric of society is organized around the concept of man as an autonomous individual who controls his own destiny. There is increasing evidence, however, that man is not as separate from his family, from those about him, and from his multigenerational past as he has fancied himself to be. This in no way changes what man is or has always been. He is as autonomous as he has always been, and he is as "locked in" to those about him as he has always been. The family focus merely points to ways that his life is governed by those about him. (Bowen, 1978, p. 289)

Bowen, therefore, substantiates the concept that we are all inexorably connected to our multigenerational past: a connection which cannot be broken or "cut-off" through separation and or adoption. (1976, p. 76-77)

Bowen contends that there are two sets of competing forces operative within the individual and, as such, the individual's family system. He furthermore postulates that
it is the interplay between these forces that determines the development of a stable, healthy identity. The two forces are specifically defined as: "differentiation of self", the need for individuality and self-autonomy, versus "fusion", the need for a sense of togetherness and emotional investment within one's interpersonal relationships. (Kerr, 1976, pg. 74-75) Bowen states:

that not only are these forces...rooted deep in man's biological makeup...and are innate components of human nature, but that they are delineated by and encompassed within "transgenerational" emotional processes and emotional contact with extended family. (Kerr, 1976, pg. 76)

Here, the central theoretical premise concerns:

The degree to which we all have poorly "differentiated" selves...or the degree of our unresolved emotional attachments to families of origin. (Bowen, 1976a, pg. 70)

There are three factors that influence differentiation of self; the degree of bonds one has with significant others, the level of anxiety in self and relationship networks, and the degree of emotional cut-off with one's extended family. (Hall, 1981, pg. 51) Bowen proposes that a person's inability to "differentiate a self" equals the degree of unresolved emotional attachments that that person has to his family of origin. (1976, pg. 529) Accordingly, if further differentiation or identity growth is to occur, the person who is cut-off from the past must re-establish contact with his family of origin to begin or resume the differentiation process. (Bowen, 1976a)
Extrapolating from these principles, it is postulated that some form of connection with one's family of origin is not only essential to one's present family relationships, but is imperative for establishing a secure identity and emotional health. This theoretical base is particularly relevant to adult adoptees whose emotional connectedness with their biological families may be limited or thwarted by a lack of access to information or actual, contact with their families of origin. Here the concept of "emotional cut-off" from the past has obvious ramifications for this unique group.

Although there are slight variations in the theoretical perspectives of each of the previously mentioned authors, their concepts lend increasing awareness to the pervasive and emotional consequences faced by adult adoptees who lack knowledge of their beginnings and access to their history. The thrust of these works poignantly demonstrates that an adult adoptee's search for his family of origin is not a matter of mere curiosity, but a quest to know "Who I am".

TELLING: AN OVERVIEW

The revelation of "telling" phenomenon in adoption has long been the subject of much professional interest and debate. The controversial nature of this topic is clearly evidenced in literature that reflects contradictory viewpoints as to whether, when, how, and what to tell the child, in addition
to oppositional research findings regarding the various emotional effects of "telling".

The following review shall serve as a synopsis of the major theoretical positions that have contributed to the debate and the research conclusions that have underpinned it.

**Proponents of Telling.** The literature indicates that, to date, the large majority of mental health professionals continue to support a policy of telling a child about his adoption at a relatively early age. This position is apparently rooted in a sudden spurt of adoption theory development that occurred in the late 1950's. (Baynes, 1950; Thompson, et al., 1978)

It was at this time that the stigma of illegitimacy began to give way to the more openminded and humanitarian views upon which present adoption practice is based: namely, that adoption is not merely a convenient means of surreptitiously dealing with the "evidence" of the immorality of unwed mothers, but a valuable resource through which quality care and permanency could be offered to children whose parents could not raise them.

It was also during this period that mental health principles were first applied to adoption practice. Eby's (1951) classic work on the effects of separation and maternal deprivation had a particularly significant impact upon professional thinking and influenced the shift in
emphasis from hereditary to mental health concerns. (Lawder, et al. 1969, pp. 13-14)

This stance gained increasing support and momentum throughout the 1960's, when the notions of "genealogical bewilderment" and the complexities of identity development for adoptees were raised by such authors as McCoy (1961), Frisk (1964), Sants (1964), Stone (1969), and Triselictis (1973).

At present, then, the "pro tell" school of thought appears relatively well-established. As early as 1956, in fact, Shapiro found that, of 270 adoption agencies surveyed:

most specifically direct adoptive parents to inform the child early, before he hears about his adoption from others. "Awareness of need to inform child a 'must' and "we do not accept if couple refuses" were comments frequently made. (Shapiro, 1956, pp. 87)

McWhinnie (1968) has also noted that, in England in 1964, the Hurst Committee actually attempted to legislate a "telling" policy. In their "Departmental Report of the Adoption of Children", the committee specifically recommended that there be an entry in the application for an adoption order to the effect that the adoptive parents had told the child of his adoption or, at the very least, "had undertaken to bring up the child in the knowledge that he is adopted." (McWhinnie, 1968, pp. 267)

The rationales that underpin the presumed advantages of disclosure vary according to differing professional perspectives. McNamara (1975), Jarfle and Fanshel (1970),
Kirk (1964), and Kornitzer (1959) all suggest, for instance, that parental revelation is basically a preventative measure. Such of these authors contend that not only is secrecy practically impossible to achieve, but that discovery of the fact of adoption is likely to be highly traumatic and disturbing to the adoptee if learned from outside sources.

Here, Jaire and Fanshel (1970) state that early telling is essential insofar as it:

_alleviates the severe turmoil and conflict that would arise if he were faced suddenly with having to incorporate this fact into a new self-conception at a later age. (p/q. 119)

McNamara (1975) similarly warns that:

_to hide the fact of adoption, as was done in past years, or to ignore it after the "terrible truth" has been told to the child by someone else, it tragic and unfair. It gives adoption a negative connotation... (p/q. 150)

Krugman (1964) and Mondell and Michaels (1965) claim, however, that the need to tell is best explained in terms of its importance in ensuring a trusting and non-deceitful parent-child relationship.

In this regard, Krugman notes that the continuing adherence to the prescription of early telling is largely due to:

_an increasingly strong conviction that the greatest security, emotional protection, and strength for the adopted child... would be developed within a parent-child relationship characterized by mutual acceptance, honesty, and trust. The withholding of information concerning so crucial a matter as a child's origins has been seen as threatening to such a relationship. (1964, pg. 349)
Rendell and Michaels' (1965) also note that:

All growing children look to their parents as their primary source of knowledge, not only about the world around them, but also about themselves and their own place in it. Parents who discuss adoption with their child are helping to build and solidify his confidence in them. (pg. 22)

Raymond (1955) expands upon this notion by pointing to the apparent fragility of the adopted child's self-image and his susceptibility to self-doubt. She believes that, if not told early, the adopted child may assume the worst about his background and suffer feelings of self-depreciation. In referring to the adopted child, Raymond thus states that: "Especially because he is adopted, he needs to know that he is wanted, that he is acceptable, that the kind of person he is, is a good kind to be." (1955, pg. 98)

Various research findings have lent credence to these professional opinions. Eldred, et al. (1976), who studied the adoption experiences of 210 adopted adults, found, for instance, that those who learned of their adoption at an early age and were apprised of the fact by their adoptive parents, were more likely to report a positive reaction than those who were told late and/or learned of it elsewhere. (pg. 287-288)

Following 58 personal interviews with adult adoptees, McWhinnie (1967) also noted that "All were emphatic that the source of information that they were adopted should be their parents and not outsiders." (pg. 240) Furthermore:

if the adopted child had been given fragments or information about its biological parents and
early history, the frustration caused by such information being hidden accentuated feelings of insecurity. (McWhinnie, 1968, pg. 245)

In pointing out the detriments of unplanned or inadvertent discovery of adoption, Jaffe and Fanshel (1970) concluded that:

The ad hoc and makeshift handling of revelation may have contributed to the subsequent adjustment problems of the adoptees with the most problematic overall adjustments. (pg. 128)

Triseliotis (1973) also found that:

Adoptees who were told or found out when over the age of ten felt this deeply and it had a profound adverse effect on them. Revelation at this late stage had a stunning impact, shaking their entire life and self-image, leaving most of them confused and bewildered. (pg. 20)

In light of these research findings, it would appear that the opinions of the "pro tell" proponents are fairly well-rounded. As is the case with all issues, however, there are those who have reserved judgment or, at the very least, expressed moderated positions as to the value of adoption revelation.

**Alternative Opinions About Telling.** The literature reveals a distinct paucity of strictly contrary views with respect to "telling". The only firm adversary, in fact, is American psychiatrist Joseph Ansfield (1973).

Ansfield specifically claims that, despite agency attempts to convince adoptive parents of the value of revelation, few adopters are actually committed to doing so. He is also of the conviction that the choice of "telling" or
"not telling" is a strictly personal matter which should be left entirely to the discretion of the adoptive parents. Ansfield clearly states that:

I am fairly convinced that most adoptive parents do not want to tell their child that he is adopted, but feel that they must because it is the truth. As a result, a lot of anxiety is generated in parents because they do not want to hurt the child by being truthful, but fear that the child will find out the truth from someone else and hold it against them for not being honest with him... (pq. 35)

He nevertheless firmly believes that "If the parents have doubts about telling the child the truth or, it fact really don't want to, they shouldn't." (Ansfield, 1971, pg. 37)

Ansfield does concede that, despite "all precautions" and "discrete maneuvering", some children will inevitably discover the facts. He continues to hold to the contention, however, that revelation is generally unnecessary and ill-advised. This "no telling" stance is made definite when he states that:

If by chance the older child completes his adolescence without discovering the fact that he is adopted, I feel that there really is no need at all to tell him the truth... Perhaps the only time when the child should learn of the adoption is at the demise of the parents and the reading of the will... (Ansfield, 1971, pg. 46)

Although not as adamant as Ansfield, several other authors have expressed subtle doubts as to the advisability of revelation.
Goodman (1977) has noted, for instance, that while he generally believes that children should be told of their adoption, he has found that they are often "over told". He specifically cites his own research with adolescents, which revealed that:

A significantly higher incidence of running away was positively correlated with information that the child had been informed of his/her biological origins. We concluded that it might well be prudent to withhold facts of biological parentage. (pq. 95)

Blau (1977) has similarly suggested that overemphasis or telling may lead to an unhealthy preoccupation with the fact of adoption. He is thus of the opinion that:

Withholding information about the adoptee presents far less risk or interference with healthy development and the relationship with adoptive parents than does telling the child...preventative psychiatry would be better served by advocating less openness with child adoptees... (pq. 210)

Although Hornitzer (1959) has supported the notion of early telling, she seems to do so reluctantly. In alluding to the rather obligatory nature of the task, she states that:

The learning that one is adopted is not itself a happy thing... This being so, it ought to be imparted before it can have emotional meaning, as just another fact, and in this way, can be got over...(pq. 122)

The literature also points to several other authors who agree to the telling prescription in principle, yet criticize the practice of apprising the child at an early age.
Schecter (1960), Peller (1961, 1963), Weider (1977, 1978), and Toussaint (1962), for instance, all concur that revelation or adoption should be postponed until such time that the child has developed the cognitive and psychological strengths necessary to integrate the information with the least amount of emotional turmoil. Arguments in this regard have been developed basically out of the principles of psychiatry and developmental psychology.

Both Schecter and Peller argue on the basis of Freud's theories concerning the prevalence of Oedipal conflicts and "family romance fantasies" during middle childhood. They claim that it is during the pre-latency and latency period that the child is most likely to feel ambivalence towards his parents and thus most likely to use fantasy as a defense against his inner anger and frustration with them.

According to Freud, it is common for children of this age to fantasize that the parents with whom they live are not their "real" parents, and that they have other "better" and "good" parents who are all-loving and permissive. These fantasies serve as emotional justification for the child's belief that his parents are "bad" and, as such, offers emotional reprieve from intrapsychic conflict. It is said that these fantasies fade when the child accepts that he can love and hate the same individual. (Freud, 1950, pp. 74-75)

This emotional function is complicated for adopted children, however, as the fantasy has some basis in reality
they indeed have two sets of parents. Schecter (1960) thus warns that early knowledge of adoption creates confusion for the child which may result in defensive psychological disturbance. He specifically states that:

The adopted child has a chance of splitting the image of his parents and continuing to attribute the good elements to one set and the bad to the other... The immature ego cannot cope with the knowledge of the rejection by its original parents, as this represents a severe narcissistic injury. The child tends to react to this information by character change or symptom formation. (pg. 31)

As a result of these concerns, Schecter recommends that revelation of adoption not occur until such time that the Oedipal phase has been resolved, that is, after about the age of ten. (1960, pg. 31)

Peller (1961) has expressed similar concerns in stating that: "We still have to learn when, what, and how we can tell the child about his origins without impairing his Oedipal attachment and without feeding his own cruel archaic fantasies." (pg. 154)

Peller has also claimed that, not only by telling the child early "as we expose him to more than he can take", but the "repeated allusion to the child's adoption can achieve mainly one thing: to convey that he really is a stranger in the family." (1961, pg. 154) She thus recommends that adoption should be discussed only briefly, and preferably after the child has had an opportunity for social interaction outside the family, that is, in his early school years. (Peller, 1963, pg. 12)
Weider (1977, 1978) and Toussaint (1962) also believe that early disclosure is disruptive to the adopted child's developing personality. Weider bases his argument, however, on the fact that young children have under-developed communication skills which cause either a lack of understanding or a convoluted perception of the meaning of adoption.

He specifically notes that children under the age of 3 or 4 tend to react to words in their literal sense. As such, any "adoption story" that alludes to abandonment or relinquishment tends to be interpreted by the child as being "cotton rid cr" or "put out". Similarly, stories pertaining to receiving or "choosing" the child are seen in the light of being "taken away" or "found". (Weider, 1978, pg. 796)

Weider describes the complicated emotional response that typically follows such misinterpretation:

Indeed, being told was itself experienced as a mortifying, shaming experience...Overwhelming anxiety induced regression, leading to a tenacious dependency upon the adoptive mother. She became ambivalently and confusedly viewed as a powerful saviour who may get rid of a bad child. The child then had difficulty trusting her and others who came to represent her. (1976, pg. 796)

Weider further contends that early knowledge of one's adoption often leads to long-lasting and pervasive emotional difficulties. In this regard, he clearly states that early revelation:

(has) a deleterious effect on the adoptee's developmental processes, object relationships, cognitive function, and fantasy life. Unlike the transient episodes found in children of similar
age, their reactions were prolonged and left an
indelible stamp on their personalities and
intellects. (1977, pg. 16)

Toussaint (1962) also suggests that adopted children
tend to be more prone to emotional disturbances than non-
adopted children. This author believes, however, that early
revelation is not damaging in and of itself. He contends
that "telling" nevertheless becomes problematic and
dangerous if the adoptive parents had unresolved feelings
about parenthood. In this regard, Toussaint states that:

A mother who has not yet worked through her
conflict about being a mother is likely to show
this in her early mothering of the child…. When
such a mother has the task of telling her child
that he is adopted, she will be less sensitive to
the child and will be apt to choose the wrong time
or do it in a way that may push the child into
emotional difficulties. (1962, pg. 64)

Here Toussaint claims that the "chosen baby" story is
especially troublesome. He believes that, of all variations
of adoption "stories", this one is most likely to reveal the
adoptive parents' ambivalence about their role as well as
imprint a deep sense of fear and guilt upon the child. He
thus states that:

The recommended story "I chose you", assures
overtones of "I took you away, I kidnapped you, I
stole you", or of a gruff "I rescued you, so
remember to be grateful so that I may be
forgiven." (1962, pg. 63)

As indicated, the issue of revelation in adoption is
one in which there is little professional consensus. The
preponderance of differing opinions, in fact, emphasizes not
craly continuing dissention among professional ranks, but the
distinct absence of a unified professional voice with
respect to the "telling" question.

The impact of such ambiguity on the part of the
"experts" is perhaps best illustrated in terms of the
difficulties that it inherently creates for adoptive
parents.

**The Telling Conundrum:** The Adoptive Parents' Perspective

The literature indicates that few adoptive parents feel
comfortable and confident in revealing the fact of adoption
to their children. (Kernitzer, 1968; Goodacre, 1966) Most,
in fact, consider "telling" to be one of the most difficult
or parental tasks. (Ahoenberq, et al., 1971; Chappellar and
Fried, 1967; Brown, 1959; Thunen, 1958)

When confronted with their own reservations and
inexperience in handling this unique situation, it would
appear appropriate for adopters to turn to the professionals
for advice and support. Numerous authors have noted,
however, that adoptive parents rarely receive clear guidance
and direction in this area.

Here, Bernard (1963) explains that:

Agencies avoid suggesting any single set formula
for how to best tell the child that he is adopted. They realize that the particular wording is far
less important than the feelings and attitudes
behind it, which somehow always come through.
(pq. 102)

Despite this rationale, research has shown that
adoptive practitioners tend to oversimplify both the
revelation process itself and the complex emotional reactions that underscore it. (Kaynor, 1980; Gochros, 1967; Krugman, 1964; Michaels and Brenner, 1957)

Michaels and Brenner have stated, for instance, that adoption workers:

- do not realize the emotional problem for adopters in telling the child... They commonly think of the adoptive relationship as exactly like the usual parent-child relationship and without specific problems. (1957, pp. )

In a study of the relationship between adoptive parents and caseworkers, Gochros (1967) also observed clear differences between the professionals' and parents' perceptions of potential difficulties within adoption. Whereas the adopters expressed serious concerns with respect to how to tell their child about adoption, how they would go about answering the child's questions about his background, and the possibility that someday the child may try to locate his natural parents, the caseworkers tended to minimize these issues and "significantly underestimated these concerns." (pp. 321)

Sorosky, et al. (1976) have furthermore noted that adoption workers often withhold or temper certain information about the child's background. According to Ceminos (1971), this practice is based upon the belief that knowledge of cultural, ethnic, and hereditary differences causes difficulties in terms of the child's integration into the adoptive family. She specifically states that:
By not sharing differences between the child's and adoptive parents' background with the adoptive parents, the adoptive process becomes less painful and more comfortable for the adoptive parents. It becomes easier for the parents to mold the child to their liking if they know little or nothing of his background. It also makes for less of an emotional conflict if they are unaware of characteristics that are dissimilar to their own.

(pq. 78)

Sorosky, et al. (1978) contend, however, that withholding parts of the child's history is more a matter of professional judgment as to the undesirable nature of the information and/or the belief that some facts are irrelevant to the adoptive relationship. In this respect, they have found that:

The background information given to adoptive parents was often very sketchy and selective. The adoptive parents were usually told, if the child was born out of wedlock, that that was the case and that the mother placed the child "out of love" to provide a family for the child. Information about birth siblings was usually withheld, unless specifically requested. In general, any information that could be construed as negative was not voluntarily shared....(pq. 79)

Regardless of the specific reasons, the norm in adoption practice seems to be to instruct the adoptive parents to tell the child of his adoption, while not teaching how to proceed with this task. In this regard, Kirk (1964) suggests that, whereas many adoptive couples may be intellectually committed to "telling", they are usually emotionally unprepared and incapable of doing so. He also asserts that those who do tell may merely be complying to the standards of professionals or seeking approval from
those that they perceive as holding authoritarian power. (pg. 39-41)

In the face of these obstacles, Rowe (1970) has pointedly stated that, even the most secure adoptive parents:

rightly perceive "telling" as an act which sets in motion complex and emotion-laden wheels which change family dynamics and which may create some problems for the growing child. It is no wonder that they shrink from the task... especially as most of them have received so little help. (pg. 29)

The literature reveals an abundance of theories with regard to why adoptive parents have difficulty with revelation. As noted by Rowe (1970), Stone (1969), and Kirk (1964), the exacerbating factor in the "telling" ordeal often lies within the double bind faced by adoptive parents; namely, the need to accept the child as their own, while being advised to tell him that he isn't.

Kirk has specifically described this as the "dilemma of differentiation versus integration", in which:

The adoptive parents must begin to differentiate the child out of their midst; declare him to be different at the very time when they also feel especially strongly the desire to attach him to themselves and themselves to him. (1964, pg. 46)

Kirk has also noted that a further predicament may be created through the "dilemma of enchantment versus disenchantment". He explains that the problem here lies within the question of the adoptive parents' perception of their role; specifically, their feelings about being identified as "adoptive" rather than "natural" parents.
The adoptive parents may, for instance, choose to regard themselves as no different from biological parents, in which case they gain societal acceptance through "conforming to the regulation model of parenthood". On the other hand, they may elect to acknowledge differences between themselves and birth parents, in which case they run the risk of being viewed as "substitute" parents. The choices of "rejection of difference" or "acknowledgment of difference" thus each have ramifications for, and influence the way in which the adoptive parents reveal adoption not only to their child, but to the community. (Kirk, 1964, pg. 43-44)

Krugman (1967) and Toussaint (1971) have elaborated on these notions by suggesting that the adoptive parents' confidence in their role is often affected by unresolved feelings about infertility and parenting a child not naturally born to them.

For these adults, adoptive parenthood is born from pain, and this initial painfulness quite naturally can colour and influence their further reactions to the adoptive relationship. (1967, pg. 263-265)

Toussaint similarly points to the effects of the "lack of a biologic tie":

Because family members do not have a "blood claim" on each other, the mutual knowledge of the fact of adoption in itself causes anxiety...Because they were unable to conceive together, the parents may perceive their marital bond to be in more jeopardy the same way, because the child is not their biologic child, adoptive parents may find it difficult to believe that he will really "belong" to them. (1971, pg. 324)
Smith and Mirozi (1981) are more pragmatic in their views. As such, they offer a simple three-field explanation as to the consequences of "telling".

First, telling produces for the child another and perhaps competitive set of parents. The very act of telling brings birth parents into the family system and can thereby jeopardize the exclusiveness of the parent-child relationship.

Second, if the adoptive parents are still struggling to develop a sense of entitlement, anxious feelings may suddenly surface.

Third, the parents are faced with the need to explain why they needed to resort to adoption. (pg. 29)

Seiglow, et al. (1972) and McWhinnie (1967) have proposed that attitudes about illegitimacy may also contribute to hesitancy in disclosing adoption.

In this instance, Kirk (1964) states that the dilemma is one of "reproductive morals versus the principle of respect for individual personality". Here the question entails certain moral imperatives; namely:

whether to admit to the child that he was born out of wedlock, and if to admit it, how to do so without either slandering his forebears or letting down the obligation that the norms of sexual behavior are to be taught in the context of premarital chastity. (pg. 48)

Rothenberg, et al. (1971) believe, however, that many adoptive parents resist discussions of illegitimacy for fear of realizing their own suspicions that the child may have inherited a propensity toward promiscuity and iritate the birth parents' behavior. These authors state that:

the specter of the "out of wedlock" moter locus in larger proportion once it has been given definition...we see...that parents may utilize whatever they learn about natural parents to
create or to intensify fantasies about a "bad seed" or "dangerous origin." (pp. 593)

Haynor (1980) found, on the other hand, that many adoptive parents reported that the only information they had given the child about his background was the fact of his illegitimacy. She concurs, however, that:

to give this one unpalatable bit of information alone suggests its importance to the adopters and, in some families at least, a need to punish the child for something they themselves had never been able to accept. (pp. 95)

Kirk (1964), among others, feels that the decision to "tell" or "not tell" is further complicated by the "dilemma of ignorance versus knowledge of the child's background" (pp. 47). He posits that, while having information about the child's history may be advantageous for medical reasons, the common use of such information may give rise to more occasions to think of the child as different. Assuming the attitude that "ignorance is bliss" serves as a protective measure against constant reminders as well as offering an avenue through which enquiries may be thwarted. As stated by Kirk: "Some parents seem to feel that, if they know nothing about the child's background, they can then say truthfully that they do not when the child enquires." (1964, pp. 48) Rothenberg, et al. (1971) have clarified this tendency in noting that:

We have learned that parents are burdened with the information from agencies about biological parents... (They) tell us that, if they had a choice, they would wish to know nothing whatsoever. (pp. 593)
Krugman (1967) claims, in fact, that "evidence suggests that many adoptive parents forget what they know about background information, once placement has occurred." (pg. 270)

Kornitzer (1966) has specifically observed a "conspiracy of silence" among adoptive parents. Through her research, she has found that while this may offer the adopters relief from the pressures of feeling obligated to tell, it often results in "self-deception and emotional dishonesty". Kornitzer concluded that "nothing seems more disruptive to the adoptive relationship than the disturbance caused by emotional evasions of various kinds." (1966, pg. 211)

Seglow, et al. (1972) and Goodacre (1966) have both made note of the reasons that adoptive parents themselves give for not telling. Most defend their reluctance by rationalizing that the child had never indicated an interest or need to know about his history. Others claim that they "could not bear to shock or hurt the child, or give him the chance of feeling in any way at a disadvantage." Still others "seriously doubted the child's ability to understand." (Goodacre, 1966, pg. 117) In most cases, however, these assumptions have been found to be erroneous.

In recording the experiences of adopted adults, McNamara (1968), for example, found that, despite the adoptees' initial questions, communication about adoptive
was often minimal in the adopted child's home. The information that was given also tended to be offered in a begrudging, contrite, or anxious manner and the adoptees quickly became aware that the subject was taboo or, at the very least, discomfiting for the adoptive parents.

As a result, the majority of adoptees reported that:

although curious about their biological parents, and about how their adoption had been arranged, they could not introduce the subject. Their reasons were given as being that it might upset their adoptive parents or that it would have seemed disloyal to them. Even when and if the subject were introduced by their adoptive parents...they usually would not ask further and in some cases elicited indifference... (McWhinnie, 1967, p. 115)

Geoghegan (1969) furthermore found that:

though they resided indifference, they resented parental attitudes which implied that they were not old enough to understand, or that the details were not their concern. Where information was withheld, or reluctantly given, or accounts conflicted, they concluded that something significant was being hidden. (p. 115)

Most researchers agree that the adoptive parents' underlying orientation to childrearing is the most reliable indicator of the manner in which adoption is disclosed. (Raynor, 1980; Jalice and Pasnau, 1970; McWhinnie, 1967)

Here, Humphrey and Dunsted (1963) assert that adoptive parents tend to be more overprotective or their children than parents who have not adopted. McQuain (1965) similarly notes that they are often overindulgent, overpersuasive, and disinclined to exert effective discipline. These characteristics are said to reflect 1st
insecurity in parenting and discomfort with the fact of adoption in general.

In this regard, Jaifee and Fanshel (1970) have specifically observed that:

Families which tended to take a sheltering approach to the general upbringing of their children...were also likely to de-emphasize the adoption component in their children's lives. They tended to postpone revelation, to give minimal information about the child's biological background, to decrease the visibility of the adoptive status, and, in effect, to simulate a biological parent-child relationship. (p. 311-312)

Conversely, parents who were less protective and who encouraged autonomy and independence, were more likely to be open about adoption, more apt to reveal information about the child's history, and more likely to accept and acknowledge the non-biological nature of the adoptive relationship. (Jaifee and Fanshel, 1970, p. 312)

In light of these findings, it would appear that revelation is not, in and of itself, an isolated phenomenon nor a process that can be understood within the context of simple explanations. It is rather a complex and emotively-laden life situation that is affected by and related to many psychological, attitudinal, and environmental factors.

Despite this fact, Kornitzer (1966) has suggested that the outcome of adoption is often contingent upon the manner in which "telling" is handled. She posits that:

Inadequate telling (including not telling at all) may not by itself cause problems, but it is so frequently associated with crisis and disaster that it seems to cause them. In fact, the survey
material suggests that inadequate telling, while often the most vivid, sign and most useful symptom of an underlying malaise, was not necessarily disastrous. But in my opinion, the data also suggested that what adopters did about the whole business of telling was a key in explaining the success or failure of the adoption as a whole. (pp. 182)

Indeed, the literature indicates that reactions to telling are often used as indicators of not only the adopters' ability to parent, but as a determining factor in assessing the psychosocial functioning of the adoptees themselves.

It is useful here to again turn to research to discover if characteristic patterns of "telling" have been observed and, if they have, how they relate to the adoptees' life adjustment.

The Telling Experience: The Adoptees' Perspective. In examining the available literature, one quickly becomes aware of two important facts with respect to research concerning the long-term effects of adoption revelation. Firstly, with the exception of a follow-up study conducted by Jaffe and Fasael (1970) in New York, and descriptive survey by Sorenson, et al. (1970) in California, all major work in this area has been undertaken in the British Isles.

The preponderance of research in England, Scotland, and Wales appears to be a clear reflection of the concern that these countries have held in terms of the psychosocial implications of adoption information release. It is also evident that these studies were both motivated and fueled
ty ongoing legislative debates as to the appropriateness of unsealing adoption records. Although Scotland has maintained open record policies since 1930, it was not until 1975 that England and Wales legislated similar policies. The aforementioned research offered much of the impetus for these legislative changes.

It is noteworthy that, despite similar challenges to sealed record legislation in Ontario, Canada has conducted little formal research into the implications of this issue. The few studies that are available, in fact, have apparently been undertaken as a result of special interest by involved parties. To date, not a single Ontario work has been sponsored by the provincial government and only one has been formally published. Whether this is the result of governmental and professional apathy, or whether it is due to resistance to change and a continuing adherence to the status quo, are questions to which there are no firm answers. The fact remains, however, that Ontario is lagging far behind in addressing an issue that is of both public and professional interest and concern.

Secondly, it is important to keep in mind that, despite legislative disputes, adoption practice has undergone many dramatic changes over the last few decades. As such, any report on the experiences of adopted adults must be considered in view of the theories and beliefs that prevailed during the eras in which the particular adoptions occurred.
The literature indicates that the main body of research concerning adult adoptees was conducted during the late 1960's and early 1970's. The findings thus reflect the attitudes and practices of the 1930's, 1940's, and 1950's; decades in which adoption was surrounded by secrecy and where mental health concerns were largely inconsequential.

Studies that have examined if, how, when, and by what adoption was revealed are most enlightening in this regard. A comparison of various research findings is also useful here.

Jaffe and Faschel (1973), for instance, studied the life adjustment of 100 adults who were adopted between 1931 and 1940. The data for the study was collected through personal reports of the adoptive parents of these individuals. Adjustment was measured by examining such variables as the adoptees' educational achievement, employment record, economic status, personal and social attributes, marital adjustment, relationship with adoptive parents, and personality factors, including any evidence of emotional pathology or anti-social behavior.

Of the parents surveyed, only 48 reported that they had never told their child that he was adopted. Six also reported that they had apprised the children of the fact themselves, with only one in ten (10%) discovering it from outside sources. 69% stated that the revelation was handled "according to plan", as compared to 21% who reported that
telling "arose precipitously". 44% of the children were said to "have always known" of their adoption, with a further 32% being told between the ages of two and seven years. (Jaffe and Famsen, 1970, pg. 121-122; pg. 126-127)

The findings of Triseliotis (1973) are somewhat discrepant, however. Triseliotis conducted intensive personal interviews with 70 adult adoptees who had been in contact with Register House in Edinburgh, Scotland between 1909 and 1970. The majority of the sample had been adopted between 1935 and 1950.

Of the adoptees interviewed, over half reported that they had learned of their adoption from sources other than their parents, and "almost two out of every three adoptees came to know of their adopted status when eleven or more years old, well over half of them, in fact, learned about their adoption when they were sixteen or over." (Triseliotis, 1973, pg. 19)

McWhinnie's (1967) analysis of 58 adoption histories indicated similar results. 10% of the adult adoptees studied reported that they had "always known" that they were adopted, 35% were told by their adoptive parents, and 55% found out from other sources. Among those told by their parents, half were made aware before age 12 and half in either adolescence or adulthood. Furthermore:

In most cases, some external occurrence precipitated the adoptive parents into telling them of their adopted status; such as going to school, an incident of another adopted child at school, a chance meeting, going to work, or being married. (McWhinnie, 1967, pg. 241)
In Britain, Hornitzer (1968) included both adopted children and adults in an extensive study involving family interviews. Approximately 30% of the 233 adoptees in the sample had been either told of their adoption at the then recommended age of five, given false information, or not told at all. (p. 183-184)

The effects of learning of adoption at a late age, being apprised of the fact by other than parents, and/or inadvertently discovering it as a result of an unplanned event are fairly well documented.

Klein (1970), for example, found a significant relationship between the age that the adoptee was told and his degree of conflict with the fact. Specifically:

Adoptees who were told by their parents when ten years old or younger were significantly more satisfied than those who were told over the age of ten. All the younger adoptees...said that the state of revelation and the way they were told gave them a feeling of well-being. No shock or upset was experienced. (p. 20)

On the other hand, adoptees who were told over the age of ten: "...felt the need to reassess their whole life and to start 'rediscovering' themselves. The later they were told, the greater the distress and confusion." (p. 20)

Although Jaarsma and Fansenel (1971) found no statistical correlation between the timing of revelation and the adoptees' adjustment in adulthood, they did express concerns in this regard. Here, they noted that a third of the adoptees classified as "high profile" were told of their...
adoption in a precipitous or crisis-oriented manner. They concluded that this finding suggested that:

If there are in fact negative potential consequences associated with sudden and unanticipated revelation, the adoptees in the high problem group tended to be more disadvantaged than the other groups in an area of central importance to their emotional and personality development. (pq. 127-128)

Kornitzer (1968) has similarly cautioned that:

It is not possible here to correlate a child’s ignorance of his adoption with the relative success or failure of the adoption. Some children were told late and seemed not to mind, while others told early seemed disturbed; many children who learned in devious ways...never told their secret, and the adopters did not know that they knew. (pq. 164)

She has stated, however, that:

In the survey cases as a whole, ten out of the twenty "bad" adoptions definitely involved the results of late telling by adopters or premature or traumatic telling by others...It is therefore easy to see a linkage between failed adoptions and defective telling. (Kornitzer, 1968, pq. 185)

Haynor (1960) and Goodacre (1960) have both observed that, if the adoptees were told by their adoptive parents, it was most often the adoptive mother who took the responsibility or felt obliged to do so. (pq. 92; pq. 113) In the case of young children, this was considered to be attributable to the fact that the mothers generally spent more time with the youngsters, were more involved in their daily routines, and perhaps more sensitive to their needs.

Here there appears to be correlation between how and what the adoptee was told and the age at which revelation
occurred. In this regard, Saynor (1980) has reported that a fairy tale or fantasy approach is most commonly used in explaining adoption to young children. She found that, those under the age of five:

were usually told a story that was a mixture of fact and fiction and which they liked to hear over and over again. Those who were told in this way mostly received the news with pride and pleasure... (pg. 93-94)

Similarly, of the children studied by Goodacre (1966), a third were told that they were "chosen" because "you were the sweetest", "the one that smiled", or "the one we loved best". (pg. 114) Goodacre also observed, however, that "chosen baby" stories rarely included any mention of "another mother", and that the omission of such was often purposeful. (pg. 114)

Triseliotis (1973) has noted that telling at an early age most often resulted in a feeling of "being special" and of having "something to be proud of". He clarifies that: "though the adoptive parents made little reference to the biological ones, they generally conveyed a good image of them." (pg. 31)

On the other hand, Saynor (1980) has observed that, when explanations about adoption were postponed, "they were more likely to be given in a far from ideal context and to cause the child distress." (pg. 92) The derogatory or punitive nature of late disclosures have been graphically illustrated by several authors. Saynor cites an incident in which:
parents reported telling their son at age 11, when he had been caught taking coins from his mother's purse. The mother had been unhappy with the adoption almost from the start and took this opportunity to tell the boy how she really felt, saying "I'm not your mummy, Daddy is not your daddy, and Sis is not your sister. We picked you out from a lot of babies and now you let us down." (1980, pg. 93)

Similarly:

A girl of sixteen had an argument with her mother on the day she was taking her A level exams and her father, who had deserted the family on a number of occasions, revealed the adoptive situation for the first time, saying "You never got on well with us because you are adopted. I was never in favour of it." (Triseliotis, 1973, pg. 23-24)

And again:

One adopted woman was not told she was adopted until she was 23 and needing a passport. She asked her adoptive mother for her birth certificate and was sent her adoption certificate, without any word or explanation. The adoptee commented that "this was the height of mental cruelty." (Kornitzer, 1968, pg. 165)

Triseliotis (1973) notes that, where adoption revelation was handled in a hostile or retaliatory manner, it left the adoptee with the pervasive feeling that adoption was "something terrible or shameful". (pg. 20) Late revelation combined with insensitivity also often resulted in the adoptees being overwhelmed with a variety of intense emotions. Specifically:

The initial reaction on finding out in adolescence or adult life was one of shock and numbness followed by intense anger toward their adoptive parents, and occasionally towards their original ones. The impact of revelation was so strong that many found it difficult to express emotions about it and simply felt "lost", "speechless", "nurk", or "shattered". There was some tendency during the
first days after the revelation to deny the fact and pretend that it was not true. Acceptance of the fact or adoption so suddenly and without preparation was beyond their coping capacity. (p. 21)

Given these findings, several researchers have sought to discover in the frequency with which adoption is discussed as a bearing upon the adoptee's comfort with the fact.

In this regard, Raynor (1960) reported that, in the whole, the parents in her study rarely discussed adoption on a consistent or frequent basis. She found that:

The largest number of parents, nearly half, said it was spoken of only two to three times over the years, and another quarter perhaps as often as once a year. Four families (2%) mentioned it as often as once a month, but seven (4%) never mentioned it again after the first telling. (p. 97)

In comparing this with the degree of satisfaction of the adoptees, Raynor found no distinctive pattern, however. One third of the adoptees were very contented with what they knew, one third were reasonably contented though wished for more information, and another third were very discontented. (1960, p. 99)

Jalife and Fanshel (1970) also found no statistically significant relationship between the adoptees' adjustment and how often adoption was mentioned or discussed. These researchers did note, however, that there was evidence of a discernible trend pointing toward the general conclusion that the more frequently reference was made to the adoptee's
status over the years, the more likely he was to encounter adjustment problems." (pg. 208)

Although Jaifee and Fanshel did not extrapolate upon whether or not the references to adoption were positive or negative in nature, their finding would appear to imply that constant reminders of one's adoptive status may be just as disconcerting as no acknowledgement of the fact.

In this regard, McWhinnie (1967) has pointed out that most adoptees prefer a compromise. Here, her study revealed that:

None of these adopted children wanted their adoption shrouded in complete secrecy. Such secrecy they found irritating and unrealistic since it led themselves and their adoptive parents into situations where they had to tell lies...Equally, however, they did not want constant reference to it. They wanted something in between, where their adoption was recognized without embarrassment and then overtly apparently forgotten so they were treated exactly as if they were the biological son or daughter of the adoptive parents. (pg. 249)

Triseliotis (1975) asserts that data gleaned from descriptions of adoptees' experiences strongly suggests a pattern of "consistent evasiveness and secrecy on the part of the parents". (pg. 19) Haynor (1980) has similarly observed a "definite tendency for parents not to divulge all they knew about the children's background and the circumstances of their birth and placement." (pg. 95)

The findings of Jaifee and Fanshel (1970) appear to support these contentions. In their study, these researchers found that the information given at the time of revelation
was at best minimal, usually inaccurate, and on occasion, knowingly falsified. Their date indicated that, among forty-two cases:

In thirty-seven (89%) instances, the adoptees were given no information concerning the marital or family status of their natural parents; in the same number of instances, they were told nothing about their biological parents' personal and social characteristics; and in thirty-five (83%) instances they received no information regarding why the biological parents had given them up for adoption. (pg. 128)

Perhaps more significantly, the researchers also found that only one quarter of the adoptive parents were actually ignorant of the true facts. The remaining three quarters had purposely withheld information known to them and/or presented untrue accounts. (Jarvis and Farnesh, 1970, pg. 126-129) These findings are consonant with those of Fayrer (1960) where:

less than 40 per cent of the parents said they had given their child all the information they themselves knew...more than 25 per cent had omitted or falsified some of the facts and another 30 per cent had revealed the child's adoptive status but had given misinformation at all about his background. (pg. 95)

Although it appears that many adoptive parents keep lack information that they perceive as being potentially disruptive for the child, Fayrer has noted that even reassuring types of information are often withheld.

For instance, when they had met the birth mother and could have satisfied the child's wish to know what she looked like, they failed to mention the meeting. Nor did they usually let the child know that the mother had found the decision for adoption a difficult one...In cases where the biological family had traits or occupations that
could have raised the adopted person's self-esteem, this information more often than not was also withheld. (1980, p. 96)

Again in these instances, however, Jarree and Fanshel (1970) found that neither divulging nor withholding background information had a significant effect upon the adoptees' life adjustment. (p. 134)

Despite this finding, and regardless of the reasons commonly given for concealing the details of adoption, most adoptees studied have expressed extreme dissatisfaction with the fact that information about their history is often denied to them. Some have claimed that it is a "basic human right" to know and have resented that their adoptive parents have been privy to information to which they themselves have no access, unless it is voluntarily given. Others have stated that the lack of background information has caused them to become preoccupied with fears of hereditary disease or mental illness. Most report that not knowing the details of their heritage has left them feeling insecure, incomplete, "rootless", or in an emotional "vacuum". (Sorosky, et al., 1978; p. 121-133; McWhinnie, 1967, p. 45)

McWhinnie has noted that most adoptees feel that they could "accept any story, no matter how absurd, since any certainty was better than the flood of uncertainty which surrounds them." (1967, p. 245) Kornitzer (1966) has similarly observed that:
It did seem that a child told everything about his background, however unpleasant, that was necessary for his own understanding of himself, could assimilate it, if his adopters dealt with it calmly and sensibly. (pg. 207)

According to these authors, the fears of adoptive parents and indeed some professionals, appear largely unfounded. Triscillitas (1973), in fact, has suggested that not telling is far more disruptive to the adoptee's emotional stability and his relationship with his adoptive parents than if adoption was revealed honestly and with good intention. He further suggests secrecy about adoption serves a purpose contrary to that which was intended, and that purposeful withholding of information often causes the very reaction that the adoptive parents had hoped to avoid. Specifically:

The initial shock...was followed by intense anger towards the adoptive parents for withholding information from them. There was criticism and bitterness towards the parents and other small grievances and parental "failures" were now resurrected. The adoptive mother craved for the past criticism...Similar bitterness was also directed by some toward the natural mother for giving them up. This was a stage of intense preoccupation with their adoptive status and their first set of parents. They tried to direct their thoughts to their original parents, picturing them in different situations, but because they had very little information about them they found this very difficult, hence an intense wish to find out more. (pg. 21)

In light of these findings, it would indeed appear that adoption revelation creates a unique set of difficulties that impact upon the adoptive relationship and which may affect the the adoptee's functioning in adulthood. It is
Noteworthy that those adoptees who were told after middle childhood, who learned of the fact inadvertently or through outside sources, or who were apprised in a negative manner, tended to display greater adjustment problems than those who learned early and were told by their adoptive parents in a sensitive and calm fashion.

Perhaps most interesting are findings which suggest that inadequate "telling" often results in feelings of diffidence which seem to exacerbate the adoptee's need to know more about his background. The relationship between the nature of adoption revelation and the adoptee's need to seek out his family of origin has rarely been specifically addressed in the literature, however. The following is a review of the rather sparse information available in this regard.

**Telling and Searching.** It is important to note that, historically speaking, the majority of literature that has addressed the etiology of "searching" has done so from a pathological perspective. This tendency appears to be the result of three related factors.

Firstly, until recently, the need to search for one's biological origins was usually passed off as either a fleeting curiosity or dismissed by society as an act of ingratitude towards one's adoptive parents. Secondly, psychiatric wisdom has traditionally dictated that searching behaviour is merely evidence of a neurotic quest caused by
unresolved medical conflicts. Thirdly, and perhaps most significantly, are the pervasive sentiments of many adoptive parents who have perceived their child's desire to search as a reflection of their own failure as parents. (Lifter, 1976; Sorosky, et al., 1976)

Contemporary literatures brought with arguments that have sought to delink the validity of each of these contentions. Indeed, society appears to be making gains in understanding the so-called "curiosity" attached to searching and, as evidenced by the growing prevalence of such liberalized practices as "open adoptions", seems to have begun to accept that such curiosity is a natural response to the unknown. (Saran, et al., 1976) Pathologically oriented psychiatric literature has similarly been affected by theories born with the recent "roots" movement. These theories claim that searching is an existential necessity which acts as a means of attaining greater self-awareness and personal growth and is not always an indication of emotional instability. Adoptive parents as well are being encouraged to recognize that searching is an integral part of the adoptee's normal need to complete his identity, and does not necessarily imply that they have failed or are being rejected. (Sorosky, et al., 1975)

The fact remains, that research has indicated that these adoptive parents who have had a less than satisfactory relationship with their adopted children may be quite
justified in suspecting that their child will search for his biological family. Research has also suggested that there is an association between poor adoptive relationships and inadequate telling. It would appear that the combination of these factors may actually precipitate a search.

In this regard, Rowe (1959) has pointedly stated that:

though many adopters worry about it, it is rare for a happily adopted child to wish to look up his adoption records, and even more rare for him to try to find his first parents. If they do, it usually means that something has gone wrong in their home and they are searching for satisfaction that they have not found. (pg. 147)

Kaynor (1980) has proposed that "satisfaction with one's adoption is closely related to the adoptee's contentment with information given to them about their background and their adoptive parents' attitudes towards their family of origin.

In the first instance, Kaynor's study revealed that 75% of those who were satisfied with their adoption were also contented with the information that they had received. On the other hand, 80% of those who stated that they were dissatisfied with their adoption also indicated that they were discontent with what they had been told. (1980, pg. 59-60)

The likelihood of dissatisfaction on the part of the adoptees was also greatly increased if the adoptive parents had indicated disapproval of the adoptee's origins. Here:

- Virtually all those who thought their adoptive parents accepted their background were satisfied with their adoption, while this was true of only
two-thirds when they thought the adopters had mixed feelings or were critical or disapproving of the birth parents. (Raynor, 1980, pg. 60)

Most importantly, among the adoptees in Raynor's study who expressed interest in contacting their birth parents, 46% had experienced unsatisfying adoptions. (pg. 61)

Raynor's data would seem to imply that there may be a cyclical or cause-effect relationship between the background information given to the adoptee, the adoptive parents' attitudes about the adoptee's origins, the adoptee's subsequent contentment with the fact of his adoptive status, and his interest in or need to search for his biological family.

The findings of Jaffe and Falshe (1970) lend some support to the interrelatedness of these factors. These researchers found little significant relationship between the adoptees' life adjustment and the type or amount of information that they received about their background. The authors did warn, however, that these findings may not have been completely reliable or accurate as their data was obtained through the reports of the adoptive parents, rather than directly from the adoptees. Regardless of the potential for "distressed or distorted reporting", Jaffe and Falshe did discover that those adoptees who had pressed their adoptive parents for more information were more likely to have experienced life-adjustment difficulties than those who did not seek further information. They specifically state:
we see that whether or not adoptees expressed desire over the years to learn more about their natural parents than their adoptive parents knew or were voluntarily willing to divulge, distinguishes the outcome among the three groups. Low-problem and middle-range outcome adoptees tended more to express little or no curiosity, while the high-problem group was more characterized by expressions of great or moderate curiosity. (Jaffe and Fashe, 1970, pg. 138)

The work of McWhinnie (1967) reveals additional supporting evidence as to the relationship between the nature of adoption revelation and the adoptee's desire to search for his family of origin. She noted that, although the adoptees in her study showed various degrees of adjustment to adoption, "inadequate, incomplete, or varying information (about the adoptee's background) often led to difficulties." (pg. 263) McWhinnie states:

"Where the adoptee individuals were not given details when they asked for them, or where they were told reluctantly or given conflicting stories, then they felt that there was something of great significance in their antecedents that was being hidden. Many felt they needed to know "what stock I came from" or they wanted to "know enough to establish my identity." They wanted to find out the age, occupation, and personality of their biological parents, why they had been placed for adoption, and how the adoption had been arranged. (1967, pg. 244)

Furthermore:

They wanted information which portrayed their biological parents in a favourable light and which did not imply that they were unwanted children who had been rejected by biological parents. They did not think of their biological parents unless they were acutely unhappy in their adoptive home, but they remained curious about their antecedents... (McWhinnie, 1967, pg. 250-251)
Triseliotis (1973) found that, not only was there a relationship between the adoptee's satisfaction with their adoptive home life and their desire to search, but a strong association between perceptions of the nature of the adoptive relationship and the manner in which adoption revelation was handled. He specifically states that:

The findings show that the adoptees who perceive their home life as unsatisfactory has generally been given no information about their origins or only hostile and deprecative facts about their natural parents. (Triseliotis, 1973, pp. 60-61)

Triseliotis also notes that many of the adoptive parents who purposely withheld information or gave it accusingly were those who tended to be described by their adopted children as "lacking in love", "devoid of warmth and real caring", "impersonal", "very controlled people who could not display feelings", "rejecting", "neurotic", and so on. (1973, pp. 61-62)

In this regard, Triseliotis observed that, where the adoptees perceived their relationship with their adoptive parents as negative or their home life as unsatisfactory, they were more likely to have poor self-conceptics. The search for biological family thus became an attempt to rectify feelings of emptiness or worthlessness. He states that:

The greater the dissatisfaction with their family relationships and with themselves, the greater the possibility that they would now be searching for their original parents...Their main criticism of their home life was about the lack of emotional satisfactions, absence of warmth, and failure to develop in them a sense of belonging...Many had
negative image of themselves and talked of their inner "void"... they felt ashamed and embarrassed at being adopted and illegitimate... The search itself was helping many to keep themselves together... (Tricalliotes, 1973, pg. 158)

Many adoptees maintained that their desire to search may have been curtailed if their adoptive parents had more readily accepted their background and had shown greater sensitivity to their need for information about their beginnings. Specifically:

It was at the start of their early teens that they mostly found themselves desperately wanting to hear from their parents about their adoption, about their origins, and about their first set of parents. This need reached its climax in adolescence and it appeared to be closely associated with the adoptees' efforts to establish their identities... Satisfaction of this need at the adolescent stage, the adoptees maintained, would have helped them to understand themselves better and possibly to forestall their subsequent preoccupation with their first set of parents. (Tricalliotes, 1973, pg. 137)

Although limited in scope and, for the most part not expanded upon, the findings of each of the above-mentioned authors would seem to point to the possibility of there being an association between the peculiarities of adoption revelation and the adoptee's need to search for his family of origin. As previously stated, the intention of this particular study is to further examine whether or not such a relationship actually exists, as per the variables correctly associated with the "telling" phenomenon.
Methodological Strategies

INTRODUCTION

Numerous authors have noted that research in the social science field is often so complex and unpredictable that "the guesses of the experienced administrator or politician are apt to be on the average as wise as those of social scientists." (Selitiz, et al., 1976, p. 10)

The fact remains, however, that research is crucial in providing the contemporary information necessary to broaden the knowledge base of clinicians and theorists alike. It is indeed through the expansion of knowledge that clinical practice and social science theory continue to develop.

In order to be useful and credible, social science research methods must be as organized and systematic as possible. In this regard, Selitiz, et al. (1976) offer the following guideline to the research process:

1. A statement of purpose is made in the form of "formulating the problem".
2. A description of the 'study design' is given.
3. The 'methods of data collection' are specified.
4. The 'results' are presented. (p. 13)

As outlined in the introduction, the purpose of this particular study is to examine the "telling" process,
through which an adoptee learns about his adopted states, and how such relates to the adult adoptee's search for his family of origin.

The remainder of this chapter, then, will focus upon the second and third steps of the research process, namely: the study design and methods of data collection.

**CLASSIFICATION: QUANTITATIVE-DESCRIPTIVE.**

According to Selltiz, Wrightsman, and Cook (1976), a "research design" is:

- the arrangement or conditions for collecting and analyzing data in a manner that aims to combine relevance to the research purpose with economy in procedure.

The particular type of design employed in a study is basically dependent upon the specific purpose and nature of the study itself, the focus of the researchers, and the availability of resources.

Research purposes are generally classified under a number of broad groupings. Those which pertain to this study are encompassed within a category that has been variously defined as "descriptive studies" by Selltiz, et al. (1976, p. 90), and as "quantitative-descriptive studies" by Tripodi, Fellen, and Meyer (1969, p. 23).

Tripodi, et al. describe a quantitative-descriptive study as:

*Empirical research investigations which have as their major purpose the delineation or assessment of characteristics or phenomena, program evaluation, or the isolation of key variables.*
These studies may use formal methods as approximations of experimental design with features or statistical reliability and controls to provide evidence for the testing or hypotheses. All of these studies use quantitative devices for systematically collecting data... (1969, pg. 3d)

Studies of this sort are "formative" in nature. They are essentially geared toward examining specified processes and explaining causal links among variables. The quantitative-descriptive study includes the following requisites:

1. to portray accurately the characteristics of a particular individual, group, or situation (with or without specific initial hypotheses);

2. to determine the frequency with which something occurs or with which it is associated with something else (usually... with a specific initial hypothesis). (Göliniz, et al., 1970, pg. 90)

The first requirement is met through this study's intention to examine a specific group of individuals: namely, adult adoptees. The focus of the study is furthermore specialized in its particular perusal of the adopted adoptee's experience with regard to the process of learning or being told about their own adopted status. Special attention will be paid to attempting to draw a characteristic profile of the nature and prevalence of the "learning" or "telling" phenomenon, as articulated through data concerned with such variables as: if one was told that they were adopted; when, how, and what one was told, and who did the telling.

The study is also specialized or "particular" in scope, as it is limited to respondents who are presently members of
or who have had contact with the Parent Finders organization of the Windsor-Essex and London-Middlesex areas. As such, the findings may be presumed to be accurate only in terms of delineating specific experiential characteristics of these two unique groups.

The second purpose is reflected in the study's attempt to discover "if" and "how" the process of learning about one's adoption affects, or is related to, the adoptee's search for his family of origin. Here quantitative relationships will be examined, with a view to describing association among variables in order to determine empirical regularities.

Specific hypotheses have also been formulated for the similar purpose of predicting, and subsequently stating, the existence of a measurable relationship among variables.

Formal methods of data collection, via the development and administration of a questionnaire, and the use of statistical analysis in tabulating data, lends further weight to this study's classification as "quantitative-descriptive".

It has been suggested, however, that "there is no one correct way to design a research project or any one answer to a complex research question..." (Toseland, 1961, p. 168) as such, classification of research design is rarely finite or clear-cut and overlaps in purpose and specific methodological approaches are often apparent.
This is indeed the case in the sub-classification of
the study, where several approaches are relevant.

**Sub-Classification: Variable Relationship.** Tripodi, et al. (1969) divide the quantitative-descriptive category into
cour sub-categories:

1. Hypothesis Testing Studies
2. Program Evaluation Studies
3. Population Description Studies
4. Variable Relationship Studies (pg. 23-25; pg. 36-45)

According to the criteria of these authors, this study
falls primarily under the sub-type of variable relationship
studies.

In this regard, the study specifically seeks to examine
the relationship between the process of learning about one's
adopted status and any subsequent search for one's family
of origin. The study is therefore "concerned with the
finding of variables pertinent to an issue or situation
and/or the timing of relevant relations among variables." (Tripodi, et al., 1969, pg. 44)

The study is also secondarily concerned, however, with
hypothesis testing, particularly as it relates to "the de-
scription of quantitative relations among specified
variables..." (Tripodi, et al., 1969, pg. 34)

Although the study's hypotheses do not project to
predict cause and effect or the direction of variable
relationships, they are in keeping with the quantitative-
descriptive design, insofar as they "state the existence of an association among variables." (Tripodi, et al., 1969, pg. 34).

Although tertiary in nature, population description elements are also apparent in this study. In this case, the function of accurately describing the "quantitative characteristics of selected populations, organizations, or other collectivities" is important in defining the nature and parameters of the study sample. (Tripodi, et al., 1969, pg. 42) Population specification is furthermore imperative to the potential for generalizing findings to similar sample groups.

Limitations of the Quantitative-Descriptive Design. Limitations of various forms of research are often articulated in terms of comparison to the "ideal", experimental type of research design. The use of laboratory type approaches and rigorous control over a closed system, however, create an artificial atmosphere which is not necessarily translateable to a world where psycho-social phenomenon is, by its very nature, malleable, changeable, and oftentimes unpredictable.

As stated by Finestone and Kann (1975):

Social work research is also a social enterprise...In the real world in which social researchers operate, technical, substantive, and social considerations all influence the design of research. (pg. 63)
Notwithstanding this argument, one of the major weaknesses of the quantitative-descriptive model is the lack of stringent methodological control over independent or extraneous variables.

This lacking creates serious questions, both with regard to internal validity and in terms of inferring causality as, firstly: "The degree of internal validity is directly proportional to the number of factors that are controlled..." (Tripathi, 1981, pg. 267) and, secondly, causality is contingent upon "...elimination of plausible explanations for the observed relationship." (Selitiz, et al, 1970, pg. 115)

In the case of a complex quantitative-descriptive research situation, it is unrealistic to assume that all variables are controllable, however. Threats to internal validity become an inherent and unavoidable obstacle in these types of studies.

Of particular relevance to this study are historical and maturational factors; specifically, the passage of time between the adoptee's childhood and adulthood and the subsequent effects that such has upon memory and the ability to recall past information. (Tripathi, 1981, pg. 267)

These abilities are crucial to this study, as the basic research question is one which requires respondents to both recall and reiterate that which they were "told" or "not told" about their adoption. Here age, level of cognitive
maturity and ability to comprehend, and one's erotic state and maturity may all have various unpredictable impacts leading to bias in the findings. Such variables nevertheless remain as natural social, biological, and psychological processes that cannot be effectively guarded against in the context of a quantitative-descriptive study.

Insofar as the quantitative-descriptive design is non-manipulatory, facts obtained through data collection must also be accepted at "face value". Because of this constraint, it is not possible to subject variable relationships to genuine scientific scrutiny, whereby a causal relationship can be established with relative certainty. It is similarly not possible to isolate or eliminate alternative explanations for causal phenomena when there is the potential for the existence of unpredictable intervening variables. Here it is imperative that the researchers recognize that there may be a multiple causation of effects.

The investigators must furthermore be cognizant of the many possible reasons for phenomenon being as it is, and thus consistently consider the likelihood of the existence of rival hypotheses. The soundness of the researchers' conclusions is therefore largely dependent upon the degree to which the appropriateness of the research questions or hypotheses can be justified, in comparison to other alternatives.
As a result of these limitations, the quantitative-descriptive study can only proportion to establish "low-order" empirical generalizations. (Tripodi, 1981, pg. 201)

These studies may also only generate a "medium" level of knowledge, as opposed to the high level of cause-effect aspired to by experimental designs.

**Design Strategy: Cross-Sectional Survey.** Tripodi (1981) states that, inherent in any research design are "logical strategies for planning research procedures and providing evidence for the development of knowledge." (pg. 213) Such strategies are commonly exemplified through the methodological means utilized in a particular research study.

In the case of this study, a "cross-sectional survey" design will be employed. This procedural design has the primary function of "providing accurate quantitative-descriptive data which can be generalized to some designated population." (Tripodi, 1981, pg. 213)

Although the specialized nature of the sample of this study creates a difficulty in generalizing to whole populations of adult adoptees, justification for utilizing the cross-sectional survey design can be drawn from the researchers' attention to the following details:

1. Development of specific hypotheses prior to the study.

2. Operational definition of independent and dependent variables, and construction of research instruments for the gathering of data.
3. Definition of a specific population in terms of geographic characteristics.

4. Choice of a representative sample of the population, as dictated by available resources and through which the parameters of the study participants are defined.

5. Pre-test of research instruments, in this case, a questionnaire, to establish evidence for validity and reliability.

6. Ensuring permission from the organization from which the sample is drawn and the establishment of cooperation of the research participants.

7. Provision for individual, preferably face-to-face contact, with respondents to solicit assistance in gathering data. (Tripodi, 1981, pg. 214)

A discussion of hypotheses, operational definitions, description of the sample, and data collection instruments will be presented in detail in the following sections.

HYPOTHESES

Tripodi, et al. (1969) state that hypotheses offer a useful framework for "relating two or more concepts to one another and making predictions about the relationship." (pg. 100)

The use of hypotheses is particularly relevant to variable relationship studies such as this, where the purpose is to determine the frequency or existence of an association between learning or one's accepted status and a search for one's family or origin. The development of specific hypotheses also offers an avenue for concise description and clear identification of variables pertinent to the study.
In developing this study's hypotheses, the researchers were mindful of criteria with regard to "hypotheses researchability". Attention was paid to the following conditions of researchable hypotheses:

1. The statement of relationship between two or more concepts is clearly articulated.
2. The concepts are operationally definable...
3. The concepts are clearly distinct and nonoverlapping.
4. The statement of relationship is specific in reference to population, time, and space.
5. The hypothesized phenomenon can be studied. (Tripodi, 1961, p. 205)

Utilizing the above guidelines, the researchers of this study formulated these hypotheses:

An adult adoptee's search for his family of origin is related to the following variables:

1. Receipt of information about one's adopted status and origin.
2. The source of information received.
3. Age of receipt of the information.
4. The nature of and manner in which the information was given.
5. The nature of the relationship with one's adoptive parents.

Support as to the relevancy of each of these hypotheses was drawn from both a literature review and the professional experience of the researchers in providing social work services to adopting and adopted individuals and their families.
CONCEPTS

Selltiz, et al. (1976) note that the initial task of any researcher is to state the purpose of a proposed study through formulating a "research question" or "problem". (pq. 12)

As previously mentioned, the problem with which this study is concerned is that which entails an examination of the relationship between learning about one's adopted status and a search for one's family of origin.

"Learning about" and "search", however, are broad constructs which require conceptual definition in order to be understood within the context of the study.

According to an explanation offered by Selltiz, et al. (1976), a "concept" is "a learned response to a common property of a variety of stimuli." (pq. 576) In simpler terms, it may be defined as "an abstraction from observed events". (pq. 76) The purpose of a concept is to simplify thinking by bringing together a number of events under one general heading or headings.

The concepts included in this study apply basically to the ambiguous terminology used in naming phenomenon relevant to the research problem. The following terms are those which require conceptual explanation.

Learning (About):

Equated with the "telling" process, the revelation phenomenon, or "being told" of one's adopted status and apprised of the details which led to the adoption, including available information as to one's origins and biological background.

Search (For):


To make efforts to secure information that may lead to the identification of the adopted individual's biological family and/or the location and status of his family of origin.

OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS

Tripodi (1983) states that an operational definition "specifies all of those procedures necessary to define dimensions of a concept so they can be measured." (pg. 44)

An operational definition, then, defines the empirical indicators or characteristics of a concept and assigns meaning to those concepts.

The operational definitions included in this study are the following:

Adoption:

The method provided by law of establishing the legal relationship of parent and child between persons not so related by birth, with the same mutual rights and obligations that exist between children and their natural parents. (The Child Welfare League of America, 1955, pg. 1)

Adult Adoptee:

An individual who has been adopted and who is over the age of majority (18 years).

Adopted Status:

The legal condition of state which specifies that an individual has been adopted.

Adoptive Parent(s):

An adult person or married couple who, through legalized adoption procedures, have adopted a child.
Ancestry: particularly the identification of biological family.

Family of Origin:

The adoptee's biological parent(s), nuclear and/or extended family. Also synonymous with the terms "birth family" or "natural family".

Information:

Knowledge acquired in any manner; facts; or the transmission of knowledge that is believed to be factual.

Identifying Information:

The first name(s), last name(s), and/or place(s) or residence of the biological parent(s).

Non-Identifying Information:

Any information that describes biological parent(s) without identifying them. Commonly includes information as to personal/social characteristics such as physical description, age, education, occupation, religion, ethnic background, medical/psychiatric history, marital status, family composition, and reason for relinquishment of adopted child.

Receipt of Information:

Whether or not information was given.

Source of Information:

From whom or where the information originated.

Nature of Relationship:
The tone of the adoptive parent-adopted child relationship, as perceived and described by the adult adoptee. (i.e. positive/negative, supportive/unsupportive)

Parent Finders:

A Canadian-wide, non-profit organization. Its purposes are for volunteers who themselves have completed a search, to provide assistance and support to other adult adoptees who are contemplating searching for their families of origin; to promote understanding of the effects of adoption on all members of the adoption triangle (adoptive parents, birth parents, and adoptees); and to advocate for changes in present sealed record legislation.

Sampling

Conceptual and Practical Considerations. An effective description of a research design necessarily includes a description of the population and sample with which the study is concerned.

As mentioned previously, the target population of this study consists of the present membership, and those in contact with, the Parent Finders organization or the Windsor/Essex and London/Middlesex regions. This association is basically comprised of adults of both sexes, of various ethnic and cultural backgrounds, who occupy a variety of social, economic, and educational positions. The majority of the membership is adult adoptees, although natural siblings of adoptees, other extended family members within the adoptees' families of origin, birth parents, adoptive parents, and other interested parties may also be involved.
In choosing this particular population, the researchers considered the purpose of sampling itself, the concept of "representativeness", and factors concerned with practicality.

With regard to the purpose of sampling, Goldstein (1969) states that the major goal is to "obtain from a smaller number of entities, information that can be generalized to a larger aggregate." (pg. 109)

Tripodi (1983) similarly states that "an obtained sample is, in effect, a miniature edition of the whole study population." (pg. 95)

In terms of representativeness, Tripodi (1983) furthermore suggests that accurate representation is dependent upon the degree of precision with which the population is specified, the adequacy of the sample, and the heterogeneity of the population. Randomization methods, whereby all members of a population have an equal chance of being included in the study, are the most common means of ensuring representativeness.

Insular as randomization was not utilized in selecting this study's sample, it may easily be argued that the findings are neither representative nor generalizable. The study in no way proposes, however, to generate findings that are applicable to whole populations of adult adoptees. It is rather, specifically specialized in scope and seeks only to describe the characteristics of this particular sample group, within the context of the research questions.
Also of primary concern to the choice of a sample source were practical considerations such as time constraints, economic limitations, manageability factors, issues of accessibility and intrusion upon respondents, and the need for cooperation by potential subjects. Each of these factors have had a bearing upon the size of the sample, which is relatively small, and the scope of the study, which is necessarily specialized.

Questions concerning the validity of the study may indeed be raised as a result of both the sample's size and its specialized composition. The researchers have not considered it to be feasible or necessary, however, to include more subjects in order to obtain a fairly accurate description of the characteristics of adoptees who search.

Defence for this position may be drawn from a statement by Sellitz, et al. (1976) who claim that:

'It is rarely necessary to study all of the people in the group in order to provide an accurate and reliable description of the attitudes and behaviour of its members.' (p. 105)

The researchers assume, then, that regardless of the sample's size and scope, the findings should reflect the general sentiments and experiences of adult adoptees who search for their families or origin. In further or subsequent replication of a study of this nature, however, it would be useful to examine a larger sample in order to evaluate external validity.
Economy of research procedure is also important in terms of the particular type of sampling methods employed. Here, again, the time, convenience, availability, and funds required to organize and gather subjects for the study are all relevant considerations. This study, because of limited time and lack of financial resources, has made use of the simplest type of sampling procedure: namely, non-probability sampling.

**Sampling Procedure: Non-Probability.** Sampling methods or procedures are divided into probability and non-probability types.

Probability sampling utilizes specified randomization procedures whereby each member of a population has the same known probability of being selected as part of the sample as every other member. Since sample selection is based purely on chance, the potential for bias on the part of the researchers is eliminated.

This study makes use, however, of non-probability sampling, where "the probability of inclusion in the sample is unknown and is usually different for each person or unit in the sample." (Seaburg, 1981, pg. 86) As a result, it is not possible to estimate sampling error.

Despite this limitation, the non-probability method seems well-suited to studying the unique group of subjects in this sample as:

the sampling units represent the extremes of a particular phenomenon or are in key positions to observe or experience the phenomenon being investigated. (Seaburg, 1981, pg. 86)
Indeed, it is only through investigating the experiences of adoptees, that the "telling" and "searching" phenomenon of adoption can be effectively studied.

Seabury (1967) identifies four specific types of non-probability sampling strategies: availability sampling, quota sampling, purposive sampling, and snowball sampling. (Ig. 68-69)

Although this study has made partial use of several of these methods, the primary sampling procedure is that of "availability"; namely, those subjects who are available to the researchers and appropriate to the study's focus. Here the memberships of the Windsor/Essex and London/Middlesex Parent Finders organization has been identified as the most accessible and obvious groups from which to select the study's sample.

The researchers were aware, however, that the members of this organization are not all adoptees. In order to maintain a level of representativeness, it became necessary to purposely select "typical" persons; specifically, only those who were actually legally adopted.Insofar as the researchers had this previous knowledge, and used it accordingly, "purposive" or "judgemental" sampling became an inherent part of the sampling procedure. (Seabury, 1967, pg. 67-68)

The researchers have also been cognizant of the relevance of sample size. Although, as previously stated,
size was not considered to be of paramount importance in terms of the scope of the study, attention was paid to "conventional wisdom which suggests a minimal sample size of 100." (Seabury, 1981, pg. 89) In this regard, Goldstein (1969) furthermore states that "the size of the sample is satisfactory when the error introduced by generalizing from it is relatively small." (pg. 194)

The researchers' preference was to obtain the sample from those attended two pre-arranged Parent Finders meetings in Windsor and London. Actual attendance, however, was not sufficient in terms of obtaining an acceptable sample size. It therefore became necessary to increase the sample by reaching those who were unable to attend through the mail. Those who received a mail-out questionnaire were given the same introductory information and instructions, and the same questionnaire as those who actually attended the meetings with the researchers present.

Limitations of Non-Probability Sampling. Although non-probability sampling procedures are acceptable where "expense of probability sampling would be too great or where less than precise representation of the population is temporarily justifiable," there are obvious limitations to this type of method. (Seabury, 1981, pg. 86) These limitations are basically related to the lack of rigor and standardization in the non-probability selection process, the potential for selection bias on the part of the
researchers, and the absence of a reliable statistical method for computing sampling error.

In probability sampling, standardization is accomplished through the use of randomization procedures. These methods ensure equiprobability of each population member being included in the sample. Randomization is particularly important in terms of testing for representativeness, as it provides an avenue through which the researchers may calculate "standard error" or the degree to which "the" findings based on their sample are likely to differ from what they would have found by studying the population." (Selitiz, et al., 1976, pg. 516)

The opportunity to use specific statistical operations also guards against drawing unjustified conclusions from the study's findings by:

- estimating from the sample findings the probable occurrence of some characteristic in the population the sample is intended to represent, and estimating the probability that differences between subgroups in the sample represent differences between the corresponding subgroups in the population rather than simple chance differences due to sampling. (Selitiz, et al., 1976, pg. 110)

Insular as non-probability sampling does not provide a basis for such statistical analysis, it is generally considered less "scientific" and less reliable than probability sampling. At best, then, the data collected through non-probability methods can only suggest or indicate conclusions, rather than empirically proving them.
The other major disadvantage of non-probability sampling is the high potential for researcher bias in the sample selection process. Again, in this instance, the lack of a systematic randomization procedure increases the likelihood that a sample may be drawn for the researcher's personal, and perhaps ulterior purposes, rather than for the truly objective purposes of the research project itself.

In this regard, Fieneston and Kahn (1975) note that:

The choice of a population and method for selecting a sample from that population may produce an unusual group and thus bias results. (pq. 43)

Most authors agree, however, that "there is no known way... of evaluating the biases introduced in such samples." (Selitiz, et al., 1976, pq. 517). If non-probability sampling is utilized, one may only trust that the researchers have, firstly, considered the advantages of this method as opposed to the risks and are able to justify the suitability of this procedure and, secondly, that they have not been grossly misled in the use of a non-probability sampling method.

DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENT: THE QUESTIONNAIRE

The data collection instrument employed in this study is that of a questionnaire. The reasons for utilizing this strategy arose basically from the advantages correctly attributed to the use of the questionnaire as a viable data collection method. Further justification has been drawn
from the contention that questionnaires are especially useful for quantitative descriptions of facts and attitudes, as those encompassed within this study. (Tripodi, 1963, p. 71) The questionnaire for this study was designed to encompass items descriptive of the sample and information pertinent to the phenomenon being studied.

The researchers distributed the majority of the questionnaires during group meetings of the target membership of the Windsor-Essex and London-Middlesex chapters of Parent Finders. It was hoped that the researchers presence at the meetings may offer some degree of "human touch" to the research process. This would appear particularly important for a study whose focus is upon the personal experiences of a group of individuals such as adoptees, who may feel segregated or different from individuals raised by birth parents. A total of 26 responses were obtained in this manner. As mentioned previously, a further 30 responses were obtained by mailing questionnaires to those parent finder members who were unable to attend the meetings. One questionnaire was critiqued from the study as the subject had never been formally adopted.

The advantages of a mailed questionnaire are similar to that of a group-administered questionnaire, as will be discussed in the following. The specific limitations of this method will be outlined in a later section.
Advantages of the Questionnaire. Sellitz, et al. (1976) identify the following advantages of a questionnaire, particularly as compared to interviews.

1. Questionnaires can be administered to large numbers of individuals simultaneously.

2. Respondents may have greater confidence in their anonymity and thus feel free to express their viewpoint more honestly.

3. Questionnaires may place less pressure on the respondents for an immediate response, allowing ample time for a more accurate, complete answer, and

4. Questionnaires require less skill to administer than an interview. (pg. 294-296)

At the same time, however, researchers using this data collection method are often faced with the danger of a low completion rate due to a lack of cooperation, discontent, or other environmental factors which may impinge upon the respondents.

This drawback may be partially guarded against by directly administering the questionnaire and waiting for its completion and return, as would be the case through a group administration attended by the researchers. Cooperation of respondents is more likely to be ensured, however, if the participants are known to have a particular interest in the research study topic.

This would indeed appear to be the case in this study, where the respondents were not only somewhat of a "captive audience", but who, by virtue of their membership in parent finders, would appear to have a genuine interest in any
topic related to the experiences of adoptees searching for their families of origin. As such, it was suspected that there may be a strong incentive for the respondents to cooperate with this particular study. It was also anticipated that, as a result, the response rate would be higher than usual.

Selltiz, et al. (1976) state that there are several important factors that further increase the likelihood of a high response rate. These include:

1. the sponsorship of the questionnaire;
2. the attractiveness and clarity of the questionnaire format;
3. the length of the questionnaire;
4. the nature of the accompanying cover letter requesting co-operation;
5. the ease of filling out the questionnaire;
6. the inducements to reply;
7. the interest of the question to the respondent; and
8. the nature of the people to whom the questionnaire is sent.

(p. 297)

In designing and planning to administer this questionnaire, each of these factors was taken into consideration.

**Questionnaire Type and Structure:** According to the classification of questionnaire types offered by Selltiz, et al. (1976), the questionnaire of this study is of the "standardized" variety. In standardized questionnaires,
"Questions are presented with exactly the same wording, and the same order, to all respondents." (pg. 309)

This format is employed essentially to ensure that all of the respondents reply to the same questions with the same instructions. In this way, consistency is enhanced and uniformity in measurement and ease in tabulation are made possible.

The structuring of the questionnaire was furthermore relatively rigid, in that both the questions and the alternative responses permitted were predetermined. Here the alternative answers provided:

- may simply be yes or no, or they may provide for indicating various degrees of approval or disagreement, or they may consist of a series of replies in which the respondents pick the one closest to their own position. (Selltiz, et al. (1976), pg. 210)

A questionnaire format of this sort specifically falls under the classification of "fixed alternative" or "closed-ended".

Selltiz, et al. (1976) offer an extensive discussion of the advantages of a fixed alternative questionnaire. The major points made by these authors are:

1. A considerable degree of complexity can be built into fixed alternative questions.
2. They are simple to administer, quick, and relatively inexpensive to analyze.
3. They may help to ensure that the answers are given in a frame of reference that is relevant to the purpose of the inquiry and in a form that is usable in the analysis.
4. The provision of alternative replies may help to clarify the meaning of the question. (pg. 310-314)

Fixed alternative questions may furthermore enhance the efficiency of the measurement instrument itself. In this regard, Jenkins (1975) suggests that "since all respondents are exposed to the same stimulus, error is reduced and reliability presumably strengthened." (pg. 13)

Despite these advantages, there are also a number of limitations to a fixed alternative design. Again, in borrowing from and summarizing Saltitz, et al. (1976), the researchers recognize the following drawbacks:

1. Closed questions may force a statement of opinion on an issue about which the respondent does not actually have an opinion.

2. In the closed question, the reply is taken at face value.

3. Even when a respondent has a clear opinion, a fixed alternative question may not give an adequate representation of it because none of the choices correspond exactly to the respondent's position, or because they do not allow for qualification.

4. Omission of possible alternative answers may lead to bias. Even when a space for 'other' replies is provided, most respondents tend to limit their responses to the alternatives offered.

5. The fact that the wording of the questions is the same for all respondents may conceal the fact that different respondents make different interpretations, some of which may be different from those intended by the researchers. (pg. 314-316)

For the purpose of this study, fixed alternative questions were nevertheless considered essential, particularly for the sake of simplicity. Further justification for the use of this format may be drawn from
the fact that computer analysis is the preferred and most efficient method of data tabulation. Although the inclusion of open-ended questions may allow the respondents more freedom of response and opportunities to more fully describe their attitudes and experiences, it is extremely difficult to standardize such responses.

**Question Content.** In establishing the nature of questions to be included in this study's questionnaire, the specific purpose of the research and the topic of the study itself were primary considerations. Here, Sellitz et al. (1976) state that:

> questioning is particularly suited to obtaining information about what people know, believe, or expect, feel or want, intend to do or have done, and about their reasons for any of the preceding. (pg. 299)

Using the above criteria, the questionnaire has focussed upon three types of question content: rarely, demographic/descriptive data, experiential/behavioural data, and attitudinal data. Jenkins (1975) explains that demographic/descriptive data "seeks information not only to describe the group studied, but to provide the basis for cross-tabulation among variables..." (pg. 138) This type of data, then, offers information as to specific variables which differentiate various characteristics among respondents, and which may be subjected to mathematical operations for analysis. Here the most common demographic/descriptive variables include sex, race, age, marital status, education, occupation, and so on.
In addition to demographic/descriptive data, the questionnaire for this study has also included items which are designed to generate information with regard to present or past behaviour and experiences. This type of data is referred to as experiential/behavioural data which "explores what in fact has happened, has been seen or heard, in current or previous circumstances." (Jenkins, 1975, pg. 119)

Selitiz, et al. (1976) state that experiential/behavioural data is particularly useful as:

"Often the simplest and seemingly most economical method of obtaining facts is to go directly to the people who are in a position to know them... People who have access to information, who are sufficiently intelligent to absorb it, and who are motivated to acquire and retain it, are able, if they are willing, to provide the investigator with reports of many interesting and valuable facts."

(p. 360)

For the purpose of this study, experiential/behavioural items will basically focus on past incidents experienced by the adult adoptee respondents. Of particular interest is the adoptee's recall of the "telling" process and the circumstances through which they learned of their adopted status. By targeting this area, the researchers hope to be able to draw a descriptive profile of the characteristics ways and means through which adoptive parents have treated this subject with their adopted children.

The researchers also intended to be able to correlate this data with information regarding the adoptees' reactions
and feelings about the "telling" experience. The latter information was gathered through questions designed to generate attitudinal/feeling data.

Sellitiz, et al. (1976) contend that there is definite value in comparing these two types of data. As such, these authors have stated that:

An investigation of emotional reactions...must uncover not only the individual's feelings, but also the circumstances in which the feelings are likely to be aroused. Both can be studied most concretely by linking them to specific events in the subject's past. (pg. 304)

In the case of experiential data with regard to the actual "telling" experience, questions have followed a fixed alternative format. To allow respondents who may not be able to recall their particular experiences, a "don't know" category has been purposely included. Similarly, for those who are unable to state a given response, an "other" category has also been offered.

As mentioned, the third type of question content utilized in this study was that geared toward attitudinal/feeling data. This type of data is "concerned with beliefs, attitudes, values, and feelings." (Jenkins, 1975, pg. 138) The major goal, however, is not only to determine what the respondents feel or believe, but to ascertain if there are interrelationships between these reactions and actual facts.

In this regard, Sellitiz, et al. (1976) state that:

People's beliefs about what the facts are will often give very clear indications of their
feelings and their desires. The converse is also true: an emotional reaction will sometimes reveal beliefs that a subject is unable to verbalize. (Pp. 303)

The questionnaire for this study has also included a final section requesting that the respondents comment, question, and/or criticize areas which they felt were irrelevant, poorly worded, "loaded", or excluded. The purpose of this section was to solicit responses which may be useful in identifying unforeseen pitfalls within the instrument, re-assessing the feasibility of the research project, and in terms of making recommendations for future, similar studies.

Validity Factors in Instrument Design. The concept of validity is an important consideration in all research design. Methods of improving validity within the data collection instrument will therefore be outlined.

Mandel's (1961) discussion on external and internal validity factors is particularly useful in this regard. This author explains that "internal validity" refers to:

the degree to which items contained in the instrument can accurately and reliably measure the underlying concept (as identified by operational definitions) being studied. (Pp. 159)

If an instrument is truly internally valid, then, differences in respondents' scores on any given characteristic are assumed to reflect true differences among individuals, rather than being the result of error.
It is often difficult to ensure internal validity within a questionnaire, however. This may be partially due to inadequate or poorly constructed operational definitions. More common, though, are complexities within the English language itself, the subsequent potential for various interpretations with regard to the actual meaning of words or phrases, or varying degrees of literacy on the part of the respondents. Any or all of these extraneous influences may cause constant or random error within the measurement instrument.

Minkel (1981) thus makes the following suggestions for instrument design:

1. Make items clear.
2. Use simple language.
3. Avoid double-barrel questions.
4. Know the knowledge level of the respondents.
5. Keep questions short.
6. Avoid negative items.
7. Pre-test the instrument. (pg. 159-160)

Utilizing these strategies greatly decreases the likelihood of measurement error and increases the likelihood of achieving internal validity within questionnaire items.

Also important to instrument design are external validity factors. These "consider the degree to which answers to the items given by the sampled individuals can be generalized to a larger population." (Minkel, 1981, pg. 159)
In order to achieve this goal of representative responses, it is imperative that the respondents are offered optimum opportunities to answer as honestly and as accurately as possible. Questions that appear to contain double messages or which hint at hidden implications, those that threaten the privacy of the respondent, or those that seem to seek a right or wrong answer, may all raise suspicion and cause resistance on the part of the participants.

Mindel (1963) suggests that external validity can be improved if the researchers:

1. Clearly state the purpose of the study.
2. Keep sensitive items to a minimum.
3. Avoid encouragement of socially desirable answers.
4. Ask only relevant questions. (pg. 159-160)

The key elements in promoting both internal and external validity within a measurement instrument are thus simply: clarity, simplicity, conciseness, and pertinence. These are indeed the concepts which provide both a guideline and a basis for assessment of the appropriateness of specific questionnaire items during the development of the instrument.

Pre-Testing the Questionnaire. As mentioned previously, one of the means of ensuring validity and reliability within an instrument is to subject it to a pre-test. Pre-testing procedures also offer an avenue through
which an instrument may be refined and improved, prior to respondent exposure.

Selltiz, et al. (1976) thus state that:

The pre-test is a try-out of the questionnaire to see how it works and whether changes are necessary before the start of the full-scale study. The pre-test provides a means of catching and solving unforeseen problems in the administration of the questionnaire, such as the phrasing and sequence of the questions, or its length. It may also indicate the need for additional questions or the elimination of others. (pg. 545)

Dillsah (1978) furthermore addresses eight specific questions which should be considered following administration of the pretest. In summary, these are:

1. Is each item measuring what it is intended to measure?
2. Are all the words understood?
3. Are questions interpreted similarly by all individuals?
4. Does each close-ended question have a response category that applies to each person?
5. Does the questionnaire create a positive impression, one that motivates people to answer it?
6. Can the questions be answered correctly?
7. Are some items missing? Do some items elicit uninterpretable answers?
8. Does any aspect of the instrument suggest bias on the part of the investigator? (Mindel, 1967, pg. 178)

Both the pre-test procedure itself and the researchers' subsequent assessment of the questionnaire's strengths and weaknesses should result in the final development of a comprehensive, utilitarian, and reliable instrument.
Most authors agree that the groups best suited to pre-test administration are those which are drawn from the population to be surveyed, or those who may be potential users of the data. Also commonly suggested are colleagues of the researchers who have experience related to the study's topic or an interest in the research project. (Minkel, 1981, pg. 178; Selitzer, et al. 1976, pg. 545-546)

For the purpose of this particular study, the researchers elected to conduct the pre-test with four adult adoptees; two of which were members of the Kansas/Essex Parent Finders group, and two of which were colleagues of the researchers. The pre-test participants were presented with the same package that those in the actual sample received. The researchers also personally consulted with the participants after they completed the questionnaire. It was through this exercise that potential pitfalls were addressed and corrective measures applied so to improve the instrument's overall effectiveness.

Limitations of Questionnaires. As previously mentioned, most of the limitations of a survey questionnaire pertain to both mailed and mass-administered types. These that are most commonly cited are:

1. There may be a lack of flexibility in question format, which prevents varying the items of picture (as is possible in interviewing).

2. Since questionnaires use written responses only, nonverbal behavior and other personal characteristics cannot be documented.
3. There is no control over the manner in which respondents choose to answer items.

4. There is the possibility that many items will be left unanswered.

5. It is difficult to record spontaneous first responses to items; respondents may record what they perceive to be requested.

6. A complex questionnaire format cannot be used.

7. There is the possibility of a biased sample, since motivated and curious people may respond, and others might not.

8. The ability to complete the questionnaire depends on the literacy of the respondent.

9. Anonymity precludes follow-up and does not allow for comparison of individual responses with data collected from other sources. (Austin and Crowell, 1981, pg. 229; Jenkins, 1975, pg. 133)

ailed questionnaires, however, have specific further limitations. These are:

1. There is a high potential for a low response rate.

2. There is no control over the environment of the respondent (ie: distractions, censorship, or use of another person's answers).

3. It is difficult to determine whether questionnaires are not returned because of wrong addresses or because recipients are uninterested in the questionnaire.

4. There is no control over the date on which respondents answer.

5. There is the possibility of misinterpretation of questions. (Austin and Crowell, 1981, pg. 229; Miller, 1977, pg. 73-74)

Concluding Remarks. Deciding upon the design of a research project and specifying the ways and means through which one proposes to collect data are tasks which require careful analysis of many research methodology alternatives.
In examining the alternatives, however, it quickly becomes obvious that there are few "hard and fast" rules in the research process. One must therefore assume that the researchers have a strong grasp upon the purpose and scope of the intended study, that they have considered various methods through which to acquire relevant information, have carefully weighed the advantages and disadvantages of different approaches, and are cognizant of potential pitfalls and limitations which may affect the findings of the study.

It is commonly understood that social science research often raises as many questions and problems as it purports to solve. This is, however, an inherent difficulty that is unavoidable when dealing with such a complex and sensitive area as human nature.
ANALYSIS OF DATA

As noted in Chapter 3, the sample for this study was drawn from the memberships of the Windsor/Essex and London/Middlesex chapters of Parent Finders, Incorporated. Selection of participants was based upon three criteria: that the respondents be adopted individuals, of at least eighteen years of age, who were conducting or had completed a search for family of origin.

A total of sixty-five questionnaires were distributed, both personally and through the mail. Of the twenty-six questionnaires handed out at Parent Finders meetings in Windsor and London, twenty-five were returned. The return rate for group-administered questionnaires was 92.59%.

A further thirty-eight questionnaires were mailed to those Parent Finders unable to attend the two specified meetings. Twenty-eight completed questionnaires were returned, representing a return rate of 73.68% for mailed questionnaires. Three of these, however, were received after the deadline for inclusion in the sample. As a result, the analysis is based on a total of fifty responses, half of which were obtained through direct contact with the respondents and half through indirect contact via the mail.
The statistical findings are presented in an order consistent with the overall purpose of the study. Descriptive data describing the sample is followed by experiential and attitudinal data for each of the major variables in the five hypotheses. Variable relationships are examined and the hypotheses are tested through cross-tabulations of these variables. The analysis concludes with a summary of findings as to the overall results and effects of searches for families of origin.

It should be noted that the terms "respondent", "searcher" and "adoptee" are used synonymously throughout the data analysis.

Description of the Sample

The findings that follow were obtained through questionnaire items geared toward generating descriptive data with respect to basic demographic characteristics: the general features of the respondents' adoptions, their adoptive families, and their birth families; and information pertinent to the search process. Description of the sample proceeds accordingly.

The sample was comprised of forty-three (86%) females and seven (14%) males, indicating an obvious preponderance of female respondents.

As shown by Table 1, the age of the respondents range from eighteen to sixty-nine years. The mean age was 35.70 years.
## TABLE 1

### Age of Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AGE</th>
<th>FREQUENCY</th>
<th>PERCENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>19 or under</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>20-29 years</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>30-39 years</td>
<td>25</td>
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<tr>
<td>50-59 years</td>
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<td>8.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60 or over</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>N=50</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is noteworthy that a full 70% of the sample occupied the middle age ranges of 20 to 29 years and 30 to 39 years. These two age periods are generally considered to be those of the mate selection, childrearing, and child-rearing years. The large proportion of searchers occupying these age brackets is consistent with literature which suggests that searching is often motivated by a life crisis or a significant role change, such as marriage and parenthood. (Sorosky et al., 1975; Triseliotis, 1973) The high incidence of female searchers is also consistent with findings in previous studies. It could be posited that this trend may
be related to traditional sex role orientations, rarely, that the female role tends to be an expressive one which revolves around such matters as family unity and cohesiveness, whereas the traditional male role involves less emphasis upon such emotionally-oriented concerns. From this perspective, it might be concluded that the female adoptee may be more likely to pursue a search in order to address unmet needs for belonging and connection to family.

Information concerning the respondents' marital status and number of children lends further support to this pattern. As illustrated in Table 2, over three-quarters (78%) of the searchers were married. Table 3 also indicates that thirty-eight (76%) of the searchers were parents, with an average number of two biological children.

It is interesting that seven (14%) of the adopted respondents were also adoptive parents. Although the data collection instrument did not provide a statistical base for examination of this phenomenon, it may be surmised that those respondents who elected to adopt were likely to have been influenced by a favourable adoption experience and positive parental role modelling. As will be seen elsewhere in the analysis, many of the searchers indeed reported propitious attitudes toward adoption and their relationship with the adoptive parents.
### TABLE 2

Marital Status of Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Marital Status</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Single</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Separated</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divorced</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Widowed</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>N=50</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### TABLE 3

Number and Status of Respondents' Children

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Children</th>
<th>Biological</th>
<th>Adopted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>Percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>24.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>18.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>34.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>22.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four or more</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>N=50</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As illustrated by Table 4, thirty (60%) of the respondents were educated at university or college. Nineteen (38%) had completed trades school, an apprenticeship, and/or secondary school. 58% of the sample had at least a high school diploma.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EDUCATION</th>
<th>FREQUENCY</th>
<th>PERCENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>University</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>30.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community College</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>30.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trades School/Apprenticeship</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>32.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elementary School</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>N=50</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5 outlines a typical range of occupations for the general population.

The 45% concentration in Professional/Technical and Management/Administration appears consistent with the educational status of the sample. The preponderance of females in the sample is also reflected in a concentration (26%) of respondents in the homemaker category, a traditional female occupation.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professional/Technical</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management/Administration</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sales/Services</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerical</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operator/Labourer</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homemaker</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>50</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

An examination of the general demographic data reveals the following noticeable sample characteristics:

1. A large proportion of female subjects (86%)
2. A vast majority of respondents (90%) in child-rearing and child-rearing age ranges (20-45 years)
3. A preponderance of married subjects with an average of two children
4. A relatively high level of education
The Adoptions. Questionnaire items which focused on the unique characteristics of the respondents' adopted status generated the following data.

As seen in Table 6, forty-six (92%) of the respondents were adopted between infancy and four years of age. "Childhood adoptions" were evident in only four (8%) instances where the adoption occurred after the age of five. The number of adoptees likely to have a clear recollection of adoption placement and the events leading to it would appear limited to these four cases.

Table 6
Age of Adoption

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AGE ADOPTED</th>
<th>FREQUENCY</th>
<th>PERCENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under 1 Year</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-4 Years</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-9 Years</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 10 Years</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The number of adoptions by relatives was similarly limited to only 2% of the sample. Forty-six (52%) of the
respondents were adopted by non-relatives, while three (6%) did not know the familial status of their adoptive parents.

Only one respondent was adopted more than once. Forty-two (84%) of the adoptions were reported to have been arranged through a public agency and six (12%) were handled privately. Two respondents (4%) did not know the method through which their adoption was arranged.

The Adoptive Families. Twenty-three (46%) of the searchers reported that both of their adoptive parents were living. In eleven cases (22%) both adoptive parents were deceased, in twelve cases (24%) only the adoptive father was deceased, and in four cases (8%) only the adoptive mother was deceased. Table 7 reveals significant information with respect to disruption of the original adoptive family unit due to death.

As shown, almost half (47.83%) of the adoptive fathers died before the adoptees reached young adulthood. In comparison, none of the adoptive mothers died during this period. The data clearly indicates a high incidence of father absence during the adoptee's developmental and maturational years. The findings further suggest that nearly half of the searchers were either raised by the adoptive mother alone or, in the case of remarriage, with a reconstituted family unit.

Reports on the status of siblings in the adoptive home provided further information about the constellations of the
Table 7
Age of Adoptee at Death of Adoptive Parent(s)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age of Adoptee</th>
<th>Death of Adoptive Mother</th>
<th>Death of Adoptive Father</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>Percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under 10 Years</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-20 Years</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-30 Years</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>13.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-40 Years</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>30.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41-50 Years</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* In this and some subsequent tables the value is less than .50 because of missing observations.

Adoptive families. Fifteen (30%) of the respondents reported that they were raised as an only child. Table 6 outlines the nature of sibling relationships for the remaining 70% of the sample.

As indicated, over half (51.43%) of the adoptive families were comprised of adopted children only. It would appear reasonable that these families may represent cases in which adoption was pursued as a result of infertility or other medical factors that prevented biological child-
TABLE 8
Status of Children in Adoptive Home

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATUS</th>
<th>FREQUENCY</th>
<th>PERCENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Also Adopted</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>51.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biological Child(ren) of Adoptive Parents</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>25.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Born Adopted and Biological Child(ren)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>22.86</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| TOTAL | N=35   | 100%   |

The remaining 42.57% were evidently adopted in order to add to an existing family unit or prior to the birth of the adoptive parents' biological children.

Noteworthy characteristics of the nature of the respondents' adoptions and their adoptive families include:

1. A majority of adoptions (92%) occurring before five years of age
2. A large proportion (92%) of non-relative adoptions
3. A high incidence of disruption of the adoptive family unit due to the death of the adoptive father
The Birth Families. Data concerning birth parents is illustrated in Table 9. It is important to note that a total of twenty-six (52%) respondents were aware of their birth mother's status, whereas only sixteen (32%) had the same information with respect to their birth fathers. This pattern appears in numerous other instances throughout the analysis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATUS</th>
<th>BIRTH MOTHER</th>
<th></th>
<th>BIRTH FATHER</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>FREQUENCY</td>
<td>PERCENT</td>
<td>FREQUENCY</td>
<td>PERCENT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>48.0</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>22.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deceased</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't Know</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>48.0</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>68.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>N=50</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>N=50</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Twenty-eight (56%) of the respondents reported that they were aware that they had biological brothers and sisters. Five (10%) had no biological siblings, and seventeen (34%) did not know if they had birth siblings.
Table 10 illustrates the known locations of biological siblings. Three of the twenty-eight potential respondents failed to answer this question.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LOCATION</th>
<th>FREQUENCY</th>
<th>PERCENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Placed in Same Adoptive Home</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Placed in Other Adoptive Home(s)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Placed Elsewhere</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>23.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remained with Birth Parent(s)</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>41.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whereabouts Unknown</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>16.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>N=43</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is interesting that in twenty-four (55.81%) cases, the respondents' siblings remained with some remnant of the biological family. In eighteen cases, the siblings were raised by one or both of the birth parents. Of the ten cases in the "placed elsewhere" category, there were four cases in which the sibling(s) were raised by maternal grandparents, one by an aunt, and one by an unspecified relative. It is also interesting that there were more instances of
biological siblings being placed in separate (20%) as opposed to the same (12%) adoptive homes. These trends would appear to suggest a fairly high degree of disruption in the continuity of the searchers' biological sibling relationships.

The following trends are suggested with respect to birth families:

1. Respondents were in receipt of more information about birth fathers than birth mothers.

2. Over a third (34%) of respondents were unaware whether or not they had biological siblings.

3. There was a high degree of disruption in the continuity of relationships with biological siblings.

**The Search.** The data below provides introductory information with respect to the adoptees' search for family of origin.

Table 11 specifies the age ranges in which the respondents began to actively search. An "active" search has been defined as any concrete effort to obtain information regarding the identities of biological family members. It includes such activities as requesting record disclosure from the placement agency, registering with the Ontario Adoption Disclosure Registry, inquiring into hospital and church records, literary research, and so on.

The general age distribution of the searchers previously noted in Table 1, closely resembles the
TABLE 11
Age Adoptee Began Active Search

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AGE</th>
<th>FREQUENCY</th>
<th>PERCENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>19 or under</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-29 years</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>51.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-39 years</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>17.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-49 years</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>17.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-59 years</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60 or over</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| TOTAL       | n=47      | 100%    |

The distribution shown here. Again in this instance, a large majority (85.10%) of respondents began their search during their child-bearing and child-rearing years. The mean age for commencement of the searches was 37.06. The previous suggestion that childbirth and the responsibilities of parenthood may lend impetus to searching appears further supported by this variable.

Table 12 reveals that twenty-six (52%) of the respondents had located members of their birth families, while twenty-three (46%) were still searching.
### TABLE 12
Result of Search

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Birth Mother</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>26.18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birth Father</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10.26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birth Siblings</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>15.31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None of the above</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>46.94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>49</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As indicated, there was a significant difference between the number of respondents who had located their birth mother (26.18%), as opposed to their birth father. This pattern was not unexpected since, as mentioned earlier, the respondents tended to have little information upon which to base a search for birth father.

The rather small number of respondents who had located birth siblings (15.31%) must be considered in light of the fact that 44% of the participants either had no biological siblings or were uncertain as to their existence. A more accurate picture is obtained by comparing the number of siblings found with the 30% of the sample who reported that they definitely had biological brothers and sisters.
Tabulations in this regard reveal that, of twenty-eight potential searches for birth siblings, eight (28.57%) were successful.

A review of the findings concerning search for family or origin reveals the following features:

1. A large number of searches (85.10%) were undertaken during the child-bearing and child-rearing stages of the family life cycle.

2. The incidence of successful searches for the birth mother more than doubled those for the birth father (28.10% versus 10.88%, respectively).

The Adoption Revelation Experience and Its Significance to a Search for Family of Origin

As outlined in previous chapters, this study was primarily concerned with the description of five major aspects of adoption revelation:

1. Receipt of information with respect to the adoptee's adopted status,

2. The source of the information,

3. The age at which revelation occurred,

4. The nature and manner in which the information was given, and

5. The nature of the adoptee's relationship with his or her adoptive parents.

The study also sought to determine if there was a relationship between any of these variables and an adoptee's
search for family of origin. Five hypotheses were developed, using the above variables as a base for testing for statistical significance. In this regard, "purpose of search" was utilized as the dependent variable in each instance.

The data analysis that follows reflects the findings for each major descriptive variable and each hypothesis.

**Findings Concerning Receipt of Information**

The review of literature strongly suggested that revelation of adoption was likely one of the most difficult tasks faced by adoptive parents. (Rothenberg, et al., 1971; Chappelear and Fried, 1967). The literature also proposed that a variety of factors may be responsible for the prevalence of a "conspiracy of silence" with respect to the adoptee's background and the circumstances of the adoption placement. (Cominos, 1971; Howe, 1970; McWilliam, 1967; Goodacre, 1966; Kirk, 1964). The majority of authors nevertheless agreed that "telling" is essential to the development of a trusting adoptive relationship and crucial to the adoptee's psychosocial adjustment. (Triseliotis, 1973; Jaffe and Fanshel, 1970; Krugman, 1964).

The question of whether or not and to what extent the adoptee was apprised of the details of his adoption is thus a simple, yet fundamental one. The ensuing review is comprised of data gathered in this regard.
Table 13 outlines a breakdown of three types of information that adoption placement agencies normally collect on biological parents. The extent to which this information is shared with adoptive parents is dependent upon both the availability and thoroughness of the information, and the agency's readiness to disclose certain facts.

**TABLE 13**

Information Received From Adoptive Parents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INFORMATION RECEIVED</th>
<th>BIRTH MOTHER</th>
<th>BIRTH FATHER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identifying Information</td>
<td>14.0</td>
<td>8.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(First Name, Last Name, and Place of Residence)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal and Social Characteristics</td>
<td>24.0</td>
<td>8.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital Status, Family Constellation, and Reason for Relinquishment</td>
<td>26.0</td>
<td>16.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acne</td>
<td>36.0</td>
<td>68.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>(N=50)</em></td>
<td><em>(N=50)</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As mentioned earlier, many adoption agencies have taken the position that they are obligated to protect the anonymity of the relinquishing parent(s). This presumed "guaranteed" of confidentiality obviously precludes not only the agency's ability to offer full disclosure to the adoptive parents, but the adoptive parents' ability to in turn provide information to the adoptee.

The findings of this study seem to attest to the prevalence of the above-mentioned agency restrictions. As shown, only a limited number of the respondents (14% and 6%) received information that could identify their biological mother and father, specifically, first name, last name, and place of residence. Most of the information that was provided was comprised of such general, special interest items as personal/social characteristics (physical description, age, ethnic background, religion, education, occupation, talents, medical history), the parents' marital status and family constellation, and the reason for relinquishment.

The data indicates that there was little difference between the number of respondents who were apprised of their birth mother's personal/social characteristics (24.6%) and the number who were told of her marital status, family composition, and the reason for relinquishment (26.0%). This pattern was not repeated in terms of information about the birth father. Here, the number of respondents who were told
of their father’s marital status, family constellation, and relinquishment factors doubled the number who received information concerning his personal/social characteristics (10.0% and 3.0% respectively).

It is enlightening that, on the whole, the adoptive parents were apparently better able or more prepared to provide information about the birth mother (64%) than about the birth father (32%). In thirty-four (68%) cases, no information at all was offered with respect to birth father, whereas reports of receiving no information on birth mother appeared in only eighteen (36%) cases.

Again, the accountability of the adoption placement agency comes into question. On the surface at least, these findings suggest a lack of attention to the paternal parent and rather pointedly imply that details concerning birth fathers tend to be overlooked, if not disregarded, by the placement agencies.

The respondents of this study indicated, however, that in their opinion, the adoption agencies were not totally blameless. As shown by Table 14, almost a third (30.23%) of the adoptees believed that their adoptive parents had information about their backgrounds, but withheld it. A further 34.68% were of the opinion that information-sharing was limited as the combined result of a general lacking of facts in addition to parental withholding of all or parts of that which was known. A pattern of evasiveness is thus intimated in 68.11% of the cases.
### Table 14

Reason Adoptive Parents Gave Insufficient Background Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Had no Other Information</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>20.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Withheld Information</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>30.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combination of the Above</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>34.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13.95</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TOTAL N=43 100%

Five of the six responses in the "other" category lent further support to this apparent tendency of avoidance. These included such pointed remarks as:

- Information was given to my parents in a letter which they stated they never read and destroyed.
- Information given to me was incorrect. I don't know if they were misinformed or they made it up.
- They never asked for background information, except race and age.
- (They gave no information) because they were afraid of rejection and felt inferior to my natural parents.
- My adoptive parents believed that adoption was almost like second class citizenship.
In consideration of the secretive tone that seemed to surround the adoptees' revelation experiences, it is not surprising that the large majority of respondents (84%) were dissatisfied with the amount of information given to them by their adoptive parents. It is interesting, however, that by no means were all of the searchers discontented. Eight respondents (16%) stated that the information offered to them was quite sufficient and that they were satisfied with it.

Raynor (1980), Serlow et al. (1972), and McKinnnie (1967) have all suggested that there is a link between the adoptive parents' attitude toward the adoptee's background and the extent to which they share information with their adopted child. These findings were not confirmed in this study.

Table 15 shows the results of cross-tabulation of the variables "information received about biological mother" and "adoptive parents' attitude toward adoptee's background". The chi-square value of 5.4847, for six degrees of freedom, does not meet the required value of 12.59 at a .05 level of confidence. As such, there is no evidence of a statistically significant relationship between the variables.

The same computations were carried out using the variable "information received about biological father". Again, in this instance, the calculated chi-square value of
TABLE 15

Information About Biological Mother By Adoptive Parents' Attitude Toward Adoptee's Background

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INFORMATION RECEIVED</th>
<th>ADOPTIVE PARENTS' ATTITUDE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Very Accepting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identifying Information</td>
<td>8.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(N=7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal/Social Characteristics</td>
<td>17.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(N=12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital Status/Family</td>
<td>23.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constellation/Reason for Relinquishment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(N=15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acne</td>
<td>19.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(N=15)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>68.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(N=32)</td>
<td>(N=8)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CHI-Square = 5.4847  
Dr = 6  
$\chi^2 = 5.4823$

3.4849, at six degrees of freedom, did not meet the critical value of 12.59, and no statistical relationship was apparent.

A general examination of the "adoptive parents' attitude" is nevertheless revealing in and of itself. As indicated in Table 15, the number of searchers who reported that their adoptive parents were "very accepting" of their
backgrounds (68.09%) far exceeded those who reported a "very unaccepting" attitude (19.15%). The relationship between the adopters' attitude and the adoptees' search for family of origin will be explored in greater detail in a later section.

**Hypothesis One.** The first hypothesis states:

An adult adoptee's search for his family of origin is related to receipt of information about his adopted status and origins.

Therefore, the null hypothesis is: there is no relationship between receipt of information about his adopted status and whether or not an adoptee conducts a search for family of origin.

This hypothesis was tested by cross-referencing "information received about birth mother" and "information received about birth father" with the dependent variable, "purpose of search".

"Purpose of search" was divided according to the basis upon which the adoptee began his search and his initial aim in conducting it. Three alternative goals were specified:

1. to secure non-identifying information only (i.e., medical/genetic background)
2. to secure identifying information, without immediate plans for locating or meeting members of the birth family
3. to secure identifying information for the explicit purpose of locating and meeting members of the birth family.
Table 16 show the results of the first set of cross-tabulations for hypothesis one.

**TABLE 16**

Information About Biological Mother by Purpose of Search

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INFORMATION RECEIVED</th>
<th>PURPOSE OF SEARCH</th>
<th>Non-Identifying Information Only</th>
<th>Identifying Information Only</th>
<th>To Locate Birth Only</th>
<th>Birth Family</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identifying Information</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2.04</td>
<td>12.26</td>
<td>14.30</td>
<td>(N=7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal/Social Characteristics</td>
<td></td>
<td>8.16</td>
<td>2.04</td>
<td>14.28</td>
<td>24.49</td>
<td>(N=12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital Status/Family</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4.08</td>
<td>2.04</td>
<td>20.41</td>
<td>26.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constellation/Reason for Relinquishment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(N=17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td></td>
<td>8.16</td>
<td>4.08</td>
<td>22.45</td>
<td>34.69</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>20.41</td>
<td>10.20</td>
<td>69.39</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(N=10)</td>
<td>(N=5)</td>
<td>(N=34)</td>
<td>(N=45)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CEI-SQUARE = 4.5599

As indicated, the majority of the respondents (69.39%) planned upon using their search as a means of locating and possibly meeting their birth families. Less than a quarter of the sample (20.41%) sought non-identifying information.
only, and only 10.20% were conducting a search with no immediate plan for locating or meeting their biological family. The data is consequently concentrated in the "to locate birth family" category.

The chi-square test resulted in an observed chi-square value of 4.559. At six degrees of freedom, this figure in no way meets the critical chi-square value of 12.59 required for significance at a .05 probability level. The hypothesis is rejected due to a lack of statistical significance between "information received about birth mother" and "purpose of search".

The results of the second set of cross-tabulations for hypothesis one are illustrated in Table 17. As seen, there is more scatter in this table than in the previous one.

Again in this instance, the observed chi-square of 10.3035, at six degrees of freedom, does not meet the expected value of 12.59 for significance at a .05 level of confidence. "Information received about biological father" is not statistically related to "purpose of search", and the hypothesis is once more rejected.

These findings were further supported by two other questionnaire items that addressed the impact of information accessibility on the adoptee's decision to search. Here, thirty-one (62%) respondents stated that they would have searched despite the amount of information given to them by
### TABLE 17

Information About Biological Father by Purpose of Search

| INFORMATION RECEIVED | PURPOSE OF SEARCH |  |  |  |
|----------------------|-------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
|                      | Non-Identifying Information Only | Identifying Information Only | To Locate Birth Only | TOTAL |
|                      | % | % | % | TOTAL |
| Identifying          | 0 | 0 | 8.16 | 8.16 |
| Personal/Social Characteristics | 2.04 | 0 | 0.12 | 0.12 |
| (N=4)                |    |   |    |     |
| Marital Status/Family | 4.08 | 6.12 | 0.12 | 16.32 |
| Constellation/Reason for Relinquishment | (N=8) |
| None                 | 14.23 | 4.08 | 48.98 | 67.35 |
| (N=33)               |    |   |    |     |
| TOTAL                | 20.41 | 10.20 | 69.39 | 100% |
| (N=10)              | (N=5) | (N=34) | (N=45) |     |
| CHI-SQUARE=10.3035   |    |    |    |     |
| DF=6                 |    |    |    |     |
| P=0.0569            |    |    |    |     |

their adoptive parents. Thirty-five (70%) respondents also stated that the availability of detailed adoption records would not prevent them from searching.

A review of findings concerning receipt of information has resulted in the following observations:

1. Identifying information about biological parents appears largely unavailable to the adoptive parents and, in turn, to the adoptees.
2. The adoptive parents were more likely to have and to share information about the birth mother than the birth father.

3. The majority of adoptive parents (68.11%) withheld all or parts of information known to them.

4. A large proportion of the adoptees (84%) were dissatisfied with the amount of information given to them by their adoptive parents.

5. Most of the adoptive parents (68.05%) were perceived as having a "very accepting" attitude toward the adoptee's background.

6. There was no evidence of a statistically significant relationship between information received about biological mother or biological father and the adoptive parents' attitude toward the adoptee's background.

7. There was no statistically significant relationship between an adult adoptee's search for family of origin and receipt of information about his adopted status and origins.

**Findings Concerning the Source of Information**

Divulging the fact of adoption has long been considered an integral and necessary part of the responsibilities of adoptive parenthood. Research has indicated, in fact, that adoptees who show the most favourable adjustment and highest
degree of contentment with their adopted status are those who have either been raised with the knowledge of their adoption "from the beginning" or who learned of it through a planned, yet sensitive discussion initiated by their adoptive parents. (Eldred, et al., 1976; McWhinnie, 1967). Research has also shown that adoptees who learn of their status inadvertently or through outside sources, are those who tend to have the most pronounced negative reactions to the revelation. (Triseliotis, 1973; Jaffe and Fenshel, 1970)

This study produced the following data with respect to "who told" the respondents of their adopted status, and their reactions to the news.

Table 18 reveals that fourteen (26%) of the respondents had "always known" of their adoption, while a further ten (20%) learned of the fact through a discussion with both of their adoptive parents. Approximately half of the sample (40%), then, were apprised in a manner that is generally considered "appropriate".

It is interesting that a fairly large proportion (16%) of the respondents were told of their adoption by their adoptive mothers alone, although none were told by their adoptive fathers alone. This tendency may in part be explained by the fact that mothers usually have more direct contact with their children during the pre-school years than fathers do. The reality of this situation is not totally
TABLE 18

Source of Adoption Revelation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SOURCE OF REVELATION</th>
<th>FREQUENCY</th>
<th>PERCENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adoptive Mother</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>18.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adoptive Parents Together</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adoptive Sibling(s)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Relatives or Family Friends</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schoolmates or Peers</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overheard a Conversation</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adopted When Old Enough to Know</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have Always Known</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>26.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't Remember</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TOTAL N=50 100%

Sufficient in justifying a lack of responsibility or the part of the adoptive father, however, particularly since most adoption practitioners specifically advise that the task of revelation be a mutually shared one. The finding is nevertheless consistent with that reported in other studies, lending weight to the suggestion that adoptive mothers may play the most significant role in the revelation of adoption.
As also illustrated, nine (18%) of the respondents were told of their adoption by other than the adoptive parents (adoptive siblings, relatives or family friends or schoolmates), or learned of it inadvertently through overhearing a conversation. None of the respondents stated that they had discovered the fact by coming across their adoption papers. One adoptee stated, however, that her first indication was in finding a newspaper clipping on the benefits of adoption, another reported that the facts were revealed through baptismal documents. Two more respondents stated that revelation of adoption arose precipitously during a crisis. A total of thirteen respondents or 26% of the sample learned of their adoption in an inappropriate way.

The variable "initial reaction" shown in Table 19 represents the collapsed findings of a questionnaire item concerning a variety of responses as to the adoptee's feelings at the point of revelation. Those classified as "positive" included such feelings as "joy", "belonging", "security", "relief", "comfort", and "pride". The "neutral" responses was indicated by reports of "indifference". "Negative" reaction included feelings of "anger", "shock", "betrayal", "embarrassment", "secretiveness", "rejection", or "anxiety". Responses in the "other" category were individually specified by the respondents and included such feelings as "curious", "special", "survivance", "acceptance", "defensive", and "too young to remember".
### TABLE 19

Source of Revelation by Adoptee's Initial Reaction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SOURCE OF REVELATION</th>
<th>INITIAL REACTION</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adoptive Mother</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(N=5)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birth Adoptive Parents</td>
<td>12.24</td>
<td>6.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(N=10)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adoptive Sibling(s)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(N=1)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Relatives or Family Friends</td>
<td>2.04</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(N=3)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schoolmates or Peers</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(N=3)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overheard a Conversation</td>
<td>2.04</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(N=3)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adopted When Old Enough to Know</td>
<td>4.08</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(N=2)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have Always Known</td>
<td>10.20</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(N=12)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't Remember</td>
<td>2.04</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(N=2)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(N=4)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>32.65</td>
<td>16.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(N=16)</td>
<td>(N=9)</td>
<td>(N=16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHI-SQUARE=41.398</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DF=27</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E=6.1276</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The cross-tabulations performed here were intended to determine the validity of previous research findings which suggested that adoptees' reactions to revelation vary according to the source or means through which the news was imparted.

The chi-square value of 41.896, for twenty-seven degrees of freedom, exceeded the critical value of 40.11, as required for significance at a .05 level of probability. The relationship between "source of revelation" and "initial reaction" is, therefore, significant.

Several notable features are apparent in the cross-tabulation. The most striking lies within the finding that none of the respondents who were told of their adoption by their adoptive mother reported a positive response. On the other hand, none of the adoptees told of their adoption by both parents reported negative feelings. The importance of mutual parental sharing of revelation could not be more graphically illustrated than shown here.

The second noteworthy finding is within the "have always known" category. Again, the number of adoptees who had been raised with the knowledge of their adoption from the outset and who reported feeling positively toward that knowledge (10.20%), more than doubled those who reported negative feelings (4.08%). Sharing the fact of adoption "from the beginning" would thus appear likely to result in a favourable attitude on the part of the adopted child.
It is also encouraging that all of the respondents who were adopted "when old enough to know" reported favorable sentiments. This finding speaks highly of the apparent "success" of older child adoptions.

Finally, it is important to point out that the adoptees were much more likely to have a negative (14.28%) than a positive reaction (4.08%), if told of their adoption by other than adoptive parent(s). Only 4.08% of the respondents reported feeling positively, when revelation was inadvertent. These findings further confirm the literature's suggestion that adoptive parents are best advised to inform their child of his adoption themselves, and before he learns of the facts elsewhere.

As mentioned earlier, other researchers have found that the adoptive parents' attitude toward the adoptee's background often has a pervasive influence upon adoption revelation. The soundness of this contention was again tested in this study, with a focus on the relationship between the "source of revelation" and the "adoptive parents' attitude". It was believed that the less accepting the adoptive parents, the less apt they may be to reveal the details of adoption and, as such, the greater the likelihood that the adoptee would learn of his status, through other avenues. Tabulations in this regard are shown in Table 2d.

The observed chi-square of 28.633, for eighteen degrees of freedom, meets the expected chi-square value of 25.99,
# TABLE 20

Source of Revelation By Adoptive Parents' Attitude Toward Adoptee's Background

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SOURCE OF REVELATION</th>
<th>ADOPTIVE PARENTS' ATTITUDE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Very Accepting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adoptive Mother</td>
<td>12.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eth Adoptive Parents</td>
<td>21.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adoptive Sibling(s)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Relatives or Family Friends</td>
<td>2.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schoolmates or Peers</td>
<td>2.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overheard a Conversation</td>
<td>2.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adopted When Old Enough to Know</td>
<td>2.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have Always Known</td>
<td>19.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't Remember</td>
<td>2.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>4.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>68.99</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$\chi^2=28.663$, $df=18$, $p=0.1548$
for significance at a .10 level of probability. The relationship between "source of revelation" and the "adoptive parents' attitude toward the adoptee's background" is thus a significant one.

As shown, 76.13% of the respondents who were told of their adoption by their adoptive parents or who had "always known", perceived their parents' attitude toward their background as "very accepting". More than half (55.61%) of the adoptees who learned of their status through other sources reported that their adoptive parents were "very unaccepting" of their backgrounds. The association between an accepting attitude and the likelihood that the adoptive parents would themselves apprise the adopted child of his status appears fairly well supported. The relationship between unaccepting parental attitudes and the likelihood that the adoptee would learn of the facts through outside sources is, however, not as evident.

Hypothesis Two. The second hypothesis states:

An adult adoptee's search for family of origin is related to who revealed information about his adopted status and origins.

The null hypothesis is thus: there is no relationship between who revealed information about the adoptee's status and whether or not he conducts a search for family of origin.

The hypothesis was tested by cross-referencing the variables "source of information" and "purpose of search".
Table 21 shows the results of the statistical operations performed.

As indicated, the chi-square value in this instance was 16.064, at eighteen degrees of freedom. This value does not meet the expected chi-square of 28.87, required for significance at a .05 probability level. The null hypothesis is thus accepted: there is no apparent relationship between "source of information" and "purpose of search".

The following is a summary of findings with respect to the source of adoption revelation.

1. Almost half (48%) for the adoptees in the sample had either been raised with the knowledge of their adoption from "the beginning", or had been apprised of the fact by both adoptive parents.

2. 26% of the respondents learned of their adoption through outside sources and/or discovered it inadvertently.

3. Of the adoptees who were told of their adopted status by their adoptive mother alone (18%), none reported a positive reaction to the news.

4. The adoptees who were told of their adoption by one or both of their adoptive parents or who "always knew" were most likely to indicate positive feelings about the revelation.

5. The respondents were much more likely to have a negative reaction if they learned of their adoption by other than their adoptive parents.
TABLE 21

Source of Revelation by Purpose of Search

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SOURCE OF REVELATION</th>
<th>PURPOSE OF SEARCH</th>
<th>Non-Identifying Information Only</th>
<th>Identifying Information Only</th>
<th>To Locate Birth Family</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adoptive Mother</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.04</td>
<td>2.04</td>
<td>14.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both Adoptive Parents</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.04</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>16.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adoptive Sibling(s)</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>2.04</td>
<td>2.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other relatives or Family Friends</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.04</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>4.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schoolmates or Peers</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.04</td>
<td>2.04</td>
<td>2.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overheard a Conversation</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>2.04</td>
<td>4.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adopted When Old Enough to Know</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>4.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have Always Known</td>
<td></td>
<td>8.16</td>
<td>4.08</td>
<td>14.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't Remember</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.04</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>2.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.08</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>6.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td></td>
<td>20.41</td>
<td>10.20</td>
<td>69.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CEI-SQUARE=16.064

DF=18

E=0.0127
there was evidence of a link between an accepting attitude toward the adoptee's background on the part of the adoptive parents and the likelihood that they would themselves apprise the adoptee of his status.

7. there was no evidence of a statistically significant relationship between who revealed the fact of adoption and whether or not the adoptees searched for family of origin.

Findings Concerning Age At Which Adoption Was Revealed

Extensive research has been conducted into the question of the age at which an adopted child "should" be told of his adoption. Although there has been debates in this area, the age generally recommended in the literature and by adoption agencies is between three and five years, that is, before the child begins school (Bleded et al., 1976; Triseliotis, 1973; Jaffe and Fanshel, 1970).

Within this sample, the age when adoption was revealed ranged from under five to over twenty-one years. Among those who specified an age range, the average age of revelation was seven years. Table 22 shows that 16% of the respondents indicated that there was no identifiable point in time when their adopted status was revealed, in other words, that their adoption was spoken of from "the beginning" and that they had grown up with the knowledge of it. The remaining 2% could not remember exactly when they were told.
TABLE 22.

Age When Adoption Revealed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AGE TOLD</th>
<th>FREQUENCY</th>
<th>PERCENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under 5 Years</td>
<td>xxxxxxxx</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 - 10 Years</td>
<td>xxxxxxxx</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 - 15 Years</td>
<td>xxxx</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 - 20 Years</td>
<td>xxx</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 Years or Over</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have Always Known</td>
<td>xxxxxxxx</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't Remember</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TOTAL | N = 50 | 100% |

The manner in which adoptive parents deal with the subject of the adoptee's birth parents and background is crucial to the revelation process. In Table 23 the adoptive parents' attitude toward the adoptee's background was examined to determine if a relationship existed between this variable and age at revelation. It was anticipated that adoptive parents who were accepting of their child's background may be more inclined to tell the child of his adoptive status at an early age. A test for statistical significance, however, failed to prove that a relationship existed between these two variables.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AGE TOLD</th>
<th>ATTITUDE TOWARDS BACKGROUND</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Very Accepting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under 5 Years</td>
<td>25.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(N=17)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10 Years</td>
<td>21.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(N=14)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-15 Years</td>
<td>6.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(N=4)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-20 Years</td>
<td>2.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(N=3)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 Years or Over</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(N=1)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have Always Known</td>
<td>10.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(N=7)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't Remember</td>
<td>2.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(N=1)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TCTAL</td>
<td>68.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(N=32)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| CEI-SQUARE = 13.70 | .DF = 12   |                   |                   | P = 0.00203  

Table 23 nevertheless shows that, among the thirty-eight cases where respondents were either told of their
 adoption at a fairly early age (before 10 years) or "had always known", 70% indicated that their adoptive parents were accepting of their backgrounds. In contrast, where the adoptive parents were perceived as very unaccepting, only 28% had told their child of his adoption before age 10. None of the respondents with "unaccepting" parents reported having "always known" of their adoption. Despite a lack of statistical significance, these trends lend some support to the contention that there is a connection between age when adoption was revealed and the adoptive parents' attitude toward the adoptee's background.

Without exception, all of the adoptees who learned of their adopted status after the age of ten, reported feelings of anger, shock and rejection. In contrast, those who were told at under 10 years of age stated that the news caused them to feel proud or enhanced their sense of belonging. In nine cases, revelation was accompanied by feelings of ambivalence or indifference. Similarly, everyone who stated they had always known of their adoption indicated a positive reaction to it.

A test of significance was completed on age at adoption revelation and the adoptees initial reaction to the news. The results are presented in Table 24. The chi-square score of 37.798 is greater than the critical value of 28.869, for eighteen degrees of freedom, and is significant at a .005 probability level. The chi-square results strongly suggest
that initial positive reactions to the adoption disclosure can be increased if children are told about adoption at an early age. These findings are consistent with those presented by Raynor (1980) and Eldred, et al. (1976).

**TABLE 24**

Ages at Adoption Revelation by Adoptee's Initial Reaction to Revelation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Told</th>
<th>Initial Reaction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under 5 Years</td>
<td>14.29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(N=18)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10 Years</td>
<td>12.24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(N=15)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-15 Years</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(N=4)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-20 Years</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(N=3)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 Years or Over</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(N=1)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kind of Adoption</td>
<td>Have Always Known</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(N=7)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't Remember</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(N=1)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>32.65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(N=16)</td>
<td>(N=9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CEI-SQUARE</strong></td>
<td>37.798</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>DF</strong></td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>P</strong></td>
<td>0.0041</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
To determine how the timing of the revelation of the child's adoptive status affected the adoptee on a long-term basis, the participants in this study were asked to describe their present feelings about being an adoptee. A shift was noticed when those feelings were compared with their initial reactions. In all but one age category there was an increase (14%) in the number of adoptees reporting that they now feel more positive about their adoptive status than they originally did. It is suggested that, in part, this occurred because the respondents have had an opportunity, over the years, to resolve some of their initial negative reactions.

**Hypothesis Three.** The third hypothesis states:

An adult adoptee's search for his family of origin is related to the age at which the adoptee learned about his adoptive status and origins.

Conversely, the null hypothesis is simply: the age at which the adoptee learns of his adoptive status is not related to whether or not an adoptee conducts a search for family of origins.

This hypothesis was based on a review of professional literature which suggested that delayed revelation often caused feelings of shock and confusion which, in turn, seemed to precipitate an intense desire on the part of the adoptees to discover the "truth" of their beginnings. (Iriseliotis, 1973).

The hypothesis was tested by cross-referencing "age at adoption revelation" with the dependent variables: "age at search" and "purpose of search."
Table 25 illustrates the results of the first set of cross-tabulations for hypothesis three.

**TABLE 25**

Age at Adoption Revelation By Age Actively Began Search

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AGE TOLD</th>
<th>19 or Under</th>
<th>20-29 Years</th>
<th>30-39 Years</th>
<th>40-49 Years</th>
<th>50 or Over</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6-10 Years</td>
<td>4.26</td>
<td>19.15</td>
<td>8.51</td>
<td>2.13</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>34.64 (N=16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-15 Years</td>
<td>4.26</td>
<td>19.15</td>
<td>2.13</td>
<td>6.38</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>31.91 (N=15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-20 Years</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2.13</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4.26</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6.38 (N=3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 Years or Over</td>
<td>2.13</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2.13</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2.13</td>
<td>6.38 (N=3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have Always Known</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10.64</td>
<td>2.13</td>
<td>2.13</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>17.02 (N=8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't Remember</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2.13</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2.13 (N=1)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TOTAL**

| | 12.77 (N=6) | 51.06 (N=24) | 17.02 (N=8) | 17.02 (N=8) | 2.13 (N=1) | 100% (N=47) |

**CEI-SQUARE = 36.7735 • DF = 24 • P = 0.0465**
As indicated, the majority of the respondents (51.06%) began to actively search for their families of origin between the ages of twenty and twenty-nine years. Of these 24 adoptees, an overwhelming majority (95.83%) were told of the adoption either before age ten, or had indicated that they had "always known" of their adopted status. These findings are consistent in the remaining age categories.

The test for significance resulted in an observed chi-square score of 38.7735. This figure is greater than the critical value of 36.4151 for twenty-four degrees of freedom, and statistically proves a significant relationship between these two variables at the .05 probability level. The chi-square results suggest that, when revelation of adoptive status occurred at an early age, there is a greater likelihood that an adoptee who is committed to a search for his family of origin will commence the search sooner after reaching adulthood, rather than any other time in his life.

It is proposed that the concentration of searches beginning between ages of 20-29 years is, at least partially, due to the following. Firstly, it is only when an adoptee reaches the age of majority that he can attend a local Children's Aid Society and request disclosure of non-identifying information concerning his adoption. Secondly, at the age of majority, an adoptee can file with the Oregon Adoption Disclosure Registry, indicating his desire and consent to contact his family of origin. If the adult
adoptees' biological parent(s) have filed, and the consent of the adoptive parents has been secured, arrangements are undertaken to co-ordinate a reunion. Thirdly, it is common for young adults between 20 and 29 years of age to consider marriage and raising a family. Although not as significant in this study, such life events have been considered motivators for adoptees to commence a search.

The results of the second set of cross-tabulations for hypothesis three are illustrated in Table 26.

The purpose of the statistical procedure in this case was to determine if a relationship existed between age of revelation and the purpose of an adoptee's search.

The chi-square score of 6.334 is less than the required for twelve degrees of freedom, critical value of 18.549 for significance at the .05 level of probability. The null hypothesis, which stated that the age the adoptee learned of his adopted status is not related to the adoptee's search for his family of origin, is thus accepted.

A review of findings concerning age at which the adoptee learned of his adopted status resulted in the following observations:

1. The average age of revelation of adoption was seven years.
2. The adoptive parents' attitude toward the adopted child's background was not statistically related to when the adoptee had his status revealed.
### TABLE 26
Age at Adoption Revelation By Purpose of Adoptee's Search

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AGE TO OLD</th>
<th>PURPOSE OF SEARCH</th>
<th>Non-Identifying Information Only</th>
<th>Identifying Information Only</th>
<th>To Locate Birth Family Only</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under 5 Years</td>
<td></td>
<td>8.16</td>
<td>2.04</td>
<td>24.49</td>
<td>34.69</td>
<td>(N=17)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 - 10 Years</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.04</td>
<td>4.08</td>
<td>24.49</td>
<td>30.61</td>
<td>(N=15)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 - 15 Years</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.04</td>
<td>2.04</td>
<td>4.08</td>
<td>8.16</td>
<td>(N=4)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 - 20 Years</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.04</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4.08</td>
<td>6.12</td>
<td>(N=3)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 Years or Over</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2.04</td>
<td>2.04</td>
<td>(N=1)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have Always Known</td>
<td></td>
<td>6.12</td>
<td>2.04</td>
<td>8.16</td>
<td>16.33</td>
<td>(N=8)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't Remember</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2.04</td>
<td>2.04</td>
<td>(N=1)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TOTAL</th>
<th>20.41</th>
<th>10.20</th>
<th>69.39</th>
<th>100%</th>
<th>(N=10)</th>
<th>(N=5)</th>
<th>(N=34)</th>
<th>(N=45)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

CHI-SQUARE = 6.334, DF = 12, P = .05277
him, although there was a trend toward an unaccepting parental attitude and late revelation.

3. The majority of respondents (70%) who learned of their adoption before age ten, were those who also reported that their adoptive parents were accepting of their backgrounds.

4. The likelihood that an adopted child will have a positive reaction to adoption revelation is apparently increased if the child is told about adoption at an early age.

5. The majority of adult adoptees (51%) commenced a search for family or origin between twenty and twenty-nine years of age.

6. When revelation of adoptive status occurs at an early age, there is a greater likelihood that an adoptee who is committed to a search will do so when in his twenty's.

7. The age of revelation is not related to the adoptee's search for his family of origin.

**Findings Concerning the Nature of and Manner In Which Information was Given**

In order to comprehensively examine the phenomenon of adoption revelation, it is necessary to consider both the factors that impinge upon the revelation experience, and the nature of the experience itself.
Here the literature has suggested that the portrayal of the adoption placement and the conditions under which adoption is discussed are closely related to the adoptive parents' security in their role, their comfort in discussing the facts, and their attitude toward the child's background. (Baynor, 1980; Jaffe and Fanshel, 1970; McWhinnie, 1967; Kirk, 1964)

The following analysis reveals the findings of this study with respect to these suggestions.

Table 27 illustrates a variety of interpretations concerning the circumstances that led to the child's adoption placement. Although the simplistic nature of the explanations may not be sufficient in the case of revelation for an older child, they may be quite adequate for younger children who lack the cognitive skills necessary for full understanding of the situation.

As shown, the largest proportion (22.45%) of adoptees were merely told that their parents were unwed. This would seem to be a sensible and in all likelihood best explanation, since illegitimacy is indeed the most common factor in the relinquishment of children into adoption. A further 10.20% of the respondents reported that they were told that they were adopted because their birth parent(s) "wanted a good home" for them.

A relatively large percentage of the adoptees (16.32%) were informed, however, that either their mother had died,
TABLE 27
Adoptive Parents' Explanation Of Reason For Adoption Placement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EXPLANATION</th>
<th>FREQUENCY</th>
<th>PERCENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mother Died in Childbirth</td>
<td>xxx</td>
<td>6.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birth Parent(s) Died in Accident</td>
<td>xxxxxxx</td>
<td>10.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birth Parents Not Married</td>
<td>xxxxxxxxxx</td>
<td>22.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital Difficulties</td>
<td>xx</td>
<td>4.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial Difficulties</td>
<td>xxxxxxx</td>
<td>14.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abandoned by Birth Parents</td>
<td>xxxx</td>
<td>8.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wanted a Good Home For Child</td>
<td>xxxxxx</td>
<td>10.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>xxxxxxxxxx</td>
<td>24.49</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TOTAL \( N = 49 \) \( 100\% \)

...or that one or both of their birth parents had been killed. This was actually true in only one of the eight cases. The fact that some adoptive parents apparently felt compelled to "eliminate" the birth parent(s) rather pointedly suggests a lack of security and fear of interference or competition from the birth family. The deceptiveness involved also raises serious questions as to the quality of the parent-child relationship in these instances.
The "other" category in this variable also produced some revealing findings. Ten of the twelve adoptees who specified "other", commented that they were "never told" the reason for their relinquishment. 20.4% of the sample, then, were apparently given no explanation as to the circumstances leading to their adoption. Again here, a tendency of avoidance in sharing the details of the adoption is implied. This tendency seems supported by the fact that, among these respondents who were given information, more than half (54.5%) reported that what they were told was either entirely false (31.63%) or only partially true (22.72%).

The "adoption story", or the way that the adoptive parents explained their motivation to adopt, is illustrated in Table 28.

As indicated, the majority of respondents (74.08%) were told that they were "welcomed", "valued", "chosen", or the child that the adopters were "denied by nature". The notions that the child was a "gift", that he was "selected", or that he was intended to "fill a gap" in the adoptive parents' lives have recently been criticized by adoption practitioners. (Child Welfare League of America, 1984) It is believed that an over-emphasis on the child's "specialness" may either accentuate his feelings of difference or cause him to perceive his place in the family as conditional upon his ability to live up to his "special" status. Explanations of this sort, do, however, tend to b
TABLE 28
How Adoption was Portrayed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PORTRAYAL</th>
<th>FREQUENCY</th>
<th>PERCENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Welcomed Gift</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valued Addition to the Family</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>24.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chosen Baby</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>42.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rescued Orphan/Foundling</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>16.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Obligation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Nature Denied</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adoptive Parents</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>N=50</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

positive in tone as they reinforce the uniqueness of the adoption process without necessarily rejudging or relitigating the child's past.

In nine cases (18.0%), the tone of the "adoption story" was a rather negative one which implied that the adoptee "owed" the adoptive parents a debt of gratitude for "rescuing" them or assuming the responsibility for raising them. In one case the adoptee was informed that he was a "replacement" for a lost natural child, and in three cases the adoption placement was "never discussed".
Table 29 reveals the overall feelings displayed by the adoptive mother and father when speaking of adoption. Those classified as "positive" included "joy", "pride", "openness", and "comfort". Negative connotations were implied in the case of "embarrassment", "secretiveness", "anxiety", "guilt", or "betrayal".

**TABLE 29**

Adoptive Parents' Feelings When Discussing Adoption

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ATTITUDE</th>
<th>ADOPTIVE MOTHER</th>
<th>ADOPTIVE FATHER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>52.08</td>
<td>53.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>41.67</td>
<td>36.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>6.25</td>
<td>10.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>100% (n=48)</td>
<td>100% (n=47)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The data reveals little difference between the number of adoptive mothers (52.08%) and the number of adoptive fathers (53.19%) who reportedly showed positive feelings when discussing adoption. The 5.50% difference between the parents who had negative feelings, although slightly weighted on the mother's side, is for the most part, also
negligible. As indicated, there was a fair degree of consistency between parental attitudes; that is, if one parent felt positively, it was likely that the other parent would also have a positive attitude. A similar pattern was apparent in terms of negative sentiments. It is interesting, however, that within the "negative" category, the adoptive fathers were far more likely to convey a feeling of "secretiveness" (76.47%) than the mothers (25.0%). Similarly, within the "other" category, all of the adoptive fathers were reported to be either "totally disinterested" or "unwilling to talk" about the adoption, while none of the adoptive mothers were described in this way. It would appear that, not only were the adoptive fathers more reticent and secretive in discussing adoption, but as mentioned earlier, the responsibility for the discussion itself was most likely to fall upon the adoptive mother, despite her comfort or lack of comfort with the task.

Since the adoptive parent's attitude toward the adoptee's background is believed to have a pervasive influence on all aspects of adoption revelation, it was suspected that there may be a connection between this variable and the adopter's comfort in and feelings toward discussions about adoption. Cross-tabulations in this regard are illustrated in Table 30 and Table 31.
TABLE 30
Adoptive Mother’s Feelings When Discussing Adoption By
Attitude Toward Adoptee’s Background

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ATTITUDE TOWARD ADOPTEE’S BACKGROUND</th>
<th>ADOPTIVE MOTHER’S FEELINGS WHEN DISCUSSING ADOPTION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Accepting</td>
<td>50.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(N=32)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat Accepting</td>
<td>2.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(N=6)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Unaccepting</td>
<td>2.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(N=6)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>54.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(N=35)</td>
<td>(N=19)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHI-SQUARE = 15.633</td>
<td>DF = 4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Table 30, the calculated chi-square value of 15.633, at four degrees of freedom, exceeded the critical value of 14.8602, at a .005 level of confidence. As such, there is a significant relationship between the adoptive mother’s "attitude toward the adoptee’s background" and her "feelings when discussing adoption". As noted, there was a far greater likelihood that mothers who were "very accepting" toward their child’s background would show "positive"
TABLE 31
Adoptive Father's Feelings When Discussing Adoption By
Attitude Toward Adoptee's Background

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ATTITUDE TOWARD ADOPTEE'S BACKGROUND</th>
<th>ADOPTIVE FATHER'S FEELINGS WHEN DISCUSSING ADOPTION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>POSITIVE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Accepting</td>
<td>46.67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(N=52)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat Accepting</td>
<td>4.44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(N=6)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Unaccepting</td>
<td>4.44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(N=7)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>50.56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(N=25)</td>
<td>(N=16)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CHI-SQUARE = 12.089  DF = 4  P = .0167

(50.0%) as opposed to "negative" feelings (17.39%) when discussing adoption with the adoptee. Similarly, these mothers with a "very unaccepting" attitude toward background were more likely to have a "negative" (15.22%) than "positive" (2.17%) response to conversations about adoption. Comparable results were found with respect to the adoptive father. As shown in Table 31, the chi-square value of 12.089, at four degrees of freedom, is greater than the
expected chi-square value of 11.1433, required for significance at a .025 probability level. Again, there was a significant relationship found between the variables with similar trends to that shown in the case of the adoptive mother.

The circumstances in which adoption was most correctly discussed are shown in Table 32. As seen, the adoptees' "own curiosity and questions" (38.0%) was by far the most frequently occurring response. The number of adoptees who stated that their adoption was discussed within a context of "anger or disappointment" (14.0%) is rather disturbing, however, particularly since this response represents the third most frequently appearing answer.

Mental health professionals have long warned against utilizing the fact of adoption as a basis for inducing guilt or berating the adoptee. Professional literature has furthermore indicated that adoptees who are raised in a critical or demeaning adoptive home environment are those who are most likely to conduct a search for the purpose of securing a "substitute" parental relationship. (Triseliotis, 1973) Although the findings of this study did not bear out this tendency, it may be surmised that this might be the case for some of the respondents who reported that their adoption was usually mentioned in unhappy circumstances.
### TABLE 32

Circumstances In Which Adoption Most Commonly Discussed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CIRCUMSTANCE</th>
<th>FREQUENCY</th>
<th>PERCENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adoptee's Curiosity and Questions</td>
<td>xxxxxxxxxx</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part of Normal Family Discussions</td>
<td>xxxxx</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adoption as a Special Event</td>
<td>xxxxxxx</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Anger or Disappointment</td>
<td>xxxxxxx</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third Party Comments</td>
<td>xxxxx</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>xxxxx</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>50</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The "other" responses specified for this item included a variety of situations. They ranged from "never discussed" (2), to conversations that centered around a "family court session", "trying to obtain answers for medical purposes", and "when my mother was ridiculing others for having small families".

The adoptive parents' attitude toward their child's background was also tested for significance in relation to the circumstances in which adoption was discussed. The results of this test are illustrated in Table 33.
TABLE 33
Circumstances in Which Adoption Discussed By Adoptive Parents' Attitude Toward Adoptee's Background

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CIRCUMSTANCES</th>
<th>ADOPTIVE PARENTS' ATTITUDE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Very Accepting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adoptees Curiosity and Questions</td>
<td>27.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part of Normal Family Discussions</td>
<td>10.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adoption as a Special Event</td>
<td>17.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Anger or Disappointment</td>
<td>2.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third Party Comments</td>
<td>4.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>6.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>68.09</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chi-square = 18.844, DF=12, p = .0524

The calculated chi-square of 18.844 for twelve degrees of freedom, exceeded the critical chi-square value of 16.5494, at a .10 probability level. The relationship between the variables is therefore significant.

The statistics show a concentration of data between the "very accepting" attitude variable and adoption discussed.
under the circumstances of the adoptee's own questions, normal family discussions, and adoption as a special event (55.32%). The significance of the variable relationship appears to be the result of this concentration. It is noteworthy that, among the six respondents who reported that their adoption was usually discussed in a context of anger or disappointment, five (63.33%) felt that their parents were either "very unaccepting" or only "somewhat accepting" of their origins.

In order to gain a sense of the long-term effects of the adoptive parents' attitude toward background, this variable was cross-referenced with reports as to the adoptee's present feelings about his adopted status. The results are shown in Table 34.

As indicated, the chi-square value of 16.655, for six degrees of freedom, is greater than the critical value of 16.547 at a .005 level of probability. The relationship between "adoptive parents' attitude toward the adoptee's background" and the "adoptive's present feelings about his adopted status" is thus a significant one.

It is clear that the adoptees were far more likely to feel positively about their status if their adoptive parents were "very accepting" of their origins. As will be discussed in the conclusion, this tendency has distinct implications for the assessment of adoptive family functioning and the adoptee's psycho-social adjustment.
TABLE 34
Adoptive Parents' Attitude Toward Adoptee's Background by Adoptee's Present Feelings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ADOPTEE'S PRESENT</th>
<th>ADOPTIVE PARENTS' ATTITUDE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FEELINGS</td>
<td>Very Accepting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>42.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(N=22)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indifferent</td>
<td>10.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(N=9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>4.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(N=10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>10.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(N=32)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| TOTAL             | 68.09       | 12.77            | 19.15           | 100%  |
|                   | (N=32)      | (N=6)            | (N=5)           | (N=48) |

CHI-SQUARE = 18.655  DF = 6  P = .0048

Hypothesis Four. The fourth hypothesis states:

An adult adoptee's search for family of origin is related to the nature and manner in which information about his adopted status and origins was given.

The null hypothesis is simply: There is no relationship between the nature and manner of information giver and whether or not an adoptee conducts a search for family of origin.
The hypothesis was tested by cross-tabulating the independent variables "explanation for adoption placement" and "told true" with the dependent variable "purpose of search". The results of the first set of statistical operations are shown in Table 35.

The chi-square value in this instance was 11.446, at fourteen degrees of freedom. This value does not meet the expected chi-square of 23.685, required for significance at a .05 probability level. The null hypothesis is therefore accepted: there is no relationship between the nature and manner in which information was given and whether or not an adoptee conducts a search for family of origin.

Table 36 represents the findings of the second test of variable relationships for this hypothesis. As indicated, the observed chi-square was 1.965, at four degrees of freedom. This value does not meet the critical chi-square of 9.487, necessary for significance at a .05 level of probability. Again the null hypothesis is accepted.

A review of findings with respect to the nature of and manner in which information was given reveals the following notable characteristics:

1. 16.32% of the respondents were told that one or both of their biological parents were deceased, although this was actually true in only one case
2. a relatively large number of the adoptees (20.4%) were given no explanation as to the circumstances that led to their adoption placement
TABLE 35

Explanation of Adoption Placement By Purpose of Search

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EXPLANATION</th>
<th>Non-Identifying</th>
<th>Identifying Information Only</th>
<th>Locate Only</th>
<th>Birth Only</th>
<th>Family Only</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mother Died in Childbirth</td>
<td>2.08</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>4.17</td>
<td>4.17</td>
<td>6.25</td>
<td>(N=3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birth Parents(s) Died in Accident</td>
<td>2.08</td>
<td>2.06</td>
<td>6.25</td>
<td>10.42</td>
<td>10.42</td>
<td>(N=5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birth Parents Act Married</td>
<td>2.08</td>
<td>2.08</td>
<td>18.75</td>
<td>22.92</td>
<td>22.92</td>
<td>(N=11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial Difficulties</td>
<td>8.33</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>6.25</td>
<td>14.56</td>
<td>14.56</td>
<td>(N=7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital Difficulties</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>4.17</td>
<td>4.17</td>
<td>4.17</td>
<td>(N=2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abandoned By Birth Parents</td>
<td>2.08</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>4.17</td>
<td>6.25</td>
<td>6.25</td>
<td>(N=3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wanted a Good Home for Child</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>2.06</td>
<td>8.33</td>
<td>10.42</td>
<td>10.42</td>
<td>(N=5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>4.17</td>
<td>2.08</td>
<td>18.75</td>
<td>25.00</td>
<td>25.00</td>
<td>(N=12)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TOTAL 20.83 8.33 70.83 100.00
(N=10) (N=4) (N=34) (N=48)

CHI-SQUARE = 11.446  DF = 14  P = 0.0507
TABLE 36

Truth of Explanation for Adoption Placement By Purpose of Search

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PURPOSE OF SEARCH</th>
<th>TRUTH OF EXPLANATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Identifying Information Only</td>
<td>6.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identifying Information Only</td>
<td>4.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To Locate Birth Family</td>
<td>32.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>44.19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CEI-SQUARE = 1.965, DF = 4, P = .7123

3. the tone of the "adoption story" was positive in 74% of the cases and negative in 18%
4. the adoptive fathers were more likely to be reticent and secretive when discussing adoption than the adoptive mothers
5. adoptive parents who had an accepting attitude toward the adoptee's background were more likely to display positive feelings when discussing adoption
6. most of the adoptees (38%) reported that their adoption was usually discussed under favorable
circumstances, although in 74% of the cases the topic of adoption was raised during moments of anger or disappointment.

7. There was a significant relationship between the adopters' attitude toward the adoptee's background and the circumstances under which adoption was discussed.

8. The adoptees were more likely to have positive feelings about their adoptive status if their adoptive parents were accepting of their backgrounds.

9. There was no evidence of a relationship between the nature of and manner in which information was given and whether or not the adoptee conducted a search for family of origin.

Findings Concerning the Adoptees' Relationship with Adoptive Parents

Studies have conclusively demonstrated that an adult adoptees' search for family of origin is not necessarily an indication of some failure by the adoptive parents to properly incorporate the adopted child into their family. (Depp, 1982; Simpson et al., 1984; Sorosky et al., 1978) Despite these reassurances, there exists powerful resistance among some professional and adoptive parents to discourage an adult adoptees' search for his birth family. This is perhaps most graphically evidenced in the fact that sealed adoption record policies continue to be firmly in place throughout Canada.
Several authors have suggested that the adopted child's relationship with his adopted parents is of paramount importance to the adoptee's life adjustment. (Jaifee and Fanshel, 1970; Kornitzer, 1968) It is clear, in fact, that without strong and unambiguous manifestations of parental love, the adopted individual has little chance of developing self-esteem, constructive and rewarding relationships with others, and a confident sense of his own identity. The adoptee's development and life functioning cannot, however, be totally attributed to the nature of his relationship with adoptive parents and the adoptive home environment. The fact that adopted individuals have certain genealogical characteristics and propensities inherited from their biological parents is undeniable. Now, then, are these two unique facets of personality incorporated into the adoptee's personal growth, and what are the ramifications of genealogical bewilderment when tested against the strength of the adoptive relationship? It is this interplay that will be examined in this section.

Table 37 shows that 72% of the respondents had a close, caring relationship with either one or both of their adoptive parents. Since all of the participants in this study are searchers, these findings suggest that not all adoptees seeking information, or contact with relinquishing parents have had an unsatisfactory relationship with their adoptive parents. Of further interest, is the greater
number of adoptees who reported that they were closer to their adoptive father (20%) than to their adoptive mothers (12%). In an earlier discussion, findings indicated that revelations of adoption was more often the responsibility of the adoptive mother. These findings reveal, however, that the adoptees were more likely to be close to the parent who did not take part in the revelation. From an emotional standpoint, the relationship with adoptive father is perhaps not as insignificant as implied earlier.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 37</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Nature Of Adoptee's Relationship With Adoptive Parents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NATURE OF RELATIONSHIP</th>
<th>FREQUENCY</th>
<th>PERCENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Close to Both Parents</td>
<td>xxxxxxxxxx 20</td>
<td>40.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>xxxxxxxxxx</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mostly Close To Mother</td>
<td>xxxxxxx 6</td>
<td>12.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mostly Close To Father</td>
<td>xxxxxxxxxx 10</td>
<td>20.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Close To Neither</td>
<td>xxxxxxxxxx 14</td>
<td>28.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>xxx</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TOTAL  
N = 50  
100%

The adoptees' initial reaction to revelation of his adoption was examined to determine if it was associated to
the degree of closeness the adoptee felt to his adoptive parents. Table 38 shows that one-fifth (20.41\%) of the respondents who indicated that they were close to their adoptive parents reported feelings of pride and belonging with respect to knowledge of their adoptive status. In comparison, none of the respondents who reported a distant relationship with adoptive parents had a positive reaction to being told. Furthermore, the likelihood that the adoptee would experience feelings of shock or rejection when told of his adoption was three times greater for those who were not close to the adoptive parents (12.24\%), as compared to those who were close to the adopters (4.08\%).

The test for statistical significance shows a chi-square score of 19.803. This figure exceeds the critical value of 19.68, for nine degrees of freedom, denoting a significant relationship between the variables at a .02 level of probability. The test results suggest that initial negative reactions to adoption disclosure can be reduced if the child has developed a sense of closeness to his adoptive parents. Similar findings were noted by Eldred, et al., 1976.

Table 39 shows a firm link between adoptees who reported a sense of belonging to their adoptive families and their view of their adoptive parents' attitude towards their family of origin. The majority (61.70\%) of those who thought that their adoptive parents had accepted their
TABLE 38

Relationship with Adoptive Parents By Adoptees' Initial Reaction to Revelation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nature of Relationship</th>
<th>Initial Reaction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Close to Eth Parents</td>
<td>20.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mostly Close to Mother</td>
<td>4.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mostly Close to Father</td>
<td>8.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Close to Neither</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>%</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>32.65</td>
<td>18.37</td>
<td>32.65</td>
<td>16.33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(N=16) (N=9) (N=16) (N=8) (N=45)

Chi Square = 19.803  DF = 9  P = 0.0192

Background felt a sense of belonging, while this was not true for any of those who thought the adopters had mixed feelings or were critical or disapproving of the birth families.

The chi-square test for Table 39 proves statistical significance between these variables. The chi-square score of 38.840 is greater than the critical value, for four
degrees of freedom, or 14.860, and is significant at a .005 level of probability.

TABLE 39
Adopted Parents' Attitude Towards Background By Sense Of Belonging To Adoptive Family

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ADOPTIVE PARENTS' ATTITUDE</th>
<th>SENSE OF BELONGING</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Accepting</td>
<td>61.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(N=32)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat Accepting</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(N=6)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Unaccepting</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(N=9)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>61.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(N=47)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CEI-SQUARE = 38.840  \quad DF = 4  \quad p = .0001

The effect of the adoptive parents' attitude towards their child's background was further examined to determine if it was related to the adoptees' sense of similarity or likeness to his adoptive family. As revealed in Table 40, 31.91% of the respondents with "accepting" adoptive parents
perceived themselves as being similar to the adopters in terms of temperament, personality, values, and interests. In contrast, none of the respondents felt similar to adoptive parents who had mixed feelings or were critical of their backgrounds.

TABLE 40

Adopted Parents' Attitude Towards Background By Similarity To Adoptive Family

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>SIMILARITY TO ADOPTIVE FAMILY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Accepting</td>
<td>31.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(N=32)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat Accepting</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(N=6)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Unaccepting</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(N=9)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>31.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(N=15)</td>
<td>(N=15)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CHI-SQUARE = 17.055  DF = 4  P = .0019

The chi-square test proves a strong relationship between these variables. Here, the chi-square score of
17.055 is greater than the critical value of 14.860, for four degrees of freedom, and is statistically significant at a .005 level of probability. The test results suggest that feelings or similarity with adoptive parents are enhanced if the adopters are perceived as having an accepting attitude toward the adoptee's background, and diminished if the adopters are seen as unaccepting. The attitude of the adopters would thus appear crucial in determining a sense of congruity between the adoptee and his adoptive parents.

The following is a discussion as to the effects of the adoptive parent/child relationship upon the adoptees' decision to reveal his desire to search for adoptive parents, the level of support he received from them, the implications of that support or lack of it, and the adoptees' plan for a reunion with biological family.

It is evident that the adoptees in this study struggled with the decision of whether or not to inform their adoptive parents of the search. They were concerned, perhaps, that their relationship with the adoptive parents might be strained or even hurt by such a quest.

Of those adoptees who reported that their parents were still living, two-thirds had informed them of their search. Among the informed adoptive parents, 57% were supportive of the adoptee's search while the remainder were unsupportive. Of those adoptive parents who were supportive, 63.16% of the adoptees reported that that support eased their decision to
search: 15.79% indicated that it did not ease their decision; and 20.05% said that their adoptive parents support made no difference in their decision to search. Conversely, of those adoptive parents who were unsupportive, 55% of the adoptees reported that lack of support complicated their decision to search; 20% reported that it did not; and 25% said that it didn't matter. On the whole it would appear that support or lack of support is not totally influential in encouraging or deterring a search.

In order to determine the possible significance of an adoptees' plan for a reunion with biological family, this variable was cross-referenced with: (a) the adoptees' relationship with his adoptive parents, and (b) the adoptees' sense of similarity to his adoptive parents. The results of the first set of statistical computations are shown in Table 41. As seen, the majority of the adoptees in the sample (58.33%) wished to meet with their biological families on a regular basis. This finding is in contradiction with that of Raynor (1980) who clearly stated that most searching adoptees have little desire for ongoing contact with birth family members.

This study's findings indicate, however, that a plan to meet regularly with birth parents does not necessarily imply that the adoptee had an unsatisfactory relationship with his adoptive parents. Only 18.75% (less than one-third) of those wishing to meet regularly reported that they were not
Plan Following Completion of Search by Nature of Relationship With Adoptive Parents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PLAN</th>
<th>RELATIONSHIP WITH ADOPTIVE PARENTS</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Close To Parents</td>
<td>Not Close To Parents</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To Meet Once</td>
<td>10.42</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>10.42</td>
<td>(N=5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To Meet Regularly</td>
<td>39.58</td>
<td>16.75</td>
<td>56.33</td>
<td>(N=26)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not To Meet</td>
<td>4.17</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>4.17</td>
<td>(N=2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't Know</td>
<td>16.50</td>
<td>10.42</td>
<td>27.08</td>
<td>(N=13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>70.83</td>
<td>29.17</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>(N=34)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chi-Square = 9.129 DF = 9 P = .0255

close to their adoptive parents. Furthermore, without exception, all of those who stated that they wanted to meet their birth parent(s) only once or not at all, felt close to both adoptive parents. It is also interesting that a fairly large number of the searchers (27.08%) were uncertain as to whether or not they desired direct contact with members of their birth family. It would appear that, for some, the
search process is largely circumspective, and perhaps tempered by the particular experiences encountered and information gathered along the way. The suggestion that the adoptee's relationship with his adoptive parents has little impact upon plans for reunion with birth family was borne out through statistical computations. The chi-square test failed to prove that there is an association between "plan for reunion" and "relationship with adoptive parents".

Cross-tabulations for "similarity to adoptive parents" and "plan for reunion" are illustrated in Table 42. The chi-square score of 15.057, at six degrees of freedom, is greater than the critical value of 14.449 and is significant at a .025 level of probability. This test reveals that there is a strong relationship between the extent to which the adoptee feels similar to his adoptive family and his plan for reunion with members of his biological family.

Among the adoptees who indicated a desire to meet regularly with birth family, 82.14% reported that they did not feel similar to their adoptive family or only somewhat similar. These findings indicate that the lesser the degree of similarity between an adoptee and his adoptive family the greater the likelihood he would plan upon meeting with his biological family members on an ongoing basis. It would appear that, for some, a reunion may act as a means of counteracting feelings of incongruity between the adoptee and his adoptive parents.
### TABLE 4.2

Plan Following Completion of Search By Similarity To Adoptive Family

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PLAN</th>
<th>SIMILARITY TO ADOPTIVE FAMILY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To Meet Once</td>
<td>8.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(N=5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To Meet Regularly</td>
<td>10.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(N=26)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Act To Meet</td>
<td>2.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(N=2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't Know</td>
<td>8.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(N=13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>29.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(N=14)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Chi-Square** = 15.057  
**DF = 6**  
**P = 0.0198**

**Hypothesis Five.** The fifth hypothesis states:

An adult adoptee's search for family of origin is related to his relationship with his adoptive parents.

The null hypothesis is thus: There is no relationship between an adoptee's relationship with his adoptive parents and whether or not he conducts a search for family of origin.
The hypothesis was tested by cross-referencing the variables "sense of belonging to adoptive family" and "similarity to adoptive parents" with "purpose of search". Table 43 shows the results of the first set of statistical operations performed.

TABLE 43

Purpose Of Search By Sense Of Belonging To Adoptive Family

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PURPOSE OF SEARCH</th>
<th>SENSE OF BELONGING</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Identifying Information Only</td>
<td>10.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(N=10)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identifying Information Only</td>
<td>4.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(N=5)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To Locate Birth Family</td>
<td>42.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(N=35)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>58.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(N=28)</td>
<td>(N=11)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CHI-SQUARE = 5.462, DF = 4, E = C.2431

As indicated, the chi-square value in this instance was 5.462, at four degrees of freedom. This value does not meet the expected chi-square of 9.4877 required for significance at a .05 level of probability.
The results of the second set of statistical operations are shown in Table 44. The chi-square score in this instance was 1.510, at four degrees of freedom. Again, this value does not meet the critical chi-square of 9.4877, required for significance at a .05 probability level.

**TABLE 44**

Purpose of Search By Similarity To Adoptive Parents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Purpose of Search</th>
<th>Similarity to Adoptive Parents'</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N Chen-Identifying Information Only</td>
<td>6.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identifying Information Only</td>
<td>2.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tc Locate Birth Family</td>
<td>22.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TTOTAL</td>
<td>30.61</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[
\text{Chi-Square} = 1.510 \quad DF = 4 \quad p = 0.6249
\]

As a result of both of these computations, the null hypothesis is accepted: there is no apparent relationship between an adoptee's "sense of belonging to his adoptive
family" nor his feelings of "similarity to his adoptive parents" and his "purpose of search".

The following is a summary of findings with respect to the adoptees' relationship with his adoptive parents:

1. A majority (72%) of the searchers had a close relationship either to one or both of their adoptive parents.

2. The adoptees were closer to their adoptive fathers (20%) than to their adoptive mothers (12%).

3. The possibility of the adoptee having a negative reaction to adoption revelation is reduced if he has developed a close relationship with his adoptive parents.

4. Most (61.70%) of the adoptees who felt that their adoptive parents were accepting of their backgrounds felt a sense of belonging to their adoptive family.

5. The adoptees' feeling of similarity to his adoptive parents were enhanced if the adopters had an accepting attitude towards his background and diminished if their attitude was unaccepting.

6. Two-thirds of the searchers had informed their adoptive parents of their search, although only a little more than half (57%) of the parents were supportive.

7. Adoptive parents support or lack of it did not always serve to encourage or discourage the adoptees' search.
8. an adoptee's desire for regular contact with members of his birth family was not related to his relationship with his adoptive parents.

9. the lesser the extent of felt similarity between the adoptee and his adoptive family the greater the likelihood that he would plan upon meeting his biological family on a regular basis.

10. there is no relationship between an adoptee's relationship with his adoptive parents and whether or not he conducts a search for family of origin.

**Findings Concerning an Adoptee's Search and Reunion**

The remaining area of discussion involves an examination of factors which motivated the adoptees' search for their families of origins, and implications with respect to the outcome of the searches.

**The Search.** The literature review suggested that a wide variety of factors influence an adoptee's search for origins. This claim appears confirmed in this study.

In responding to the question "what factors motivated your search", the participants were encouraged not to limit their answers but to mark more than one factor, if appropriate. The resultant multiple answers were then separately calculated out of 100% and are presented in Table 45. This table reveals a close division exists between those whose search was precipitated by existential, as opposed to
pragmatic reasons. An average of 53% of the sample identified such existential motivators as: a wish to know about one's origins, a belief that access to information is a basic human right, a need for a sense of belonging or personal completeness, and satisfaction of a natural curiosity.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FACTORS</th>
<th>FREQUENCY</th>
<th>PERCENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Background Information (Roots)</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>70.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To Satisfy a Natural Curiosity</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>64.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To Complete Personal Identity</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>60.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lineage for Your Children</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>50.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Fight to Know&quot;</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>40.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sense of Belonging</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>36.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical or Genetic Information</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>72.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major Life Event or Crisis</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>38.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ontario Adoption Registry</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The literature emphasized that, for some adoptees, the experience of biological familial continuity and
Connectedness is fundamental in the development of a sense of identity. (Colon, 1978; Frisk, 1964; Sants, 1964). This premise was supported in this study, where 60% of the respondents reported that their search was motivated by a need to complete personal identity.

The most frequently appearing factor was a practical one; namely, a desire for medical or genetic information chosen by 70% of the sample. A search prompted by a life crisis and the establishment of the Ontario Voluntary Registry were the other factors that fell into the pragmatic category. Although Sorosky, et al. (1978) and Triselortes (1973) both found that it was some life crisis that triggered a desire to search, only 38% of this study's sample answered in this fashion. Of those who did, however, a majority (11) were prompted by marriage or a pregnancy. In five cases, it was a serious illness, and the remaining three pointed to the death of an adoptive parent as the precipitating factor.

It is of interest that only five respondents (representing 10% of the sample) indicated that the establishment of the Ontario Adoption Registry in 1977 was a factor in motivating a search. This finding supports the passivity and general disuse of the registry as suggested by the literature.
The Reunion. Of the sample population 50% indicated that they had located members of their biological family, despite sealed record policies currently in existence. The study's findings dramatically reveals that not one of the successful searchers reported they were dissatisfied with the outcome or their search. This finding confirms suggestions in the literature that reunions often have a healthy influence on the participants. It gives the adoptee a chance to forgive the parent, the parent a chance to overcome his or her guilt feelings at relinquishing the child, and the unexpected bonus of acquiring brothers and sisters.

The impact of the reunion was examined from three perspectives:

1. the effect upon the adoptee's self perception
2. the effect upon his feelings toward his biological family; and
3. the effect upon his feelings toward his adoptive family

Table 46 shows the results of a chi-square test of the variables "satisfaction with outcome of search" and "difference in feelings about self". The chi-square value of 5.636, for two degrees of freedom, exceeds the critical value of 4.605, reflecting a significant relationship at the .10 level of confidence. It is noteworthy that nearly three-quarters or the sample (72%) reported that their search had a positive effect on their feelings about self.
### Table 46

**Satisfaction With Outcome of Search By Difference in Feelings About Self**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SATISFACTION WITH SEARCH</th>
<th>DIFFERENCE IN SELF</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Positive Difference</td>
<td>Negative Difference</td>
<td>No Difference</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>(N=13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>(N=0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>(N=12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>(N=25)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Chi-square = 5.636, DF = 2, p = .0597**

Similar findings were evident in Table 47. The chi-square value of 5.618, for two degrees of freedom, exceeds the critical value of 4.605, also reflecting a significant relationship between "satisfaction with outcome of search" and "feelings towards biological family" at the .10 level of confidence. A majority (.56%) of the successful searches reported that the reunion resulted in a positive difference in feelings towards their biological family. This represents
a smaller percent than the positive effect the reunion had on self-perception, which may, in part, be attributed to the fantasies cultivated by the adoptee with respect to members of his family or origins over the years. After the reunion, the expectations of the biological parents' personal qualities, appearance, and lifestyle are transformed into reality and, understandably, may lose some of their more naive qualities.

**TABLE 47**

Satisfaction With Outcome of Search By Difference in Feelings Toward Biological Family

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SATISFIED WITH OUTCOME</th>
<th>DIFFERENCE IN FEELINGS</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>TOTAL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Positive Difference</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>N=10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>40.0</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>52.0</td>
<td>(N=13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>(N=0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat</td>
<td>16.0</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>28.0</td>
<td>48.0</td>
<td>(N=12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>56.0</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>36.0</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>(N=25)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[CHI-SQUARE = 5.318\] \[DF = 2\] \[P = 0.070\]
It was discovered that the adoptee's feelings for his adoptive parents were not affected by the outcome of his search. The chi-square test fails to prove an association between these two variables. Table 48, however, does show that all of the adoptees reported that their feelings for their adoptive parents either remained the same or changed in a positive direction. These findings support suggestions in the literature that a reunion with a birth parent does not necessarily have a detrimental effect on the existing adoptive relationship. (Stoneman, 1978; Sorosky, et al., 1978).

In this study, over 95% of the successful searchers reported they felt very similar or somewhat similar to birth relatives in personality, temperament and specific interests or occupations. In order to further determine the significance of this trend the researchers examined whether feeling similar to biological family members affects the adoptees' self-perception or his feelings towards his adoptive family. As revealed in Table 49 and Table 50, neither of these cross tabulations proved that a statistically significant relationship existed between the variables. These findings imply that although adoptees report a high incidence of resemblance with their biological families such does not affect the adoptees existing relationship with his adoptive family nor does it significantly change his self-image.
TABLE 48

Satisfaction With Outcome of Search By Difference in Feelings Toward Adoptive Family

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Satisfaction With Search</th>
<th>Difference in Feelings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Positive Difference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(N=13)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(N=0)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(N=12)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CEI-SQUARE = 1.066  DF = 1  P = 0.3019
TABLE 49

Similarity to Biological Family By Difference in Feelings About Self

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SIMILARITY</th>
<th>Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>50.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(N=15)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(N=1)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat</td>
<td>20.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(N=8)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>70.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(N=24)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CHI-SQUARE = 5.365  DF = 4  P = 0.2519
TABLE 50

Similarity to Biological Family By Difference in Feeling Toward Adoptive Family

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SIMILARITY TO BIOLOGICAL FAMILY</th>
<th>DIFFERENCE TOWARD ADOPTIVE FAMILY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Positive Difference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>29.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(N=15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>4.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(N=1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat</td>
<td>12.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(N=6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>45.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(N=24)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CHI-SQUARE = 1.410  DF = 2  P = 0.4942

In this section the following observations were noted:

1. An adoptee's search for origins is a complex endeavour, involving a wide variety of factors;

2. That, in respect to this study's sample population, a significant number of adult adoptees find members of their biological family;

3. That, on the whole, an overwhelming majority of reunions prove to be satisfactory for the adult adoptee; and that specifically:
a) reunions positively affect the adoptees self-image; 
b) reunions positively affect the adoptees feeling toward his biological family; 

(c) reunions do not adversely affect the adoptee's existing relationship with his adoptive family; 

4. although adoptees report a high degree of similarity to their biological family, this discovery does not affect: 
a) the adoptee's self-image; or 
b) the adoptee's existing relationship with his adoptive family.

Limitations of Findings

The limitations involved in utilizing a quantitative-descriptive design, a non-probability sampling method, and a fixed alternative questionnaire have each been addressed in previous sections. The researchers are also cognizant, however, of several other constraints that may impinge upon the validity of this study. It is important that the study's findings be viewed in light of these qualifying conditions.

Most significant is consideration of the moral core, attitudes, and practices that prevailed at the time of the respondents' adoptions. The social and moral climate of the late 1940's, 1950's, and early 1960's was indeed quite
different from that of the present, particularly with regard to such key adoption issues as unwed parenthood and the need for privacy.

The stigma of illegitimacy has long underscored an emphasis upon confidentiality in adoption matters. There is little doubt that these attitudes have contributed to the secrecy and deception that have traditionally surrounded adoption and which have led to a "conspiracy of silence" with respect to sharing the details of the adoptee's history. These are nevertheless historical facts which cannot be ignored.

From a retrospective standpoint, it is easy to recite censorious, to point out the inadequacies of prescriptive philosophy or advice, and to find fault with the attitudinal views of the adopters. An understanding of the events and experiences reported in this study is nonetheless contingent upon a clear understanding of historical factors and the context of the times in which the adoptions took place.

Also of significance is the fact that this study has focused upon a complex area of human experience in which a myriad of personal feelings and individual opinions come into play. The self-reports of the respondents are not only dependent upon the ability to recall past events, but coloured by the emotional context in which the events occurred and the adoptees' present orientation toward their experiences in general.
One must remember that a child's-eye view of the world tends to be largely egocentric and that the child's capacity to translate and assimilate information given at a young age is dependent upon his cognitive and intellectual development at the time. One must also keep in mind that initial reactions may be altered by maturational processes or affected by subsequent experiences. The individual who may have had a favourable revelation experience yet difficulties in his relationship with adoptive parents in later years may, for instance, be more likely to paint a bleak picture of his adoption than an individual whose adoption experience was consistently positive. This study did not allow for the control of identification of such unknown intervening variables and influences.

The emotional ramifications of the search itself has further implications. Legislative barriers are often extremely frustrating for adoptees seeking information about their families of origin. Searching is moreover an emotionally-charged process in which the adoptee must grapple with innumerable uncertainties. The questions of whether to inform the adoptive parents of one's intention to search and how to approach this sensitive issue, whether to involve one's spouse and children in such a personal quest, how to go about making initial contact once biological family has been located, and what to expect from a reunion are dilemmas commonly faced by searching adoptees. The
demands for discretion and sensitivity, when countered against one's "need to know", indeed have the potential for creating confusion, emotional turmoil, and further frustration. It is clear that the respondent's emotional state of mind at the time of participation in the study may have had a bearing upon the manner in which he chose to respond to certain enquiries.

There were also inherent difficulties in the dual method used in administering the data collection instrument. As previously mentioned, half of the questionnaires were distributed at Parent Finders meetings and half were mailed. Control over the environment of the respondents was obviously not possible in the case of the latter group. The potential for misinterpretation of the questions and for collusion between the respondent and another party were much greater for those who received a mailed questionnaire.

Because of the nature of the sample, the findings of this study cannot be generalized to the entire population of searching adoptees. Membership and participation in an organization such as Parent Finders would appear to reflect not only a fairly high degree of motivation and commitment to a search, but a commitment to the organization itself. Those adoptees who have considered conducting a search yet who have made no concrete efforts in that direction, or those who have chosen to search without the assistance of an established support group may therefore have quite different characteristics than the members of the sample.
Lastly, the variables utilized in the data analysis were of a low order classification that allowed for only simple statistical computations. Generally speaking, the more sophisticated the variables, the more powerful the statistical techniques used to analyze them. Insofar as the data base for this study was comprised of nominally measured variables, the analysis was necessarily restricted to the use of chi-square as a test for significance.

The chi-square statistic is useful for comparing observed and expected frequencies, and allows one to draw simple conclusions about the nature of variable relationships with respect to association between variables, the probability that the relationship is the result of chance factors, and whether or not the association is statistically significant enough to make generalizations about the variable relationships. The chi-square operations does not, however, permit an examination of differences between means, standard error, or variance. The use of nominal variables was nevertheless considered essential in providing as many alternative and unique responses as possible.

Despite each of these limiting factors, the findings of this study did provide extensive information and insight into the adoption revelation phenomenon and its impact upon the adoptee's search for family of origin. The data analysis was comprehensive and detailed and, in many instances, laid
the ground work for identification of areas that require further study.

**Personal Anecdotes**

Although inherent to the research topic, the scope of this study has not allowed a thorough investigation of such important issues as information accessibility and the effects of present adoption disclosure legislation, or the psychological impact of the search process and actual reunion with birth family. The written comments of the participants help to fill this gap. They indeed serve as the necessary ingredient for adding human flavour to the research process and offer invaluable insight into the feelings and opinions of the adoptees involved.

The comments centered around three major areas:

1. reservations and fears with respect to the search itself;
2. the reunion experience as it related to the adoptee's feelings about self, his birth family, and his adoptive family; and
3. concerns about present record disclosure statutes and the dissemination of information by child welfare agencies.

As evidenced below the adoptees were both candid and sincere.
Search Related Concerns

I haven't met my birth father, only spoken with him on the phone. He is very much afraid of the reaction of his family (wife and four daughters).

I have five half brothers and sisters I would like to meet, but my birth mother still can't tell them about me. We have both expressed our feelings about this and I am leaving it up to her as to when and if she tells them.

As with my search for my father, I intend to do this discretely. He may be married and his wife and family might resent an illegitimate child popping up. He and they may not want to have anything to do with me so my main goal is to obtain medical information and warn them that diabetes could develop in their children or grandchildren.

I enter my search for my biological parents with great fear that if I find them and they are not fairly decent people (ex. alcoholics, criminals, long term welfare recipients, etc.) Then I will feel less of a person myself. If they are good hard working decent people then I must be alright. I realize that what I am now won't change if ever I meet my birth parents but mentally I will be reassessing my self-image depending on the type of people my 'birth' parents are.

This week I met another "adoptee" who is searching and so ... I will begin. I don't want to involve my adoptive parents just because my mother is so sensitive about not being able to bear children. If it gets to a point in my search where they must be involved, then I will have to make a very big decision.
Positive Feelings Toward Biological Family.

Discovering my biological parents has been a positive experience for me. It is a shame that at my age I had to use clandestine means to achieve my goal. The relationship with my adoptive parents has gotten closer since I appreciate them much more now. The relationship with my birth parents has been gratifying on all sides.

My reunion with my birth mother has been of six years duration, with positive results on both sides.

My reunion with my father is of four years duration, also positive on both sides, though he was unaware of my existence for forty years. So far I have had personal contact with four half-siblings with differing degrees of acceptance. However, my main interest was in finding my birth parents.

I met my birth mother a year before I came down with cancer, and she has shared in the whole process, right through from remission to cure. My birth father and I have worked along the same lines of youth programmes, and have also travelled to many of the same countries about the world. We both share in the same type of Community Programmes and Community Service.

My birth mother is uninterested in meeting me, but close relatives of hers have told me of a close resemblance to her and of similarities in personality. Of four siblings contacted on my birth father's side of the family, I am maintaining regular contact by mutual agreement with one half-sibling only.
I was fortunate in my search for my mother. My step-father and siblings accepted me and mother was relieved to know that I had a good childhood and didn't blame her for anything. She had had nightmares about me for several years following my adoption. I wish that my adoptive parents had met her. I think they would have liked her and they wouldn't have felt so inferior.

Positive Feelings toward Adoptive Family

I haven't mentioned anything to my adoptive mother about my search in finding my brothers. It probably would hurt her. I love her for what she has done for me and the way they brought me up. My adoptive father loved me like his own child. It is too sad he couldn't be here today for he was, and is, my father, who I loved dearly.

Adoption for me has been a positive experience both as an adoptee and as an adoptive mother.

In general, my opportunities and education level is better because of my adoptive environment and in this way my search settled that question.

Emotional Impact

I wish I could have done my search when I was growing-up because that's when I needed it the most. All my life I've felt less of a person than anyone else. My adoptive parents love me more than any adopted or birth child could ask for, but I took my adoption as a rejection on my birth mother's part. It didn't matter if she was good or bad, I just needed to know about myself and my background and have the mystery solved. It will take me a long time to reprogram myself and to learn to love myself.

Since the conception of our first child I have been extremely curious. As a child I always fantasized about my birth mother (not my birth father) and possible siblings. Every newspaper article on cases of adoptees searching, etc. has spurred on my interest and desire to know.
This is my first serious effort to search. I hope it won't be a frustrating, dead-end search. As a 28 year old stable adult, I feel I do have the right to know.

The hardest part of adoption is the not knowing. Once you know, you can reach an end, and close that chapter of your life. Knowing who you are from your beginnings, you can finally attain self-acceptance.

I consider my adoption as successful and normal, but I will always resent being told that my "first" parents were killed. I felt sadness and loss for so many years.

To fully comprehend the emotional impact of successfully completing and to some extent aligning myself with the biological family may take years. Yet the experiences, taken at face value, have had an overwhelming contributory effect towards self awareness and confidence.

I'm optimistic that with time I will discover my "roots".

After finding out by accident about being adopted I had a severe personality change. I no longer trust anyone or can get close to them, including my husband and children. Personally I feel that the facts of one's past should be made more readily available to adult age persons.

I do wish my parents had been more open regarding background information. I grew up believing I was 'English' and learned at age 31 that I am French, Irish and native Indian. I feel betrayed that my parents kept this a secret, as it wouldn't have harmed them in any way.
I found my biological mother almost 3 years ago. Finding her, along with my brother, has "filled a emptiness". I know who I am, why I was given up for adoption, the shame she had to go through and the pain she had to endure. She is a lady - a strong human being.

It has opened new doors and has allowed me to tell my adoptive mother "I love you" and to really mean it.

There are so many emotional complications that it is hard to weigh the value of your reasons for searching. Even the strongest of people can't realize the impact they are making upon all parties concerned. One wonders if our reasons are important enough to tamper with fate?

Concerns About The Adoption Disclosure System

Better records should be kept at the time of an adoption and adoptive parents should be told more about the child and his family background.

I strongly believe the Canadian government should not be allowed to deny me my papers. Who are they to keep from me what they think I should, or shouldn't know.

Adoptive parents need more guidance on how to "tell" their children that they are adopted.

The Children's Aid Societies should be acting as an intermediary rather than a road block.

The Children's Aid Society should be freer to give out information and records should be easier to get.
I am a mature human being, a mother, and I feel my children should know the health of their grandparents for medical and genetic reasons. The laws need to be changed regarding adoption procedures. The "Right to Know" should be enforced - LEGALLY!

I think it should be made easier for siblings to find each other.

The Children's Aid Society seems to have little understanding of the psychological effects of being separated from one's biological family. I definitely feel more research should be put into this area.

I feel Canada is lagging behind other countries in its treatment of adults adoptees, i.e. the records are still sealed. One still needs the permission of one's aged adoptive parents before any identifying information can be revealed! I realize the records won't be opened overnight but the legislators should at least start moving in that direction.

I had a real medical problem shortly after my first pregnancy which necessitated me finding my medical history. I was given the royal "run around" by the Children's Aid Society until I called our MPP. I do believe adopted children have the right to honest information that is basic to their needs.

These anecdotes reflect many of the issues and concerns that were identified in the review of literature and, in some cases, lend support to the statistical findings of this
study. As evidenced by the respondents' comments, present adoption record disclosure legislation is indeed perceived as an impingement upon the adoptee's basic human rights and is considered to be a major stumbling block in the search process. Legislative restraints are not, however, the only obstacles that face the adoptee who is conducting a search. As indicated, the decision to search for one's family of origin is often complicated by fear of the unknown and concerns as to the effect of a search upon relationships with one's adoptive family. The reunion experience was nevertheless shown to be rewarding and positive, enhancing the adoptee's feelings about himself and his relationships with both his adoptive family and his biological family.

The data collected for this study provided a wealth of information about the "telling" experiences of the adopted adults in the sample and the effects of such upon their search for family of origin. As indicated, no statistically significant relationship were found between adoption revelation and searching behaviour. A number of retestable characteristics were nevertheless apparent among each of the major variables and several common themes were identified throughout the data as a whole. The conclusions shall revolve around a discussion of these trends.

Although not statistical in nature, the comments of the respondents provided a certain depth and flavour to the
findings of the study and were invaluable in enhancing an understanding of the adoptees' experiences.
Conclusions and Recommendations: Implications for Practice and Policy

The preceding chapter was comprised of an extensive array of specific findings as to the revelation experiences of adopted adults and the impact of these experiences upon their search for family of origin. As noted, associations were found among several major variables.

It is important to reiterate, however, that adoption revelation is a complex phenomenon that is affected by a wide variety of intertwined influences. It is also important to point out that association of factors does not prove the existence of cause-effect relationships nor allow for drawing finite concluding statements as to the exact parameters of variable linkages. A quantitative-descriptive study is indeed intended only to draw attention to observed trends and tendencies which offer insight into the nature of the phenomenon being studied and through which certain implications become evident.

The data analysis of this study revealed four major trends and issues with respect to adoption revelation: information availability, adoptive parents' comfort with adoption revelation, adoptive parents' attitude toward the adoptee's background and, the interrelationship between telling and searching. Each of these will be discussed in
terms of salient characteristics, implications for practice or policy, and recommendations.

Information Availability
When describing the sample population for this study, it was noted that 70% of the respondents were between twenty and thirty-nine years of age. The majority of the participants' adoption placements apparently occurred during the 1940's, 1950's and early 1960's.

At this time adoption philosophy and practice reflected a conservative view towards the dissemination of background information, not only between adoptees and their adoptive parents, but between adoption agencies and the adopters. During these decades, professional ethics dictated that energies be directed toward providing the child with stability and permanency through the legitimization of a family unit created by legal means. This focus on the future indeed seemed to preclude the importance of the child's genetic past, and in many cases, the child's genealogical history became a secondary concern. These practices have been strongly criticized in recent years. The adoptee movement has been particularly adamant in pointing out the effects of information inaccessibility upon their right to their heritage, while contemporary authors have begun to pay greater attention to the long-term effects of emotional cut-off from one's past.
As evidenced in this study, there was a high level of adoptee dissatisfaction with the amount and type of information they received about their backgrounds. These findings implicate both adoption agencies and adoptive parents.

When a child is relinquished for adoption, concerted efforts are extended in developing and implementing a service plan that will see that the child is placed with loving, caring adoptive parents. A volume of government forms and legal procedures are required to create this "new" family unit. Unfortunately, these responsibilities can take precedence over the tedious task of gathering and recording medical, social and personal background information from the child's biological parents. As seen from this study, at least 20% of the adoptive parents received no information as to the details of their child's origins.

Among the adoptive parents who were given information, the vast majority of such pertained to the birth mother only. The findings indicated a distinct paucity of available information with respect to the birth father, implying that his history is not considered as significant to the adoption process. Whereas adoption agencies may argue that information gathering is particularly difficult in the instance of putative paternity, the fact remains that history on the birth father provides an important link to the child's genetic past.
Adoption agencies, however, are not always proficient in collecting and dispensing knowledge of the birth family. This study revealed that many adoptive parents chose not to divulge these facts to their adopted child. Too often adoption has been viewed as a singular event as opposed to a lifelong process. As such, the services of the adoption agency have traditionally revolved around the adoptive placement and have been limited to after the finalization of the adoption. If, however, a mechanism for follow-up between the adoptive family and the agency can be devised and instituted, professional support and guidance can be extended to adoptive parents to share this information with their adopted child at appropriate times, and in an honest and open manner.

The issue of information availability is further exacerbated by present adoption record disclosure statutes in the province of Ontario. As stated previously, adoptees are legislatively refused access to identifying information about their family of origin, even in their adult years. It is encouraging, however, that a very recent news release from the Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services (May 18, 1984) has taken a step forward to counteract the wall of silence that has surrounded adoption in the past. Although the new "Child and Family Services Act" will preserve the three party consent system for adoption record disclosure, the bill will now provide for the disclosure of
information that "may be essential to the health of the adopted person or to his children". As well, if the adoptive parent has become mentally incompetent or has died, then their consent will no longer be required.

In the past, the prerequisite for adoptive parent consent acted as a permanent foil for adoptees who sought identifying information after the death of the adopters. The change in legislation seems to reflect the government's recognition of the inadequacy of this statute. These precedent-setting moves indeed seem to mark the beginnings of a new era in adoption legislation and, as evidenced by the avenues of recourse now offered, the rights of the adult adoptee are apparently gaining greater attention. It is clear, however, that without the co-operation of adopted placement agencies in gathering information and without the commitment of adoptive parents in imparting that which they know, gaps will continue to exist in the adoptee's sense of heritage. The researchers thus propose the following recommendations:

1. that adoption placement agencies make concerted efforts to gather detailed information about both the birth mother and the birth father

2. that as much information that is allowed by the present limitations in the law be shared, in writing, with the adoptive parents at the time of placement and with the adoptee at the age of majority
3. that present legislative restrictions to access to adoption records continue to be examined with a view to meeting the needs and ensuring the rights of all members of the adoption triangle

4. that the legislation governing the Ontario Adoption Registry revamp its mandate and actively assist in searches based on a singular request from either an adoptee, a birth parent, or an adoptive parent

5. that the legislation allow the Ontario Adoption Registry to assign an intermediary to contact the missing person(s) who may then refuse to release their identity or consent to a reunion

6. that adoption placement agencies make a commitment to the provision of on-going post-placement services and that administrators of such agencies seriously consider application for additional funding to ensure that these services are available

Adoptive Parents' Comfort With the Task of Revelation

On the whole, the adoptees in this study had positive relationships with their adoptive parents and, for the most part, were apprised of their adopted status in an acceptable and appropriate manner. These factors did not necessarily imply, however, that the task of adoptive revelation was a simple one for the adopters. The data suggested, in fact, that a pattern of evasiveness was apparent in 68.11% of the
adoptive situations, and that even when information was available to the adoptive parents, it was often withheld. The tendency toward avoidance, or at least reluctance, in sharing the details of adoption was most graphically illustrated in reports of the type of feelings displayed by the adoptive parents when discussing adoption with their child. As indicated previously, almost 40% of the adoptees conveyed feelings of anxiety, guilt, betrayal, embarrassment, or secretiveness. Such sentiments not only allude to the taboo nature of the subject, but offer clear messages as to the adoptive parents' willingness to participate in ongoing conversations around this topic. One may safely assume that communication is likely to be blocked if the emotional context of the discussion is one which is known to cause distress or discomfort.

Evasiveness was also evidenced in the finding that a fair number of the adoptees were told nothing at all about the circumstances that led to their adoption placement. In other instances, deception was apparently utilized as a means of circumventing discussion of the adoptee's criqirs, and denying the existence of the child's birth parents. It was interesting that the adoptive fathers were far more likely to be secretive than adoptive mothers. This tendency was evident in terms of the initial revelation itself, which was most often a responsibility assumed solely by the mother, and with respect to subsequent references to the adoption placement.
It is important to realize that the findings of this study offered no basis for assessing the relative merits of full as opposed to minimal revelation. Neither did the data allow for the development of criteria to differentiate between those adoptive parents who were likely to be receptive toward disclosure and those who were apt to be resistant. As indicated by the literature, a myriad of psychological and attitudinal factors may influence the adopters' decision to "tell" or "not tell".

Communication about adoption within the family is nevertheless a crucial issue, as it provides a test of the adoptive parents' security in their role, or their sensitivity toward their child's questions and need for information or reassurance, and of their own capacity to accept and empathize with the background of their adopted child.

The fact remains that, as shown in this study, secrecy and prevarication with regard to adoption revelation were just as prevalent as openness and honesty. This tendency gives rise to serious questions about the extent and quality of pre-placement assessment of the adoptive parents and the degree to which their biases and reservations were explored and therapeutically dealt with prior to the actual placement. Also of serious question is the adoptive parents' preparation for handling the unique task of "telling" and the degree to which they received professional support and assistance in this regard.
The following recommendations are proposed:

1. that adoption placement agencies make it a matter of policy to provide follow-up services with adoptive homes on an annual basis.

2. that screening of adoptive applicants include an exploration and assessment of the degree to which they are committed to apprising the child of his adoptive status.

3. that adoption agencies place an expectation upon adoptive parents that they apprise the adopted child of his status and that a contract be struck to ensure follow through.

4. that emphasis in preparation of prospective adoptive parents revolve around education as to the uniqueness of the adoptive relationship, the child's need to know of his adopted status, and the need for recognition of his origins.

5. that counselling be provided with a view to resolving psychological issues or fears which may impede the adopters' ability to communicate openly about the adoption placement and the circumstances that led to it.

6. that clear direction, guidance, and support be offered to the adoptive parents as to methods of handling the initial revelation and any subsequent enquiries on the part of the adoptee.
The Adoptive Parents' Attitude Toward the Adoptee's Background

Of all the variables examined in this study, the adoptive parents' attitude toward the adoptee's background produced the most consistent results. These attitudes indeed had an influence upon all major aspects of the revelation process and, in many cases, directly affected the manner in which disclosure was handled. Parental views about the child's origins were also significant in determining the adoptee's degree of contentment with his adopted status, his sense of similarity to his adoptive parents, and his sense of belonging within the adoptive family unit. Attitudinal factors were thus not only essential in terms of the adoptive parents' orientation to the revelation process in general, but crucial to the adoptees' adjustment.

As indicated in the data analysis, the majority (68.09%) of the respondents' adoptive parents were perceived as being "very accepting" of the adoptee's origins and history. In less than a fifth of the cases were the adopters regarded as "very unaccepting." The findings suggested, however, that there were subtle differences in the manner in which each of these groups approached revelation.

There were fairly strong indications that parents who were very accepting were more likely to raise their child with the knowledge of his adoption from the outset of the adoption placement, or to apprise him of the fact at a
relatively early age. These parents were also more likely to inform the child of his status themselves. In comparison, among the adopters with a very unaccepting attitude, there were no instances in which the adoptee was made aware of his status "from the beginning" and fewer cases of early disclosure. The likelihood that the adoptee would learn of his status through outside sources or inadvertently was slightly greater for those whose parents were critical of the adoptee's background.

Attitudinal factors were also closely linked to the circumstances in which the subject of adoption was raised, and the adopters' readiness and comfort in discussing the adoption experience. The data revealed that adoptive parents who accepted the adoptee's origins were more likely to portray the placement in a positive light, to refer to adoption in favourable circumstances, and to display feelings of joy, pride, comfort, and receptivity when discussing adoption with the adoptee. In cases where the parents maintained negative attitudes, however, the tone of references to adoption tended to be negative. In these instances, the adopters were apt to bring up the topic of adoption within a context of anger or disappointment, and to convey feelings of embarrassment, betrayal, or anxiety when speaking of the adoption.

These findings strongly suggest a connection between a negative parental attitude about the adoptee's history and
avoidance of situations which necessitate reference to his origins and his adopted status. Denying or de-emphasizing the adoption component in the child's life raises serious questions as to the adoptive parents' acceptance of their role and their ability to confront the realities of the adoptive situation. Denial of the adoptee's background also has serious implications with respect to integration of the child into the adoptive home and the degree of congruity within the family unit. The parents' ability to accept the adopted child as a unique individual with certain irrevocable genetic traits is likely to be limited if prejudicial feelings toward his biological beginnings are prevalent.

As shown in this study, there were indeed strong relationships between the adoptive parents' attitude toward the child's history, and the adoptee's feelings about his status, his sense of similarity to the adoptive parents, and his sense of belonging to the adoptive family. Those who perceived their parents' attitude as accepting were far more likely to have positive feelings about their adopted status, to report a likeness between themselves and the adopters, and to feel that they belonged. In contrast, within the group of parents who were unaccepting of their child's background, there were no instances in which the adoptee reported feelings of similarity or belonging, and fewer cases of positive sentiments toward the adoption.
These findings have distinct implications for prognosis of the adoptive family's functioning and the adoptee's psychosocial adjustment. Of particular concern is the impact of critical parental attitudes upon attachment and bonding processes upon attachment and bonding processes, parent-child relationship development, family cohesiveness, and the adoptee's self-image. It is clear that negativity towards biological family sets the adoptee apart from his adoptive family and leads to feelings of displacement and discontent. It is further suggested that unaccepting attitudes toward birth parents may be translated into unaccepting attitudes toward the adoptee himself, thus creating a tenuous context for the development of a positive self-concept.

Attitudinal factors indeed appear to be primary indicators of potential difficulties within the adoptive family unit. As such, they should be regarded as clear warning signals from the very beginning of involvement between prospective adoptive parents and the practitioners who assess them.

Based on the above, the following recommendations are made:

1. That pre-placement counselling focus upon education as to the adopted child's background with a view to assessing the degree to which biases or prejudices may be prevalent on the part of the prospective adoptive parents.
2. that placement be contingent upon evidence of attitudes that are considered acceptable and growth promoting for the adopted child or dependent upon therapeutic resolution of value judgments believed to be detrimental to integration of the adoptee into the adoptive home.

**Telling and Searching**

From the knowledge gained in this study, it has become very apparent that the factors which lead an adoptee to search for origins are highly complex and not necessarily dependent upon isolated variables. This was most dramatically demonstrated by the statistical failure of the study's hypotheses. Specifically, the researchers conclude from the findings that there is no statistically significant relationship between an adult adoptee's search and:

1. receipt of information about his adopted status;
2. who revealed the fact of adoption;
3. the age when adoption was revealed;
4. the nature and manner in which adoption was discussed and;
5. the adoptee's relationship with adoptive parents.

Although the desire to know more about one's family of origin seems to be independent of the above-mentioned variables, the researchers were impressed with the quality of the relationships with the adoptive parents and their handling of the adoption revelation.
Generally, most searchers grew up with the knowledge of adoption. The adoption disclosure was usually handled by the adoptive parents themselves, as opposed to others or the adoptee inadvertently discovering the facts on his own. The adoptive mother was more often the parent who took responsibility to divulge the fact of adoption. It was interesting, however, that on the whole the adoptees had reported a closer relationship with their adoptive father.

For the most part, the adoptive parents imparted the information in a positive, caring fashion and from an early age. The data revealed that the likelihood of an adopted child reacting positively to adoption revelation was increased when the adoption was disclosed early. Of the adoptees who were apprised of the adoption after age ten, all reacted with feelings of anger and shock.

Contrary to the popular belief that adoptees seek access to genetic information because of an unsatisfactory adoptive family experience, this study indicated that most adoptees involved in a search had close relationships with their adoptive parents. Moreover, this closeness was found to enhance the adoptee's positive reaction to the revelation.

Furthermore, the study revealed that reunions between adult adoptees and birth family members were consistently deemed to be productive and rewarding. The adoptee achieved a more complete sense of self and identity by gaining
personal access to their individual histories and
genealogies. Although the search for family of origin is
often misinterpreted by adoptive parents and others as
rejection, the study verified that reunions can enhance
relationship within the adoptive family and should not be
viewed as a threat to its stability.

It is therefore suggested that an adoptee’s need to
know about his birth parents and understand his genetic past
is a normal and natural aspect of the adoption process.
It is further suggested that searching provides an
opportunity for the adoptee to work through and understand
his past life experiences which may lead him to a greater
appreciation of self, his adoptive family, and his biological
family. The findings of this study shed light upon the
access issue and debunk some of the fears and suppositions
about adoptees who desire information about and contact with
families of origin.

The researchers thus propose the following
recommendations:

1. that discussions about adoption between adoptive
   parents and the adopted child be part of an ongoing
   process, and that such commence at an early age

2. that the task of adoption disclosure be a mutually
   shared parental responsibility, and that the adoptive
   father become more involved in the revelation process
3. that adoptive parents be informed of contemporary research findings with respect to factors which are known to motivate an adoptee's search for family of origin and that they be assured that a search is not always indicative of a failure within the adoptive relationship

4. that adoption agencies publicly promote professional counselling and supportive services for adoptive parents and adoptees at the time of an expected or actual search

5. that longitudinal studies be conducted on the impact of adoptees searching for and reuniting with members of their birth family has on all members of the adoption triangle

Other Recommendations

In addition to these major trends, this study produced several other notable findings that are worthy of further research. The following are suggested areas requiring examination in the future.

1. a comparative analysis of the adoption experiences of searching and non-searching adoptees

2. an exploratory study examining the factors which lead more female than male adoptees to search for family of origin
3. an exploratory study examining the impact of a high mortality rate of adoptive fathers upon the adoptee's integration into the adoptive family
4. a child focused study examining the revelation experience at the time of its occurrence
5. an exploration of parent/adoptiveee relationships and role differentiation between adoptive mothers and fathers
6. an inquiry into the effectiveness of the Ontario Adoption Disclosure Registry
7. an investigation into the effects of Ontario sealed record policies upon all members of the adoption triangle
8. an examination of the potential effects of open adoption records upon all members of the adoption triangle
9. the impact of life crisis on the adoptee's decision to search
10. a comparative study of the differences in identity formation between adopted and non-adopted individuals
11. a longitudinal study as to the advantages and disadvantages of reunions between adoptees and members of their birth families

The purpose of this study was to examine how the process of learning of about one's own adopted status related to the adult adoptee's search for his family or
origin. By dispelling some of the fears and suppositions about adult adoptees who search, the researchers' aim was to help those directly and indirectly involved in adoptive relationships to understand the importance of the adopted persons' connection to their genetic past.

Special attention focused on the role of adoption placement agencies in carefully preserving details pertinent to the adoptee's history, practices and policies with respect to assessment and pre-placement procedures and the provision of ongoing post-placement services. The researchers emphasized the importance of the parent/adoptiveee relationship and the effects of parental attitudes upon the adoptees' integration into the adoptive home and satisfaction with his adopted status. It was stressed that adoptive parents share information about their child's history and heritage in a spirit of openness and honesty.
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Vita Auctoris

Evelyn Adele Glass was born in St. Catharines, Ontario on March 2, 1954. She completed her high school education at Beamsville District Secondary School in 1972. Following a year spent in the workforce and travelling, she was accepted into the School of Social Work, University of Windsor, where she attended from 1974 to 1978. Miss Glass received a Bachelor of Arts degree in Psychology in 1977 and a Bachelor of Social Work degree in 1978.

From June of 1978 to August of 1983, Miss Glass was employed by the Roman Catholic Children's Aid Society for the County of Essex, holding social work positions in the Family Services Department and the Children's Services Department, respectively.

In the Fall of 1983, she was granted an educational leave of absence to pursue graduate studies in Social Work at the University of Windsor. She expects to graduate in September 1984.

Miss Glass resumed employment with the Roman Catholic Children's Aid Society as a Foster Care/Placement Resource Worker in July 1984.
Vita Autoris

Erwin William Novac was born in Windsor, Ontario on January 17, 1956. After completing his secondary school education at Kennedy Collegiate in 1974, he enrolled at the University of Windsor. In 1978, he graduated with a Bachelor of Social Work degree and a Bachelor of Arts degree in Psychology.

Following graduation, Mr. Novac was employed by the Roman Catholic Children's Aid Society for Essex County, holding social work positions in the Central Intake and Family Services Departments.

In the Fall of 1983, he returned to the University of Windsor to complete a Master of Social Work degree and expects to graduate in September 1984.
Appendix A

Covering Letter
June 7, 1984.

Dear Sir/Madam:

Enclosed please find a questionnaire entitled "Telling and Searching in Adoption".

As you may be aware, the questionnaire is part of a study being conducted by ourselves, two Master of Social Work students, in co-operation with the Windsor/Essex and London chapters of Parent Finders.

In order for the study to have value, it is important that we reach as many Parent Finders as possible. Your participation in the study would thus be greatly appreciated.

A brief introduction and instructions for completing the questionnaire follow on the next page.

We ask that you fill out the questionnaire and return it in the enclosed, stamped envelope by June 20, 1984.

Thanking you in advance, we remain,

Yours sincerely,

E. Adele Glass, B.A., B.S.W.

Erwin M. Novac, B.A., B.S.W.
Dear Participant:

Before you complete this questionnaire, we ask that you take a few minutes to read this introductory note.

The purpose of this research project is to examine the process of learning about one's adoptive status, and how such relates to the adult adoptee's need to search for his or her family of origin.

The study has been approved by the School of Social Work at the University of Windsor where we, the researchers, are presently completing our Master of Social Work degrees.

We share a combined twelve years of experience in child welfare and have a particular professional interest in adoption practice and policies. We hope that our research may expand general knowledge in the field of adoption and serve as a basis in helping both professionals and the public in understanding the needs and interests of adoptees.

The format of the questionnaire has been designed for thoroughness and ease in completion. Please read all alternatives for each question and choose the one that best describes your answer by marking it with a check (✓). If none of the alternatives are satisfactory to you, an optional (other) category is included, which allows you to write in the exact word or phrase you wish.

Please note that the term "biological" also refers to "birth" or "natural" parents, brothers and sisters, and other extended family members: in other words, your family of origin.

Also please be assured that your anonymity and confidentiality will be protected. We ask that you not sign the questionnaire or identify yourself in any other way.

In anticipation of your co-operation, please accept our sincere appreciation.

Yours sincerely,

E. Adele Glass, B.A., B.S.W.

Erwin W. Novac, B.A., B.S.W.
7) Present Occupation:

1) Professional/Technical
2) Management/Administration
3) Sales
4) Craftsman/Tradesman
5) Operator/Labourer
6) Services
7) Homemaker
8) Student
9) Unemployed
10) other (specify)

8) At what age were you adopted?

1) under one year
2) 1-4 years
3) 5-9 years
4) over 10 years
5) don't know

9) Were you adopted more than once?

1) yes
2) no
3) don't know

10) Were you adopted:

1) through an agency
2) privately
3) don't know

11) Were you adopted by:

1) relatives
2) non-relatives
3) don't know

12) Are your adoptive parents:

1) both living
2) both deceased
3) adoptive mother deceased
4) adoptive father deceased

13) If applicable, what age were you when:

Your adoptive mother died?
1) under 10 years
2) 11-20 years
3) 21-30 years
4) 31-40 years
5) 41-50 years
6) over 60 years

Your adoptive father died?
1) under 10 years
2) 11-20 years
3) 21-30 years
4) 31-40 years
5) 41-50 years
6) over 60 years
14) Are there other children in your adoptive family?

1) yes ___ 2) no ___

15) If yes, are they:

1) also adopted ___ 3) both ___
2) born to your adoptive parents ___ 4) don't know ___

16) Do you have any biological brother(s) and/or sister(s)? (include half brothers and sisters)

1) yes ___ 2) no ___ 3) don't know ___

17) If yes, were they:

1) placed in the same adoptive home as you ___
2) placed in other adoptive homes(s) ___
3) placed elsewhere (specify) ___
4) remained with birth parent(s) ___
5) don't know where they are ___

18) Is your birth mother:

1) living ___ 2) deceased ___ 3) don't know ___

19) Is your birth father:

1) living ___ 2) deceased ___ 3) don't know ___

20) At what age were you first told, or when did you first realize that you were adopted?

1) under 5 years ___ 5) 21 years or over ___
2) 6–10 years ___ 6) have always known ___
3) 11–15 years ___ 7) don't remember ___
4) 16–20 years ___
21) How did you first find out that you were adopted?

1) told by adoptive mother
2) told by adoptive father
3) told by adoptive parents together
4) told by brother(s) and/or sister(s)
5) told by neighbours
6) told by family friends
7) told by other relatives (specify)
8) told by schoolmates/peers
9) saw adoption papers
10) overheard a conversation about you
11) adopted when old enough to know
12) have always known
13) don't remember
14) other (specify)

22) What best described your feelings when you first learned or first realized the meaning of being adopted? (please mark one only)

1) joy
2) belonging
3) security
4) relief
5) comfort
6) pride
7) indifference
8) sorrow
9) anger
10) shock
11) betrayal
12) embarrassment
13) secretiveness
14) rejection
15) anxiety
16) other (specify)

23) What best describes your present feelings about being an adoptee? (please mark one only)

1) joy
2) belonging
3) security
4) relief
5) comfort
6) pride
7) indifference
8) sorrow
9) anger
10) shock
11) betrayal
12) embarrassment
13) secretiveness
14) rejection
15) anxiety
16) other (specify)

24) How do you feel about the adoption system as a whole? (ie: procedures and policies)

1) positive
2) negative
3) indifferent
25) What best describes(ed) your adoptive mother's attitude when she talked to you about being adopted? (please mark one only)

1) joy _____ 7) embarrassment _____
2) pride _____ 8) secretiveness _____
3) openness _____ 9) anxiety _____
4) comfort _____ 10) guilt _____
5) sorrow _____ 11) betrayal _____
6) anger _____ 12) other (specify) _____

26) What best describes(ed) your adoptive father's attitude when he talked to you about being adopted? (please mark one only)

1) joy _____ 7) embarrassment _____
2) pride _____ 8) secretiveness _____
3) openness _____ 9) anxiety _____
4) comfort _____ 10) guilt _____
5) sorrow _____ 11) betrayal _____
6) anger _____ 12) other (specify) _____

27) After you learned about it, how often was your adoption mentioned by your adoptive parents(s)? (please mark one only)

1) often _____ 3) rarely _____
2) occasionally _____ 4) never _____

28) Under what circumstances was your adoption most commonly discussed? (please mark one only)

1) because of your own curiosity and questions _____
2) as a common part of everyday or 'normal' family discussion _____
3) your adoption as a special, unique event _____
4) in anger, disappointment, or to belittle you _____
5) when others mentioned it (ie: commented on differences in your physical appearance) _____
6) other (specify) _____
29) What were you told about why your birth parent(s) place you for adoption?

1) birth mother died in childbirth
2) birth parent(s) died in an accident
3) birth parent(s) could not afford to raise a child
4) birth parents were not married
5) marital difficulties between birth parents
6) you were abandoned by birth parent(s)
7) authorities removed you from birth parent(s)
8) birth parent(s) wanted a good home for you
9) birth parent(s) wanted you to have two parents
10) other (specify)

30) Regarding the above, to the best of your knowledge, was what you were told the truth?

1) yes ___  2) no ___  3) somewhat ___

31) What best describes(ed) how your adoptive parent(s) portrayed your adoption? (please mark one only)

1) you were a welcomed gift
2) you were a wanted and valued addition to the family
3) you were a 'chosen' baby
4) you were the child that 'nature denied' them
5) you were a foundling/orphan that they rescued
6) adoption was a social or family obligation
7) other (specify)

32) Do you presently have in your possession:

1) your original birth certificate
2) your adoption order
3) your adoption 'fact sheet'
4) a personal article left for you by your birth parent(s) (ie: momento, letter)
33) What information did you receive from your adoptive parent(s) with regard to your birth mother?

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<td>13) medical/psychiatric history</td>
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<td>15) whether she was married</td>
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<td>16) if she had other children</td>
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<td>17) why she placed you for adoption</td>
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34) What information did you receive from your adoptive parent(s) with regard to your birth father?

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<td>15) whether he was married</td>
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<td>16) if he had other children</td>
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<td>17) if he knows of your existence</td>
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</table>
35) Do you feel that your adoptive parent(s) gave you sufficient information about your background?

1) yes  __  2) no  __

36) If no, in your opinion, do you believe that this was because:

1) your adoptive parent(s) had no other information  __
2) your adoptive parent(s) had other information, but withheld it  __
3) a combination of the above  __
4) other (specify)  ______________________________________

37) In your opinion, are (were) your adoptive parent(s):

1) very accepting of your background  __
2) somewhat accepting of your background  __
3) very unaccepting of your background  __

38) What is your own attitude toward your background?

1) positive  __  3) indifferent  __
2) negative  __  4) don't know  __

39) Do you feel that you were 'one of the family' in your adoptive home?

1) yes  __  2) no  __  3) somewhat  __

40) Do you feel that you are similar to your adoptive parent(s)? (ie: in temperament, personality, values, or interests)

1) yes  __  2) no  __  3) somewhat  __

41) What best describes your relationship with your adoptive parents?

1) close to both parents  __  3) mostly close to father  __
2) mostly close to mother  __  4) close to neither  __
42) Has your relationship with your adoptive mother:

1) improved over the years
2) deteriorated over the years
3) remained the same

43) Has your relationship with your adoptive father:

1) improved over the years
2) deteriorated over the years
3) remained the same

44) When did you first start thinking about making enquiries or searching for your biological family?

1) childhood
2) adolescence
3) adulthood

45) When did you first start actively making enquiries or searching for your biological family?

1) 19 or under
2) 20-29 years
3) 30-39 years
4) 40-49 years
5) 50-59 years
6) 60 or over

46) What factors motivated your search?

1) a desire for more medical or genetic information
2) a desire to satisfy a 'natural curiosity'
3) a desire for more in-depth information about your background ('roots')
4) a desire for information to pass on to your children (ancestry)
5) a search for personal identity and completeness
6) "it's a basic human right to know"
7) a need for a sense of belonging
8) a major life event or crisis (ie: death of adoptive parent(s), marriage, pregnancy, serious illness, etc.) (specify)
   
9) the establishment of the Ontario Adoption Disclosure Registry
10) other (specify)
47) Would you have searched if your adoptive parent(s) had or had given you more sufficient information?

1) yes _____ 2) no _____ 3) don't know _____

48) Would you have searched if more detailed records had been made available?

1) yes _____ 2) no _____ 3) don't know _____

49) What is (was) the primary purpose of your search? (please mark one section only)

1) to gain more complete non-identifying information only (ie: medical) _____

2) only to learn the identities of:

   a) birth mother _____
   b) birth father _____
   c) birth siblings _____

3) to learn the identities of the following for the purpose of locating and meeting them:

   a) birth mother _____
   b) birth father _____
   c) birth siblings _____

50) If you locate (have located) your biological family members, do you plan upon: (please mark one only)

1) meeting once or twice only _____

2) meeting regularly _____

3) not meeting (biological family members uninterested or deceased) _____

4) don't know _____

51) Have your adoptive parent(s) been told of your desire to search?

   1) adoptive mother _____  NO _____ N/A (deceased) _____

   2) adoptive father _____  NO _____ N/A (deceased) _____
52) If yes, are your adoptive parent(s) supportive of your search?

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<tr>
<th>YES</th>
<th>NO</th>
<th>N/A (deceased)</th>
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<tr>
<td>1) adoptive mother</td>
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<td>2) adoptive father</td>
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</table>

53) If yes, was your decision to search made easier by your adoptive parent(s)' support?

1) yes  2) no  3) didn't matter

54) If no, did lack of support by your adoptive parent(s) make your decision to search more difficult?

1) yes  2) no  3) didn't matter

55) Have you found your:

<table>
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<th>YES</th>
<th>NO **</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) birth mother</td>
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<td>2) birth father</td>
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<td>3) birth brother(s) and/or sister(s)</td>
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</table>

* IF YES, PLEASE COMPLETE QUESTIONS 57 TO 62. ** IF NO, PLEASE ANSWER QUESTION 62 ONLY.

56) Do you feel similar to your biological family members? (ie: in temperament, personality, values, or interests)

1) yes  2) no  3) somewhat

57) Did finding your biological family members make a difference in your feelings about yourself?

1) positive difference  2) negative difference  3) no difference

58) Did finding your biological family members make a difference in your feelings about your adoptive family?

1) positive difference  2) negative difference  3) no difference
59) Did finding your biological family members make a difference in your feelings about your biological family?
   1) positive difference  2) negative difference  3) no difference

60) Did you accomplish what you had hoped for in your search?
   1) yes  2) no  3) somewhat

61) Please add any additional comments:

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

THANK-YOU FOR YOUR INTEREST AND CO-OPERATION - IT IS SINCERELY APPRECIATED.