

campaign for Federation. A very precious and important skill to teach agency executives is how they can be supportive of the annual Federation Campaign and what role they can play. There is sometimes a tendency to use the agency staff as the "whipping boys" when actually they may feel insecure and inept.

In what other ways can planners help the agencies?

There is a vast reservoir of laymen with special skills who can be most helpful to agencies. Enlightened self-interest would suggest that Federations should develop programs of *pro bono* management assistance for their agencies, using this resource of people, some of whom may or may not be interested some day in agency board service. They should assist agencies in securing endowments, lobby on their behalf for necessary legislation and help them obtain special grants from foundations.

Federations should also assist the agencies with their lay leadership—assisting with designing courses in leadership training and "feeding" lay people to the agencies. This will result in a stronger Jewish community through well-trained volunteers. Strong lay leadership only comes about through hard, thoughtful work.

Agency lay leadership should not be entirely different from Federation leadership. There should be overlap. It is through this overlapping leadership that there is back-and-forth formal and informal communication and enhancement of a sense of community.

It would appear that more and more of our thrust is going to be to encourage different functional agencies to work together in common service needs. Whether it be with respect to the aged, the family, the single parent, the teen, the problem of substance abuse, and so forth, we must more effectively pool our resources in attacking a problem in a meaningful way. Without focusing only

on the word teamwork—the very nature of how agencies are brought together with common concerns can be a substantial step in enhancing a sense of community. The major task of Federation is community building.

The question has frequently arisen as to the appropriateness of Federation itself executing demonstration projects. Frequently this implies a lack of trust in our agencies. It can even be an unconscious "put-down". Every effort should be made when a demonstration project is to be mounted to use the functional agency and not the Federation as the demonstrator.

As Charles Miller has expressed it, Federation has become the closest thing we have in this country to an organized Jewish community. Whatever structural shortcomings it has, its enabling interest over so many programs makes it the most important central organizational mechanism we have to ensure the survival of many aspects of Jewish life.

People need a warm environment today. Agencies are instruments for Jewish linkage. They are more than a vehicle for service. People need services they can trust. They need life goals, standards and guidelines that matter. It is conceivable that well-planned community services are a strong combative force in terms of the disorganization we are seeing and experiencing.

We are going to prevail in our Jewish Federation network, led by people who play key roles in enhancing and planning human services. Heschel said that "Survival, mere continuation of being, is a condition man has in common with animals. Characteristic of humanity is concern for what to do with survival. To be or not to be is not the question. The true problem is how to survive, what sort of future to strive for. Survival requires above all, a self worthy of survival".

Identity Issues in the Jewish Adopted Adolescent*

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Adoption, per se, triggers seven lifelong issues for members of the [adoption] triad. These issues surface at different developmental stages, but all appear to be present in full force during the adoptee's adolescence. These issues, especially the ones involved in identity formation, are painfully increased by the presence of issues regarding Jewish identity and by Jewish laws and attitudes toward adoption.

Introduction

In the Jewish-American community, adoption is, and has been, a common and acceptable manner for childless couples to become parents. Of late, Jews have, of necessity, adopted primarily non-Jewish children. There has been little examination of these practices. The infertile couple's pain and the reaction this distress has caused in rabbinic and social service circles have led to ill-considered rescue behaviors and an avoidance of the long-term implications and wide-reaching ramifications of adoption. This short-sightedness has an impact on the adoption triad—the adoptee, the adoptive family, and the birthfamily—and raises issues for the Jewish community as a whole. Jewish communal workers and agencies, whether or not they provide adoption services directly, do treat adoptees and their families, and the birthparents who surrendered them.

Many of the issues inherent in the Jewish adoption experience converge when the child reaches adolescence. At this time 3 factors intersect: (1) an acute awareness of the significance of being adopted; (2) the profound meaning of being a Jew in history; and (3) a biopsychosocial striving toward the development of a whole identity. Jewish communal workers must address the

interactional effects of adoption; Jewish attitudes toward adoption; and adolescent development, and the threat these factors pose to the formation of an integrated identity.

Adoption is such a common experience that it is worthy of more than "orphan drug" investigation. Roughly one in fifty persons is directly affected by adoption.¹ Jews are over-represented in the large number of adoptors. One percent of all children under 18 years of age are adopted outside of their birthfamily. Thirteen percent of all emotionally disturbed out-patients are adoptees, and in some facilities, up to thirty percent of the inpatients are adoptees.²

These facts alone are unsettling. Additionally, they raise a number of issues for which there presently exist only partial answers or no answers at all. It is not the intent of this article to question adoption *per se*, but rather to challenge some adoption assumptions, specifically, the persistent notion that adoption is *not* different from other forms of parenting and the disregard of many people for the pain and struggles inherent in adoption. These latter difficulties become particularly pronounced in the adoptee's adolescence.

¹ Statistics from Triadoption Library, Westminster, California, 1983.

² Notes from a conference sponsored by Del Amo Hospital, Del Amo, California, December 8, 1983.

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A case example is that of a family who came to the author's agency requesting guidance for their 13 year-old, adopted daughter who was refusing to celebrate her *bat mitzvah*, stating "I don't feel Jewish." After four months of counseling, a number of factors were uncovered including the fact that the girl had been adopted soon after the death of a retarded infant; also disclosed were the parents' own marital problems which included a one-year separation when the child was two years of age. The girl's attempts at gathering information about her birth-family had been so threatening to the adoptive parents that they refused to supply her with any information. The question had triggered the parents' grief and fear of rejection and loss. The parents' refusal only reinforced the adoptee's doubts about her own identity and origins.

Adoption Issues

Adoption, the severing of biological, legal, and family ties, and the establishment of a new kinship, raises seven core issues.³ These issues surface at different life cycle and developmental stages for all members of the triad, regardless of the child's age at the time of adoption or the adoptee's ethnic identification or the particular circumstances surrounding that adoption. The seven core issues in adoption are: Loss and separation; grief, rejection; guilt and shame; intimacy; mastery/power and control; and identity. This paper will focus on how these issues affect the adoptee, creating additional hazards for the adoptee. This article emphasizes many "casualties" that result. However, it is a tribute to human resourcefulness how many adoptees negotiate the shoals successfully.

Adoptees have suffered their first loss at the initial separation from the birth-family. Awareness of the adoptive status is inevitable. Even if this loss is beyond conscious awareness, recognition, or vocabulary, it is a fundamental, trauma-

³ Developed by the author with Sharon Kaplan, Director, Parenting Resources, Santa Ana, California.

tic, and life-altering event. Subsequent loss, or the perceived threat of separation, becomes more formidable for adoptees. Loss and separation clearly lead to feelings of grief, followed by an unending mourning of the loss.

The capacity to abstract sufficiently to comprehend the enormity of that loss does not arrive until adolescence. During adolescence adoptees reach an existential awareness of their predicament. In addition to other tasks, adoptees must mourn their losses and hopefully gain an acceptance of the present reality.

Such feelings of loss are exacerbated by the adoptee's keen sense of rejection by the birthfamily. Although rejection *per se* is usually not the rationale behind the birthparent's decision to surrender a child for adoption, adoptees personalize their adoption experience and, therefore, believe that they were rejected for themselves. Adopted persons become sensitive to the slightest hint of rejection, causing them either to avoid situations where they might be rejected or to provoke rejection in order to validate their earlier self-perceptions. The sense of deserving such rejection leads adoptees to experience tremendous guilt and shame. This self-accusation is intensified by the secrecy often present in past and present adoption practices. These factors combine to lead the adoptee to conclude that the feelings of guilt and shame are indeed valid.

In addition to problems of self-worth, adoptees have lifelong issues with intimacy. These issues are particularly evident in relationships with members of the opposite sex and revolve around questions about the adoptee's conception, biological concerns, and sexuality. Further, the issues of loss, unresolved grief, rejection, and guilt lead to fears about establishing intimate relationships and thereby risking reenactment of those early issues.

Adoptees also feel powerless in the most basic sense of the word. They were not party to the decisions which led to their adoption. They had no control over the loss of their birthfamily or the choice of the adoptive family. This unnatural change of course stymies the growth toward self-actualization and self-control. Adolescent adoptees may continue to rebel against authority rather than to internalize self-control, leading to a lowered sense of self-responsibility. These patterns, frequently passive/aggressive in nature, may continue into adulthood.

The seventh lifelong issue for adoptees is that of identity. The process of identity formation commences before birth and derives from somatic, intrapsychic, and social influences. Adoptees do not have access to information about whom they look like, medical histories, genetic pre-dispositions, or cultural, religious, or historical heritage. These deficits impede the integration of their identity. Ultimately, impaired or incomplete identity causes difficulties in integrating all the previous steps of development and precludes a sense of belonging to society. Such identity crises may lead to feelings of helplessness, disequilibrium, and separation.

Jewish Law and Attitudes on Adoption

The lifelong issues in adoption are compounded by Jewish law and attitude. Civil adoption by Jewish parents does not automatically make a child Jewish. According to *Halacha*, special attention is needed to ensure the Jewish status of adopted children. The *Halachic* problems raised by adoption have lately received more attention.⁴ This attention, however, has dealt with specifics regarding the child's status but not with

⁴ Immanuel Jakobovitis, *Journal of a Rabbi*. New York: Living Books, Inc., 1966, p. 240.

the double messages Jewish law and tradition give both adoptees and their parents.

Whether or not the birthmother is Jewish establishes two conditions for the child. If the mother is Jewish, the child may legally assume the name of the adoptive family, but retain the birthfamily's original position as Kohen, Levi, or Israel. The adoptee is required to respect and honor the new parents but the laws of mourning apply only to the death of natural parents. The adoptee does not automatically inherit from the adoptive parents unless this is clearly stipulated. On reaching adulthood, the adoptee cannot legally be constrained from rejoining the natural family.⁵

Halacha clearly asserts that non-Jewish children remain non-Jews in spite of being raised and educated as Jews, unless they have been formally converted. There is a misconception that civil adoption constitutes conversion.⁶ If the conversion takes place before the "coming of age"—12 years for the girls and 13 years for boys—the adoptee retains the right to renounce the conversion and to withdraw from the Jewish community. Donin, however, urges that the conversion take place between one and three years before the adoptee can ask too many questions.⁷ Adopted children—Jews or converts—can never assume the adoptive father's status as Kohen or Levite, clearly signifying that such standing passes only through bloodlines.

The dilemma, then, which permeates less Orthodox circles as well, is the man-

⁵ Norman Linzer, "Halachic Implications of Illegitimacy and Adoption for Social Work Practice," *The Jewish Social Work Forum*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (Spring, 1967), p. 17.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

⁷ Hayim Halevy Donin, *To Raise a Jewish Child A Guide for Parents*. New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1977, pp. 126-127.

date to raise the child "as if he were born to you" while mindful of the limitations of the relationship, and not to interfere with the ethnic and religious relationships established through birth. This is in juxtaposition to other converts whose status is much clearer. This aspect of Jewish law is frequently interpreted negatively, but obviously it is intended to acknowledge the inheritance intrinsic in consanguinity, and to declare the loss to the Jewish community, in general, and to the birthfamily and adoptee, in specific, through any attempt to alter such ties. Jewish tradition recognizes that the court cannot create or replace the full equivalent of natural family relations.⁸

Our tradition, then, seeks to give the adoptee the bio-cultural, historical inheritance of the birthfamily as well as the psychological and social inheritance of the nurturing adoptive family. In its present interpretation, however, and with the burden of secretive and adversarial American adoption practices, the adoptee is frequently in limbo. Current adoption policy and practice deny the adoptee access to the birthfamily and limit the adoptee's knowledge with which to answer adolescent identity questions. Although Jewish adopted adolescents have the same developmental tasks in the formation of their identity as their non-Jewish, non-adopted counter-parts, they must also cope with being a Jew and with the issues inherent in adoption.

The Adolescent Backdrop

Adolescence is frequently a bewildering, chaotic, and conflicted period of development for both parents and teens. Adolescence is often accompanied by feelings of isolation, loneliness, and confusion. A sense of urgency, fear, and panic exist.⁹ The crises of

adolescence, however, also provide the opportunity for growth and integration. Blos characterized this phase as a second step in individuation.¹⁰

Adolescence can be divided into three discrete sub-phases. Early adolescence may begin by 12 years of age as youngsters begin to cast off their childhood and enter the dependency versus independence struggle. They suffer from mood swings, boredom, and indecision. They test new behaviors as they attempt to define themselves.

Middle adolescence is a time of strong peer allegiance and involvement in the "adolescent subculture," leading to separation from the family. This shift of identifications occurs roughly between 14 and 16 years. Control is the basic issue between parent and teen. At 16 and 17, risk-taking behaviors may appear as middle adolescents try to prove themselves to be fearless, powerful, and sexy.

Late adolescence is characterized by emancipation from parents; emotionally, if not physically. Sexual identity, sex dreams, and adult roles are important. The tasks of late adolescence include the development of autonomy, competency, and self-esteem as well as an inner stability and identification with the culture and society.¹¹

Families also develop along a continuum with expectable transitional crises and with developmental family tasks. Families with teenage children are seen as being in the "Companionship versus Isolation" stage of development.¹² The adolescent themes of sexuality and separation arouse intense feelings in all family members. The res-

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

¹¹ Louis L. Fine, "What's a Normal Adolescent?" *Clinical Pediatrics*, January 1973, pp. 1-5.

¹² Sonya L. Rhodes, "A Developmental Approach to the Life Cycle of the Family," *Social Casework*, May 1977, pp. 301-311.

olution of major crises for family members depends on their ability to develop companionship both outside and inside the family. At this time, the couple must renew the marriage. Parents' authoritarian stance toward their children must now be modified to incorporate the teens' burgeoning independence. Parents who have not renewed an attachment to each other as a couple may fear impending desolation and invade their children's lives in an attempt to block the process of disengagement.¹³

Adolescence is an especially difficult period for adoptees and their parents.¹⁴ Many of the multiple crises emanate from the core adoption issues which have become pervasive. Missing are the interconnected serial pieces necessary to complete the identity puzzle, including genealogical, genetic, and physical facts about the birthfamily, as well as a shared common experience with the birthparents. Adoptees and their adoptive parents are often conflicted about sexual matters, reflecting the adoptive parents' own unresolved sexual issues; concerns over the "bad seed" legacy and over the presumed social unacceptability of the earlier sexual behavior of the birthparents.

Without recognition of the importance of the birth-family in the unfolding of the adoptee's identity, adolescents express the feeling that they do not have a sense of belonging in their adoptive family. Many of the sources of identity seem external or "borrowed." Young adoptees are subject to losing their sense of identity as they emancipate from the adopted environment. An adolescent attempting to navigate the larger world, must choose among the "external" identifications supplied by

the adoptive family and the fantasized images of the birthfamily.

Because of the lack of role models, of relevant education, and of support for adoptive families in our society, many adoptive parents have been unable to assist their children in successfully completing the previous developmental stages. These parents and adolescents find themselves handicapped in negotiating the leaving process. Adoptive parents may suffer from their own unresolved issues regarding infertility and, therefore, question their entitlement to this youngster. These doubts compel parents to fear the loss of the teen and to become overprotective, guilt-provoking, and clingy. If adolescents openly announce a desire for more information about their origins or if the parents misinterpret their child's behavior as a renunciation, parents may thwart normal adolescent activities.

As illustration, a woman came to Jewish Family Service requesting assistance in dealing with recent traumatic events in her family. Her sixteen-year old adopted daughter had become involved with an older man whom the mother described as a "bum." The more involved the parents became in attempting to stop that relationship, the more adamant the teen became. Ultimately the youngster became pregnant, had an abortion, and was sent by her parents to live on a kibbutz in Israel until she reached majority. "I know it's a genetic issue. She's just like her birthmother," the adoptive mother said.

Identity

Identity, operationally, is described as "the integrative effect of feelings, needs, and roles that give a person a sense of individuation, worth, and purpose that is recognized by oneself and others."¹⁵ Individuals are subject to a drive toward the formation of identity which, al-

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 307.

¹⁴ Arthur Sorosky, Annette Baran, and Reuben Pannor, *The Adoption Triangle*. Anchor Press, 1979, p. 97.

¹⁵ Samuel L. Dixon and Roberta G. Sands, "Identity and the Experience of Crisis," *Social Casework*, April, 1983, p. 226.

though at its peak during adolescence, is present from birth to death. Identity is not a finished product but rather a synthesizing process, a fusion of our many selves. Identity is the projection of our continuous growth. That projection is based primarily on the past, involving both conscious and unconscious material. The self-images cultivated during the childhood stages thus gradually contribute to creating the sense of identity.¹⁶

In order to develop and maintain a sense of self-wholeness, optimally, one needs choices and a sense of security and predictability. Adoption can threaten all of these conditions. Adolescent adoptees have difficulty bringing together the contradictions of their lives. Much of the material available for synthesis is presented in antitheses—stereotypes of bad, uncaring, immature, reckless, poor birthparents versus perfect, selfless, loving, well-to-do, respectable adoptive parents. For many teens there appears to be no acceptable resolution of these extremes, engendering loyalty conflicts. Our society requires a complete renunciation of the adoptee's historical, biological, and cultural past, indicting natural adolescent curiosity as abnormal, or, at least, a display of ingratitude. This material from the past must, therefore, be relegated to the "dark or negative side of identity" and submerged as undesirable or "not me." These rejected parts of the adoptee's identity may prove unruly throughout one's life.¹⁷ These factors exaggerate feelings of being disconnected from the larger society, of not meshing with adoptive families, and of being egotistical. Although adolescence is normally

seen as a period of alienation,¹⁸ when this temporary state is superimposed on the alienation fundamental to adoption, the adolescent experiences feelings of helplessness, rage, and abandonment which may reach pathological proportions.

This lack of information or "identity lacunae"¹⁹ leads to shame, embarrassment, and lowered self-esteem. Adoption makes the boundaries of the self as permeable and fluid as those of an amoeba and as subject to splitting and diffusion.

As Lynd points out, the search for identity is a social as well as an individual problem.²⁰ Adolescent adoptees, unable to regulate their own behavior nor establish themselves in society, fill the ranks of runaways and substance abusers. Never having experienced a sense of unity anywhere, they cannot "fit" into our society. The intrapsychic diffusion they experience splits them both internally and externally.

Jewish Identity

The multifaceted components of Jewish identity are theological, ideological, cultural, sociological, psychological, and geopolitical.²¹ Jewish identity ranges from concrete body images to abstract notions of identification. The development of ethnic identity includes both ancestral and future-oriented identification with the group and a

¹⁶ C. Glenn Cambor, "Adolescent Alienation Syndrome," in Joseph C. Schoolar, ed., *Current Issues in Adolescent Psychiatry*. New York: Brunner, Mazel, 1973.

¹⁷ Sorosky, et al., *op. cit.*, p. 103.

¹⁸ Helen Merrell Lynd, *On Shame and the Search for Identity*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, Inc., 1958, p. 14.

¹⁹ Judith Weinstein Klein, *Jewish Identity and Self-Esteem: Healing Wounds Through Ethnotherapy*. New York: Institute on Pluralism and Group Identity, American Jewish Committee, 1980.

¹⁶ Erik H. Erikson, *Insight and Responsibility*. New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1964, p. 94.

¹⁷ Erik H. Erikson, *Life History and the Historical Moment*. New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1975, p. 20.

feeling that "these are the 'people' of my ancestors."²² When Jews bring this multiplicity of issues to adoption, the complexities snowball. The presence of negative self-images and identity ambivalence in a couple will hamper their capacity as parents to provide adoptees with positive, stable, and continuous messages about being Jewish. As Bubis has noted, today everyone has more freedom, including the freedom to opt out of being Jewish.²³ Many adolescent adoptees, already attempting to deny their own isolation and lowered self-worth, become further confused by Jewish discontent, alienation, and self-hatred. They choose not to identify as Jews. Parents who have neither resolved their infertility conflicts nor been helped to deal with their own issues about being Jewish or about adopting non-Jewish children convey to the adolescent the desirability of not being Jewish. These covert messages are heightened if the youngster does not "look Jewish" and could "pass" in the larger society. The approach/avoidance conflict about "claiming" the child may already be reflected in the lack of either a formal conversion or a formal Jewish education. The parents' metacommunication to the child then is acted out by adolescent adoptees who deny being Jewish, lack a Jewish peer group, date only non-Jews, do not become *Bar or Bat Mitzvah*, refuse to participate in Confirmation, and hold the so-called "Jewish traits" in contempt.²⁴ Clearly, part of the emancipation process and the search for a positive self-image for these youngsters involves distancing

themselves from Jews—an "identity rejection,"²⁵ and a returning to the majority group of their birth. According to *Halachic* principles, of course, this is their right. On a personal level, however, it has disastrous consequences because it leaves the adolescent conflicted and without moorings during a crucial developmental stage, thereby creating more loss and rejection, leading to increased feelings of guilt and rage.

The difficulties seem to arise regardless of the quality of the Jewish affiliation of the family. Even if the parents are affiliated with Jewish institutions when the child is young, families frequently withdraw as they come to feel uncomfortable with the status of the adoptee. Questions regarding the child's background, physical characteristics, or conversion cause the family to disaffiliate.

If the child, indeed, does not possess the attributes which lead the Jewish community to claim the child as their own and vice versa, the bond between Jews and adoptee may never cement. The task of creating an identity out of various identifications is the same but more complicated and more conflictual for minority children than those in the majority.²⁶ The adoptee, not possessing the Jewish characteristics requisite for belonging, may only be cared for as a lost swan, loved and admired, until she can rejoin her own flock. Adoptees are placed in a *Catch-22* position, stigmatized first by being adopted, then by being Jews, and finally, by being a gentile or "stranger" within the Jewish community. The adoptee has, in Goffman's terms, a "spoiled identity."²⁷

²² *Ibid.*, p. 9.

²³ Gerald B. Bubis, "Family Change and Jewish Identity," *Proceedings, 24th Annual Professional Staff Institute of Jewish Welfare Federation and Member Agencies*, Detroit, Michigan, October 26, 1973, p. 3.

²⁴ Developed from Judith Klein's material, *op. cit.*

²⁵ Jerry V. Diller, "Identity Rejection and Reawakening in the Jewish Context," *Journal of Psychology and Judaism*, Vol. 5, (1) Fall, 1980.

²⁶ Klein, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

²⁷ Erving Goffman, *Stigma Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity*. New York: Jason Aronson, 1974.

Summary

In summary, Jewish adolescent adoptees face a myriad of issues as they work to formulate a whole identity. The severity of these difficulties has long been ignored due to both the negative feeling content they evoke and the lack of readily visible solutions. Jewish communal workers, who do not work in direct adoption practice settings, have left the matter to adoption workers. Adoption workers, in turn, understandably preoccupied with finding sufficient numbers of babies to meet the demands of clamoring prospective parents, have ignored the long-term implications of their practices.

Adoption *per se* triggers seven lifelong issues for members of the triad. These issues surface at different developmental stages, but all appear to be present in full force during the adoptee's adolescence. These issues, especially the ones involved in identity formation, are painfully increased by the presence of issues regarding Jewish identity and by Jewish laws and attitudes toward adoption. The lack of resolution of these matters by the individual, the family, the Jewish community and society threatens the Jewish adopted adolescent's development of a healthy, integrated identity.

Implications for Practice

Jewish communal workers, then, must take a pro-active stance and provide services to adoptive families in order to help those families deal with the issues inherent in adoption. These interventions must occur on primary, secondary, and tertiary levels of prevention.²⁸ Jewish adoptive families need education

²⁸ Refer to Linda Katz, "Adoption Counseling as a Preventive Mental Health Specialty," *Child Welfare*, Vol. LIX, No. 3 (March, 1980), pp. 161-167.

about the issues in adoption. This educative (non-judgmental) process should begin at the time of the initial inquiry about the possibilities of adopting. Interventions on the secondary preventive level should concern themselves with stabilizing and nurturing the child, especially older adoptees, in their new families. A family-systems orientation is essential. These services often coincide with the transitions in the family life cycle, such as *Bar* and *Bat Mitzvah* or marriage. Many problems in bonding, conversion, and Jewish identity should be dealt with on this level.

Finally, on the tertiary level, we must continue to make available and advertise our services in the mental health arena. These interventions are corrective in nature, seeking to support healthy ego functioning and offering a relationship in which the adopted person can grow. Frequently, information regarding lost birthfamilies and information about the cause and effect relationship between the individual's presenting problem and the core adoption issues begin the curative process. Also at the tertiary level, we must treat adoptees' families who carry the heavy burdens of guilt, anger, and disappointment.

Much of this work can be accomplished through aggressive Jewish family life education programming. This type of service is vital, given the high number of adoptive placements now occurring in the independent adoption community, outside the purview of agencies. An example of such programming is a four-part series recently sponsored by Jewish Family Service in Orange County, California.²⁹ Each of the four sessions had a different focus. The topics were: "Myths and Issues in Adoption Today," "Talking About Adoption Within the Family" "To Search or Not To Search," and "The

²⁹ Led by the author.

Lifelong Issues in Adoption." The program was geared toward adolescents and their adoptive families. A local synagogue co-sponsored the series.

Jewish agencies which directly provide adoption services need also to offer more education and more post-adoption services. Jewish families need to be encouraged to adopt through

Jewish agencies, so that they can benefit from inclusion in the community and can be permitted to view adoption as part of the Jewish experience. Adoption by Jewish parents in Jewish agencies can foster the family's integration into the Jewish community, thereby strengthening the adoptee, the family, and the community.

Do You Recognize these Parents?

From this *Journal of*
Twenty-Five Years Ago

There was a time when parents came to ask for the placement of their children because they were experiencing physical or emotional illness, marital discord, or economic chaos. Under these pressures families broke down and children had to be placed. Today, however, parents usually come to us presenting a picture of relative adequacy. These families are intact. They include in their number working mothers, housewives, factory workers, small business people, white-collar workers and professional persons. They are a cross-section of our lower and middle-class suburban Jewish community. Their marriages albeit neurotic in interaction, give every indication that they will continue. They have difficulty in the management of their incomes, but are employed and self-supporting.

They ask for help only in dealing with their child, usually a child with severe behavior and adjustment problems. They come chiefly because the child is causing them embarrassment, acute discomfort, unwelcome

feelings of frustration and inadequacy. Significantly, in many instances, these parents indicate that they have felt no problems in the rearing of their children, no dissatisfactions with their growth or development, until the school or community began to exert pressure upon them. Anger then is often divided, projected in part on the child, and in part on the school or the court or other agency which faces them with this failure. They are well defended against examining their own role in the problem of their child. It was easier, in the past, for parents to look, however reluctantly, at such realities as illness, death, divorce, or poverty. It would seem that families of today, relieved of these hazards, somehow manage to stay together. They deal with frustrations and failures and the frustrations of unhappy family relationships by building up massive systems of defenses.

JULIA STARR
June, 1960