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"The Challenge of Judaism to the Adoptee"

by Roseann Michelson

The student has submitted a thesis in which she successfully demonstrates that there are indeed additional challenges in the Jewish identity development of the adopted child, in comparison to those encountered by the Jewish child who is raised by his/her natural parents. As part of this argument she skillfully examines the tasks implicit in the identity development of the child, highlighting those tasks which prove to be especially challenging for the adopted child. A well-executed and well-written thesis, Ms. Michelson has made a significant contribution to the field of Jewish education. While the thesis is educationally sound, it also reflects profound insight and sensitivity in a growing area of importance which requires further exploration. Especially significant is her identification of the important place of religious identity development (replacing ethnic identity development) in the adopted child.

As a result of her efforts, many educators and adoptive parents will be in debt to her for many years to come. As an advisor, I must admit that the student opened new vistas for me, as well. I applaud Ms. Michelson's efforts; I heartily endorse this thesis and recommend its acceptance by the faculty.

Respectfully submitted,

Kerry M. Olitzky

THE CHALLENGE OF JUDAISM TO THE ADOPTEE

ROSEANN P. MICHELSON

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree Master of Arts in Religious Education

Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion
School of Education
New York, New York

1993

Advisor: Dr. Kerry Olitzky

DEDICATION

To my children Brian and Lonni

Through whom

I have come to know

The joys and challenges of

Adoptive and biological

Motherhood.

To my husband and best friend

Allen

For sharing my life

And enriching it

With his encouragement and love.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to acknowledge the assistance of several people whose guidance was invaluable throughout my work on this thesis. My advisor, Dr. Kerry Olitzky, demands of his students the same excellence he demands of himself. I sincerely want to thank him for not permitting me to do anything less than my best and for having the confidence that I could research my chosen topic objectively.

I would also like to thank Dr. Leonard Kravitz for reading my chapters on Jewish law and offering his advice and criticism of the material. His willingness to assist me is greatly appreciated.

To Dr. Joan Spector, I express my thanks for all her help with the psychological portions of this paper. Her wealth of insight into the challenges of adoption, as well as her encouragement throughout this research was invaluable.

I would like to thank the nine adoptees who were willing to discuss with me a very personal part of their lives. Sometimes the sharing was difficult, but they all did it willingly in the hope that their experiences could help others. I am grateful to each and every one of them for all their cooperation.

Finally, to my husband, Allen, for all the hours he spent at the computer preparing this manuscript for printing, I express my deepest appreciation.

This research, which began as a necessary means of fulfilling a requirement, became, for me, a labor of love. I am grateful to all those who made it possible.

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THE CHALLENGE OF ADOPTION AND JEWISH IDENTITY

Introduction

There is a great deal of psychological research on the development of identity[1] but limited research on the development of Jewish identity. Likewise, there are studies which focus on the emotional, social, and psychological adjustment of the adoptee[2] but very minimal research on the development of Jewish identity in the adoptee. This study concentrates on Jewish identity formation in the adopted adolescent who is not a born Jew and who, because of factors related to adoption which impact on the developmental tasks, faces additional challenges which affect self-perception and identity.

Adoption

Adoption directly affects approximately one out of every fifty people in the United States. In 1986 there were a total of 104,088 adoptions of which 51,152 were non-relative adoptions.[3] Because adoption is not uncommon and directly or indirectly touches many people each year, it merits serious study in order to help parents, teachers, and adoptees deal

with its inherent risks.

There are two different categories of adoption: relative and non-relative. In relative adoptions, some member of the extended family assumes the role of parent. Or in the case of a second marriage, the new husband or wife may adopt the child of the first marriage. Unlike relative adoption, in non-relative adoption, which is the focus of this study, there are no blood ties between parent and child. This lack of consanguinity makes adoptive families unique and requires special adjustments and understanding on the part of all family members.

Adoption and Jewish Identity

Among Jews, adoption has always been an acceptable alternative way to build a family. Silverstein, who studied the relationship between adoption and Judaism, tells us that "Jews are over-represented in the large number of adopters."[4] Michael Gold, who has also studied and written about Judaism and adoption, says that Jews:

> tend to delay childbearing longer than the general population, particularly as more Jewish women pursue professional careers. The longer one waits to try to conceive, the greater the rate of infertility.[5]

The number of Jewish infants available for adoption has diminished as the number of prospective Jewish adoptive parents has increased. For this reason, as well as for

reasons pertaining to Jewish law which will be fully examined in the next chapter, many Jews today have chosen to adopt non-Jewish infants. The relationship between adoption and Jewish identity formation has not been thoroughly examined, but there is evidence that it may be problematic. For example, in her book, How It Feels to be Adopted, Jill Krementz records the following statement made by thirteen year old Philip:

> So far, the only real problem I have with being adopted relates to my being part of a Jewish family. Whenever I go to temple or when we celebrate the Sabbath on Friday night, I often sense that there's a Hebrew loyalty that my relatives have that I don't. Even though people tell me that my natural parents were Jewish, in my heart I'm not all that certain. I mean, how do I know that they were both really Jewish?[6]

Philip reveals to us that despite the fact that Judaism seems to be important in his family, he has doubts about his own Jewish identity. Philip is a thoughtful adolescent who seems to express serious concerns about his Jewishness.

Another example is provided by Deborah Silverstein, a psychologist who has studied the relationship between adoption, adolescence and Judaism. She describes the case of a family who came to her for help because "their 13 year old adopted daughter . . . was refusing to celebrate her bat mitzvah, stating 'I don't feel Jewish.'"[7] This teenager was articulating the confusion she felt regarding her Jewish identity.

Some research on Jewish identity, such as the work of the

psychologist Judith Klein, who has experimented with ways of raising Jewish self-esteem, suggests that children of religious or ethnic minorities have a more difficult task in developing a positive self-image.[8] One implication which may be drawn from Klein's research is that the adopted child, who is a member of two minority groups, and whose self-image may be damaged due to factors relating to adoption, will likely face more obstacles in forming a positive Jewish identity.

Adopted Adolescents and Judaism

Both of the aforementioned examples involve adopted adolescents. Research indicates that for the adoptee the teenage years can be particularly difficult because three significant factors in the youngster's life converge. Silverstein tells us that

> 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 bio-psychosocial striving toward the development of a whole identity.[9]

Adolescence is a difficult period for most youngsters. For the adoptee, the problems may be even more pronounced. Being a member of a minority group such as Judaism may become a concern for the adopted adolescent. As a result, additional difficulties may ensue.

The Problem and the Design of this Study

The concern of this study is Jewish identity formation in the adopted child who, because of the realities of the adoption process, confronts the process of maturation with obstacles beyond those of the normative growth process. Adoption can interfere with identity formation because the adopted child may feel "different," perhaps insecure or uneasy about his biological origins. The child is aware of becoming part of a family in an atypical way and during adolescence comes to understand the full implications of adoption. The adoptee may imagine, question, or actually know that his birth-parents were not Jewish. The adopted child may perceive that he does not "look" Jewish and often hears this confirmed by others. The feelings of being "different" may extend to all areas of life. Therefore, identity development, and specifically Jewish identity development, may be more difficult for an adoptee.

The inter-relationship between adoption, and the development of Jewish identity in the adolescent is the focus of this study. In order to gain an understanding of the complex issues involved, the succeeding chapters will explore how Jewish law views adoption; how identity develops; and, finally, how Jewish identity develops. Once the theoretical background is established, the results of interviews with adoptees, all of whom had non-Jewish birth-mothers and were

raised as Jews, will be evaluated. The implications of this study for Jewish supplementary school education will be considered in the final chapter.

ENDNOTES

1. The research of Erikson and Piaget illustrate this point. Erik H. Erikson, Identity Youth and Crisis (New York: W. W. Norton & Co.,1968) and Jean Piaget, On the Development of Memory and Identity Vol. 2 (Worcester: Clark University Press, 1968).

2. A sample of research in this area includes work by the following: David Kirk, Shared Fate. A Theory and Method of Adoptive Relationships (Portangelos, Washington: Ben Simon Publications, 1984); Joseph Ansfield, The Adopted Child (Springfield, Ill: Charles C. Thomas, 1971); and Joan Spector, Adoptive Status and Level of Thinking About Adoption in 5-13 Year Old Children, (Ph.D. diss., Adelphi University, 1986), 93-99.

3. U.S. Bureau of the Census, Statistical Abstract of the United States: 1991 , 111th ed., (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1991), 376.

4. Deborah Silverstein, "Identity Issues in the Jewish Adopted Adolescent" Journal of Jewish Communal Service 61, no. 4 (Summer 1985): 321.

5. Michael Gold, Adoption and the Jewish Couple (New York: United Synagogue of America, 1987), 10.

6. Jill Krementz, How It Feels to be Adopted (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1982), 67.

7. Silverstein, "Identity Issues in the Jewish Adopted Adolescent," 322.

8. Judith Weinstein Klein, Jewish Identity and Self-Esteem (New York: The American Jewish Committee, 1989), 53.

9. Silverstein, "Identity Issues in the Jewish Adopted Adolescent," 321.

CHAPTER TWO

ADOPTION AND JEWISH LAW

Introduction

In halakhah, or traditional Jewish law, there are no legal procedures for adoption, but fosterage, or de facto adoption, has existed in Judaism since biblical times. The purpose of halakhah was to protect the essence of Torah. Halakhah became the means by which the rabbis adapted and interpreted the spirit of Torah so that its laws could be observed. One of the reasons for the apparent omission of any reference to adoption in a law code which covers every imaginable aspect of daily life could have been the rabbinic concern for Jewish survival. Another reason may have been xenophobia. Since Biblical Judaism stressed the importance of not imitating the lifestyles of alien cultures, the idea of raising a child born in another culture may have been totally anathema. In addition, perhaps as an attempt to preserve the status quo, the importance of bloodlines was stressed in Jewish law. This emphasis remains evident today and the provisions of halakhah which influence modern adoption by Jews will be considered.

The Jewish Attitude Toward De Facto Adoption

The Jewish attitude toward adoption is overwhelmingly positive. The Babylonian Talmud (Sanhedrin 19b) illustrates this point by discussing a number of cases in which children are borne or begotten by one individual but raised by another. None of these cases involved a legal adoption. Yet in every example the person who raised the children is considered to be their parent.

The Bible tells us that Michal, wife of David and "daughter of Saul had no children" (II Samuel 8:23). In 21:8 of the same book of the Bible, the text refers to "the five sons that Michal daughter of Saul bore to Adriel." The Babylonian Talmud clarifies this discrepancy and provides other similar examples:

> Now as R. Joshua b. Korha, surely it is written, And the five sons of Michal the daughter of Saul whom she bore to Adriel? R. Joshua [b. Korha] answers thee: Was it then Michal who bore them? Surely it was rather Merab who bore them! But Merab bore and Michal brought them up; therefore they were called by her name. This teaches thee that whoever brings up an orphan in his home, Scripture ascribes it to him as though he had begotten him.
>
> R. Hanina says this is derived from the following: "And the women her neighbors, gave it a name, saying, There is a son born to Naomi" [Ruth 4:17]. Was it then Naomi who bore him? Surely it was Ruth who bore him! But Ruth bore and Naomi brought him up; hence he was called after her [Naomi's] name.

> R. Johanan says it is derived from the following: "And his wife Yehudiah [another name for Batya, the daughter of Pharaoh, mentioned at the end of the verse] gave birth to Yered the father of Gedor, Heber the father of Soco, and Yekutial the father of Zanoah [various names for Moses, I Chron.4: 18] Was it Batya who bore him? Surely Yocheved bore him. Rather Yocheved bore him and Batya raised him,, therefore he is called by her name.
>
> R. Eleazar says: It is inferred from the following: "Thou hast with thine arm redeemed thy people, the sons of Jacob and Joseph, Selah" [Ps. 77:16]. Did then Joseph beget them; surely it was rather Jacob? But Jacob begot and Joseph sustained them; therefore they are called by his name.
>
> R. Samuel b. Nahmani said in R. Jonathan's name: He who teaches the son of his neighbor the Torah, Scripture ascribes it to him as if he had begotten him, as it says, "Now these are the generations of Aaron and Moses" [Num. 3:1] whilst further on it is written, "These are the names of the sons of Aaron" [Num. 3:2] thus teaching thee that Aaron begot and Moses taught them; hence they are called by his name.[1]

All of the rabbis mentioned above acknowledged that in Jewish tradition the person who both raised and sustained a child was considered its parent. According to Rabbis Korha, Hanina, Johanan, and Eleazar, biology alone did not entitle one to be called "mother" or "father." These verses reflect the idea that in classic Judaism it is the day to day loving and nurturing of a child which truly made one a parent.

However, as the final passage indicates, a male child required more than love and the satisfaction of basic

requirements. He also required education in Torah. A father's Talmudic obligation was not only to teach his son Torah, but to teach his son a trade, and to teach his son personal survival skills.[2] Therefore, as stated above by Rabbi Samuel b. Nahmani, the person who taught the child Torah, the person who brought to the child skills, ideas, mitzvot, and stories of Judaism was considered the child's father.[3]

The Midrash Rabbah, which is a collection of rabbinic thought and commentary on the Pentateuch comprised of both halakhic, or legal material, and aggadic, or rabbinic ideas, comments, or legends, also lends credence to the Jewish view of adoption, namely that nurturing and care rather than mere biology determine who is to be considered the true parent. The Midrash Rabbah quotes a passage from Isaiah and Lamentations in which Israel is compared to an orphan who calls God, its protector and guardian, "father." The excerpt states:

> Similarly, the orphan is Israel, as it says 'We are become orphans and fatherless' [Lam. 5:3]. The good and faithful guardian is the Holy One, blessed be He, whom Israel began to call 'our father' as it says, 'But now, O Lord, Thou art our father' [Isa. 54:7]. God said, 'You have ignored your own father and now call me your father'. . . Lord of the Universe! He who brings up children is called the father, not he who gives birth.[4]

The material quoted above substantiates the fact that informal adoptions have existed in Judaism since biblical

times, and that Judaism recognized that whoever reared a child had the right to be called "mother" or "father." The quotes above are an example of aggadic Midrash, and while they "are not halakhic [legal] statements, . . . they indicate a climate of opinion which definitely favored adoption."[5] Aggadah is not considered binding and, despite the fact that aggadah is enlightening and informative, it is considered less important than halakhah. Consequently, these midrashic passages provide us with rabbinic opinion on informal adoption, but they lack the sanction of Jewish law.

Rabbi Michael Gold, himself the father of two adopted children, reiterates from a contemporary perspective the classic Jewish view of adoption:

> Judaism has a long history of adoption de facto. Since biblical times, Jewish couples have taken an orphan into their homes, raised and sustained that child, and called that child by their name. Judaism sees such an adoption as a great mitzvah.[6]

It seems ironic that Judaism, which has been shown to favor the idea of adoption, and has a sophisticated law code, fails to provide any legal means for adopting! This issue will be considered in the next section of this chapter.

The Absence of Adoption In Halakhah

The Bible and the Talmud place great emphasis on blood lines. The book of Genesis (4:1) traces man's ancestry from

Adam to Noah, and then from Noah's son, Shem, to Abram (Gen. 11:10-26). The book of Numbers begins with God telling Moses "to take a census of the whole Israelite community by the clans of its ancestral houses, listing the names, every male, head by head" (Numbers 1:2). Gunther Plaut, a biblical scholar and commentator, clarifies this passage as follows:

> A person's descent was traced through his or her father and back through the father's father [2]. This lineage was called ancestral house'; it was part of a larger family (mishpachah) and in turn part of a tribe (mateh).[7]

The first nine chapters of First Chronicles contain genealogies. Chronicles begins by again tracing the line from Adam to Noah. In I Chronicles, chapter two, the line of Israel's son Judah is followed while chapter three opens with the genealogy of David's descendants. These are only a few example of the biblical concern with establishing the ancestry of our forefathers.

The Talmud was even more concerned than the Bible about consanguinity.[8] This position may have resulted from the priests' desire to maintain the purity of their inherited position, as well as their political power. The importance of blood lines in the Talmud is illustrated by the following verse which states that after the Exile "ten genealogical classes went up from Babylon: Priests, Levites, Israelites, Halalim, Proselytes, Freedmen, Mamzerim, Netinim, Shetuki and Foundlings."[9]

Traditional Jewish law stresses the importance of one's

biological descent which cannot be changed by any legal procedures. A person's genetic heritage is given at birth and is immutable. According to Michael Gold:

> Halakhah places great importance on a child's biological identity and status. Such identity is permanent and cannot be changed by a legal procedure such as adoption. It is birth that gives a child identity as a Jew or gentile and as a Kohen, Levi, or Yisrael. This identity does not change because of a judicial decree. Even after adoption, the child would maintain his or her relationship with the biological parents. Technically the child would inherit from the biological parents. Similarly, biological siblings would be forbidden from marrying one another by the laws of incest. For these reasons, in Jewish law adoption was never a judicial procedure.[10]

Apotropos

Despite the fact that adoption is unknown in halakhah, there is legislation in the Talmud which permits the court to appoint guardians for minor children. One of the legal justifications which gives this right to the court is found in the Talmud which states that "one may act for a person in his absence to his advantage." (Ketuvim 11a) The selection of a guardian whose sole function is to act in the best interest of a minor ward is considered to be advantageous. The guardian, or apotropos, carries out many of the functions of an adoptive or biological parent by being responsible for the care, maintenance, upbringing, and education of the child. The

guardian is also responsible for managing the child's inheritance, trying to keep the capital intact while using only the dividends to offset the child's living costs. The guardian is required to make all decisions keeping in mind the best interests of the ward and is not entitled to any salary for performing this mitzvah. Jewish law, through the creation of the apotropos, referred to as the "adopter" below, has set up a legal system very similar to adoption since the apotropos undertakes:

> To be accountable to the child and, at his own expense and without any right of recourse, would assume all such financial obligations as are imposed by law on natural parents vis-a-vis their children. Thus, the child is for all practical purposes placed in the same position toward his adopters [apotropos] as he would otherwise be toward his natural parents, since all matters of education, maintenance, upbringing, and financial administration are taken care of. [11]

However, there are important differences between an adoptive parent and an apotropos. Under halakhah the child would still inherit from the biological parents, if known, and not from the apotropos unless specific provisions were made by the latter. The Talmudic verse, "Scripture looks upon one who brings up an orphan as if he had begotten him" [12] is cited as justification for permitting the ward to inherit from the apotropos.

The child's place of domicile was determined by the apotropos and, unlike in an adoptive family, the child might not live with the guardian. For example, if there was a

relative, who was unable to serve as apotropos, the child might be best served by residing with a familiar relative rather than a stranger appointed as apotropos. The most significant difference between an apotropos and a parent was, unlike parenting, the guardianship automatically ended when the child reached maturity. Technically speaking, parental responsibilities also end with the advent of maturity, however, in the reality of the modern world, this is frequently not what actually happens.

In summary, the apotropos performed many of the same functions as an adoptive parent, but the child retained his or her biological identity. In halakhah, the "child's biological status can never be broken, nor can artificial ties of parenthood be created by an act of the court."[13]

Halakhah And The Adoption Of A Jewish Infant

Halakhah, unlike biblical law, recognizes matrilineal descent and accepts as fully Jewish any child born of a Jewish mother regardless of the status or religion of the father. In order for traditional Jews to pursue the adoption of an infant born of a Jewish mother it would be necessary to determine that the child was not a mamzer, the offspring of an incestuous or adulterous relationship as defined in Leviticus, chapter 18. The term "mamzer" is much more limited in meaning than the broader English term "bastard," which refers to any

child born out of wedlock. According to Halakhah a mamzer is not allowed full participation in community life because of a passage in Deuteronomy which states that:

> No one misbegotten shall be admitted into the congregation of the Lord; none of his descendants, even in the tenth generation, shall be admitted into the congregation of the Lord. [14]

The meaning of this verse, which stresses once again the importance of blood lines in Judaism, is simply that a person who is "misbegotten," (translated a "mamzer" in Hebrew) is not allowed to marry a Jew. Maimonides elaborates on this point:

> Who is accounted a bastard, as designated in the Torah? The offspring by any of the forbidden unions, except by a menstruant, whose child is considered impaired, but not a bastard. If, however, a man has intercourse with a woman of any of the other forbidden unions, whether by force or by consent, whether willfully or by error, the child born of that union is regarded as a bastard, and both male and female are eternally forbidden to marry into Israel, as it is said,'even to the tenth generation'(Deuteronomy, 23:3), that is, forever.[15]

Halakhah defines two types of mamzers: the shetuki or "one who knows his mother but does not know his father;" and the asufi, who "is one picked up from the streets and knows neither his father nor his mother."[16]

In modern times, it is not adoption of these Jewish infants, that is, per se, the issue, rather it is their eventual marriage within the Jewish community that is problematic. Regulations concerning marriage between those of

legitimate Jewish birth and those of unknown or doubtful origin are discussed extensively in the Talmud:

> All who are forbidden to enter into the assembly may intermarry with each other; R. Judah forbids it. R. Eleazar said: Certain [unfits] are permitted [to intermarry] with certain [unfits]. Certain [unfits] with doubtful [unfits], doubtful with certain, or doubtful with doubtful, are forbidden. Now these are the doubtful: shethuki, foundlings, and Cutheans.[17]

The question of marriage between persons of different classes is also discussed in the Talmud by Rabbi Eleazar who said:

> Persons of confirmed illegitimacy may [intermarry] with others of confirmed illegitimacy, but those of confirmed illegitimacy may not intermarry with those of doubtful illegitimacy; nor those of doubtful, with those of confirmed illegitimacy; nor those of doubtful, with others of doubtful illegitimacy. And the following are of doubtful legitimacy: The shethuki, the asufi and the Samaritan.'[18]

Maimonides states that "the child retains the status of the impaired parent."[19] Therefore if two assured mamzerim marry, there is no change in the status of their offspring. However, if a child is declared a doubtful mamzer the possibility that the child is a mamzer exists, and if such a child were permitted to marry an assured mamzer the child of such a union would be declared an assured mamzer. Those Jews who adhere strictly to halakhah may choose to avoid adopting Jewish children of doubtful origin, but mamzerut is not a concern for the majority of liberal Jews.

Halakhah tries very hard to avoid labeling children as mamzerim. If the mother is married, the presumption is that the husband is the father and that the child is legitimate and Jewish (Sotah 27a). The Talmud, as well as many of the codes, (cf. Shulhan Aruch, Even Ha-ezer, 4:31;32, Yad, Hilchot Bi-a XV.30,31) believe the word of the unmarried mother if she claims that the child's father was not forbidden to her by the laws of incest or adultery.[20] If a mother is unwilling or unable to reveal her child's father, the Talmud considered the child only a doubtful mamzer because the overwhelming majority of men would have been fit to father this child:

> Raba said: By Biblical law a shethuki is considered fit. What is the reason? The majority are fit for her [sc. the mother], while only a minority are unfit for her. . . . The Torah said, 'A mamzer shall not enter': only a certain mamzer may not enter, but a doubtful mamzer may enter; only into a certain assembly may he not enter, but he may enter into a doubtful assembly. Then what is the reason that they [the Rabbis] ruled that a shethuki is unfit? . . . [the reason is:] a higher standard was set up in respect to genealogy.[21]

Another example of how lenient halakhah tried to be in order to avoid the stigma of mamzer is illustrated by Maimonides who states that:

> If an unmarried woman becomes pregnant by way of adultery, she should be asked, 'What is this expected child,' or 'This newborn child?' If she says, 'It is a legitimate child, for I had intercourse with an Israelite,' she is to be believed, and the child is to be considered legitimate, even if the majority of the inhabitants of the city

> in which she had committed adultery are such as she could not lawfully marry.[22]

Cases of asufi, an abandoned Jewish child, were and are very rare. However, when they do occur Jewish law tries to find a legal means to avoid labeling these foundlings as mamzerim. If the rabbis found any evidence that the abandoned child had been cared for or wanted, it was presumed that the child was not from a forbidden union. The Talmud tells us that:

> If he [the foundling] is found circumcised, [73b] he is not [forbidden] on account of [the law of] a foundling. If his limbs are set, he is not [forbidden] as a foundling. If he has been massaged with oil, fully powdered, has beads hung on him, wears a tablet[with an inscription] or an amulet, he is not considered a foundling. If he is suspended on a palm tree, if a wild beast can reach him, he is [forbidden] as a foundling; if not, he is not considered a foundling. [If found in] a synagogue near a town where many congregate, it is not a foundling; otherwise it is.[23]

Maimonides reiterates much of the above and summarizes the legal reluctance to label an infant an asufi by indicating that if any "precautions had been taken that he should not die, he is presumed to be legitimate."[24] In reality, with all the interpretations and clarifications of Jewish law many infants avoided the unfortunate categories of asufi or shetuki.

Today the question of mamzerut may present problems for Orthodox Jews, but Conservative and Reform Jews would not, in general, consider this an issue. On the other hand, the

adoption and conversion of a gentile child makes him or her Jewish and totally acceptable to all Jews.[25] Consequently, since there are no halakhic problems, some Jews prefer to adopt gentile rather than Jewish infants. Others may feel that adopting a gentile infant creates an additional difference between the parents and the adoptee and, despite conversion, may add to the challenges that both already face.

Infant Conversion

According to halakhah a gentile child must be converted in order to be considered a Jew. The conversion ritual for a male consists of two parts: the Brit Milah, or circumcision, which normally is held on the eighth day of life, and the Tevilah, or immersion. If the child has already been circumcised then a drop of blood can be taken from the skin of the glans penis before the infant is given his Hebrew name. A female convert undergoes Tevilah and is then given her Hebrew name. The Tevilah ceremony consists of an adult holding and completely immersing the child in a mikveh, or ritual bath, in the presence of three rabbis who comprise a bet din, or Jewish court. Infant Tevilah should be done only after the adoption is finalized but before the child is old enough to be frightened.

The Talmud allows infant conversions based upon the assumption that it is permissible to do something good for a

person without his knowledge. The Talmud discusses this as follows:

> R. Huna said: A minor proselyte is immersed by the direction of the court. What does he let us know: That it is an advantage to him and one may act for a person in his absence to his advantage? [Surely] we have learned [this already]; One may act for a person in his absence to his advantage, but one cannot act for a person in his absence to his disadvantage![26]

Maimonides also comments on the acceptability of converting minors by saying that "A proselyte who is a minor may be immersed by sanction of the court, since this involves the bestowal of a privilege upon him."[27]

Halakhah provided laws concerning the conversion of minors that are still followed by traditional Jews. Reform Judaism, on the other hand, recommends circumcision,[28] but a halakhic conversion of an adopted gentile child is not mandatory:

> The naming of such a child should occur in the same manner as with any other child. . . . In most Reform congregations this would be considered sufficient ritual conversion for girls and also for a large number of boys. This act, along with Jewish education would bring the child into the covenant of Judaism in the same manner as any natural child.[29]

Rabbinic authorities agree that an infant who is converted to Judaism has the right to annul this conversion upon reaching the age of understanding, which is twelve for a girl and thirteen for a boy. In the Talmud, Rabbi Joseph

says, "When he reaches the age of majority, he can protest . . . if he reaches the age of majority plus one hour, if he has not protested he can no longer do so."[30]

Today, according to Michael Gold, there is no consensus as to what constitutes protesting such a conversion.

> Some say that the child must reconvene a bet din and formally renounce the conversion. Others say that it is sufficient simply to stop living as a Jew.[31]

Reform opinion agrees with Rabbi Gold:

> In earlier days, a formal process of rejection was required because of the rigidity of Jewish-Gentile relationships. Nowadays, no such rejection mechanism is necessary, because belonging to the Jewish people and faith are essentially voluntary.[32]

While the Talmud considers the conversion of minors complete and irrevocable if no protest occurs immediately after the child reaches his or her majority, Reform opinion indicates that "theoretically, the child could reject Judaism upon becoming an adult, but that matter is moot for us, and the conversion matures along with the child and becomes irrevocable."[33]

The procedures leading to conversion are not the same for infants as they are for adult proselytes. In the case of the adult, Jewish study precedes the rites of conversion. For an infant the rites of conversion precede the study of Judaism. The adult must totally accept Judaism prior to conversion. On the other hand, the child retains the right to reject Judaism

and annul conversion after study and upon attaining maturity.

Two other important issues stem from the conversion of minors. In the first place it seems apparent that Judaism expects honesty

and openness regarding adoption, since a child cannot reject his or her conversion, if the facts are unknown. The Talmud, by giving the child the right to annul conversion at maturity thereby obligates the adoptive parents to provide the child with the facts of his birth.

The second point to be considered regarding the conversion of minors is that the development of positive Jewish identity in these children is crucial. The agreement on this issue among eminent rabbis is illustrated in the following passages beginning with the ideas of one Conservative rabbi, Michael Gold:

> Acts of Jewish identity at the age of majority serve to reaffirm the conversion. The validity of the entire conversion is contingent upon assuring a positive Jewish identity upon reaching Bar/Bat Mitzvah.[34]

> .... It is particularly important to give an adopted child a strong Jewish education and positive feeling about being Jewish. It the child feels good about being Jewish, he or she will reaffirm it upon reaching the age of majority. . . .The bar or bat mitzvah of the adopted child would be such a reaffirmation.[35]

Like Michael Gold, Walter Jacob, a Reform rabbi, also affirms the importance of Jewish education for the adopted child. Both rabbis express the thought that an excellent

Jewish education is vital for the development of a positive Jewish identity in the adoptee. Walter Jacob expresses a Reform point of view on this issue as follows:

> Jewish scholars agree that the religious education of the adopted child is crucial since it serves to reinforce the child's developing sense of Jewish identity: The Jewishness of the child matures along with the child himself. . . . This places a special duty upon adoptive parents to see to it that an adopted child receives an adequate Jewish education so that the child's sense of being Jewish would not ever come into question.[36]

These passages illustrate the fact that adoptive parents have a great obligation to provide a good Jewish education for their children. In order for the process of conversion to be concluded and in order that the child develop a positive Jewish identity and a sense of self-esteem and belonging, a good Jewish up-bringing of these children is vital.

Conclusion

Adoption, whether de facto or mandated by a court of law, remains a viable way of building Jewish families. While there are halakhic obstacles to the adoption of Jewish infants, the adoption and conversion of gentile children is a completely acceptable alternative. Once the adoption has occurred and a new family has been forged, many issues still remain. Giving a child a sense of really belonging to his adoptive family is a lifelong task. Helping a child develop positive feelings

about being Jewish, when it is a faith into which he was not born, is another major challenge. It is imperative that adoptive parents provide an excellent meaningful Jewish education for their children. If positive Jewish identity is to be fostered, it is particularly vital for the adoptee to understand that being Jewish is an important part of his or her family's life. Some of the factors that may help to contribute to the positive growth of Jewish identity in the adopted gentile child will be examined in a subsequent chapter of this study.

ENDNOTES

1. B. Talmud, Sanhedrin 19b.

2. B. Talmud, Kiddushin 29a-30a. The necessity of having a father teach his child Torah and some occupation is understandable. The third paternal requirement, literally stated is to teach a child to swim, which has been interpreted to mean that it is also a parent's duty to teach his child the practical survival skills he will require in life.

3. It is interesting to note that the Talmud only details examples of the "adoption" of male children. In other Talmudic passages, to be discussed later, the neutral terms "orphan," "minor," or "foundling" are used, and reference is made to females. The only biblical instance involving the "adoption" of a female is found in the book of Esther:

> And he [Mordecai] brought up Hadassah, that is Esther, his uncle's daughter; for she had neither father nor mother, and the maid was fair and beautiful; whom Mordecai, when her father and mother were dead, took for his own daughter (Esther 2:7).

4. Exodus Rabbah 46:5.

5. Walter Jacob, ed., American Reform Responsa (New York: Central Conference of American Rabbis, 1983), 204.

6. Michael Gold, And Hannah Wept: Infertility, Adoption, and the Jewish Couple (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1988), 157.

7. W. Gunther Plaut, ed., The Torah: A Modern Commentary (New York: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1981), 1028.

8. Michael Gold in his article, "Adoption: A New Problem For Jewish Law," Judaism, 36, (Fall 1987) presents evidence that in both the Bible and Talmud blood lines were sometimes ignored. He offers the following examples, the first of which refers to the census with which the Book of Numbers begins:

> . . . many people in that Biblical census were not connected to a tribe, at least by blood. The Bible describes a mixed multitude who left Egypt with the Israelites (Exodus 12:38).
>
> Perhaps the most dramatic example of the Bible's lack of concern with bloodlines is in the Book of Ruth. The Torah says that no Moabite shall be admitted into the

> Congregation of the Lord (Deuteronomy 23:4). Yet, Ruth, a Moabite woman, not only becomes part of the people of Israel, she is the great-grandmother of King David. The Talmud seeking to resolve this contradiction says that only a male Moabite cannot enter the Congregation: a female may become a proselyte (Yebamot 77a).

The story of King Agrippa, who ruled during the first century C.E., lends further credence to the idea that blood lines were sometimes ignored. King Agrippa, who was not an Israelite, read publicly a passage from the Torah concerning kingship and the incident was described as follows:

> King Agrippa stood when he received it and read it and the Sages praised him for this. When he reached the words, "Thou mayest not put a foreigner over thee," his eyes streamed with tears. They said to him, "Fear not, Agrippa, you are our brother, you are our brother, your are our brother" (Sotah 7:8).

Gold claims that:

This story of Agrippa indicates the attitude of the rabbis towards bloodlines. In the Jewish community, the mantle of religious leadership was passed from the hereditary priesthood to scholars. . . . Torah learning, which was open to everybody in the community takes precedence over leadership by heredity.

9. B. Talmud, Kiddushin 69a.

10. Gold, And Hannah Wept, 157.

11. Menachem Elon, ed., "Adoption," The Principles of Jewish Law (Jerusalem: Keter Publishing House Jerusalem Ltd., 1974), 440.

12. B. Talmud, Sanhedrin 19b.

13. Gold, And Hannah Wept, 160.

14. Deuteuteronomy 23:3.

15. Moses Maimonides, The Code of Maimonides: Book Five: The Book of Holiness, trans. Louis I. Rabinowitz and Philip Grossman (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1965), 97.

16. B. Talmud, Kiddushin 69a.

17. B. Talmud, Kiddushin 74a.

18. B. Talmud, Yebamot 37a.

19. Rabinowitz and Grossman, The Code of Maimonides, 97.

20. B. Talmud, Kiddushin 73b.

21. B. Talmud, Kiddushin 73a.

22. Rabinowitz and Grossman, The Code of Maimonides, 99.

23. B. Talmud, Kiddushin 73b.

24. Rabinowitz and Grossman, The Code of Maimonides, 104.

25. The patrilineal descent decision may impact upon the issue of infant conversion. If an infant adopted by a Jewish family has a Jewish birth-father and a non-Jewish birth-mother would any type of conversion be necessary for this child to be considered a Jew by the Reform Movement? Such issues may need future consideration.

26. B. Talmud, Ketubot 11a.

27. Rabinowitz and Grossman, The Code of Maimonides, 87-88.

28. The Central Conference of American Rabbis has the power to vote on non-binding recommendations and resolutions which, despite a frequent lack of unanimity, may reflect the majority of opinion within the Reform rabbinate. However, because of the Reform principle of autonomy which gives each Jew the right to make an educated choice as to which rituals and practices to observe; it is currently not possible to require circumcision or any other ritual.

29. Jacob, American Reform Responsa, 206-207.

30. B. Talmud, Ketubot 11a.

31. Gold, And Hannah Wept, 166.

32. Jacob, American Reform Responsa, 205.

33. Ibid., 205-206.

34. Michael Gold, Adoption and the Jewish Couple (New York: United Synagogue of America, 1987), 29.

35. Gold, And Hannah Wept, 167.

36. Jacob, American Reform Responsa, 206.

CHAPTER THREE

ERIK ERIKSON'S DEVELOPMENTAL THEORY

Introduction

Identity is perception of the self in the world. Identity consists of how we view ourselves, how others view us, and how we think others view us. Identity is self-perception in the world. It is how we see ourselves in relation to other people such as family, friends, peers, co-workers, or those having authority over us. Identity is how we perceive ourselves in conjunction with institutions such as school, as well as attitudes about ourselves stemming from our ethnic background including race, religion and country of origin.

Identity formation presents additional challenges for the adopted child who must come to terms with the unique realities of adoption and integrate them, as well as other developmental factors, into a cohesive identity. In order to perceive the inter-relationship between adoption and Jewish identity, one must first understand both identity construction in general, and the development of Jewish identity in particular. This chapter explores Erik Erikson's recognized and influential theory of identity formation. His theory provides insights which must be understood before proceeding in subsequent

chapters to the more specialized area of Jewish identity development in the adoptee.

Erik Erikson's Theory Of Identity Development

Erik Erikson is a psychoanalyst whose psychosocial theory of human development strongly influenced the social sciences. Erikson states that everyone goes through Eight Stages of identity formation: Basic Trust versus Mistrust; Autonomy versus Shame and Doubt; Initiative versus Guilt; Industry versus Inferiority; Identity versus Role Confusion; Intimacy versus Isolation; Generativity versus Stagnation; and Ego Identity versus Despair.

According to Erikson, stages include ever-expanding psychological urges which may be satisfied, frustrated, or sublimated. In each stage the individual grows socially by responding to a greater number and variety of people, and likewise, biological maturation makes the individual ready for new learning. In each stage one encounters and resolves a crisis or turning point and experiences a "sense of estrangement awakened along with the awareness of new dependencies and familiarities."[1] Every stage contains the possibility for gaining a new identity strength. Healthy growth occurs when a person achieves a favorable balance of the positive quality over the negative quality. Erikson states that "each successive stage and crisis has a special

relation to one of the basic institutionalized endeavors of man for the simple reason that the human life cycle and human institutions have evolved together."[2]

Erikson stresses the importance of environment upon human development. He feels that identity formation is related to both personal maturation and communal change. Furthermore, every trait which characterizes a stage exists in some elemental form before and after it becomes the focus of development. All characteristics are inter-related, interdependent, and must be sequential for healthy growth. The process of identity development begins when there is mutual recognition between the mother and her child. The infant learns to associate "mother" with the satisfaction of urgent physical and emotional needs. A mother's caring and love for her baby can convey to the newborn child a sense of self-worth.

The process of identity development continues throughout life as long as a person possesses the capacity to think, reason, and sense. When a person loses the ability to grow mentally due to disease or dysfunction, only then does identity formation cease. Only the first six stages of Erikson's schema are relevant for the purposes of this thesis. Since the focus of this study is the development of Jewish identity in the adopted adolescent our primary concern with Erikson's theory ends with the sixth stage of development which is Intimacy versus Isolation. Therefore, only stages

one through six will be explored in depth.

Stage Number ONE -- Trust Versus Mistrust

In Erikson's theory, Trust versus Mistrust constitutes the first crucial step in identity development and occurs during the first 12 to 14 months of life. Erikson believes that a healthy infant ego must gain a favorable balance of trust over mistrust. Trust as defined by Erikson means that the infant gradually develops confidence that his basic bodily needs will be met, and that his bodily organs will be able to cope with his urges. Erikson says that consistency, continuity, and ease of care foster trust. He postulates that the quality of maternal care is the crucial factor in determining the amount of trust developed in the newborn. Erikson believes that despite the very best care, all infants experience a sense of having been deprived, divided, and abandoned. He refers to a "universal nostalgia for a paradise forfeited,"[3] and he claims that basic trust must battle with these negative feelings throughout life. This nostalgia for the past and feelings of deprivation, division, and abandonment constitutes the basic dangers of the earliest stage of life, since all of these emotions hinder the infant's unfolding sense of trust. In order for healthy ego growth in each stage, the positive quality must outweigh the negative. The greater the gap in favor of the positive, the better the

self-image.

A second important thing happens to the child during Stage One. The infant's first social accomplishment occurs: the ability to allow mother to leave without feeling inordinate anxiety or anger. Since "mother" represents the totality of the infant's protection and security, permitting her to depart without too much of a protest is significant. It is one of the indicators that trust is being established.[4]

Stage Number TWO -- Autonomy Versus Shame and Doubt

Erikson's second stage of identity development is Autonomy versus Shame and Doubt. The toddler's physical maturation encourages within him two opposite modalities: holding on and letting go. He must be encouraged to become independent while, at the same time, he must be protected since his immaturity severely limits the amount of freedom he can safely handle. Erikson hypothesizes that for trust to remain firm, the toddler must come to believe that the world is friendly, safe, and protective. He claims that:

> The infant must come to feel that the basic faith in existence which is the lasting treasure saved from the rages of the oral stage, will not be jeopardized by this about-face of his, this sudden violent wish to have a choice, to appropriate demandingly, and to eliminate stubbornly.[5]

The processes of holding on and letting go which are so characteristic of this stage have the inherent potential to be

either positive or negative. Holding on can be protective, comforting, and reassuring, or, as Erikson points out, it can be retaining and restraining. Likewise, letting go can "turn into an inimical letting loose of destructive forces, or it can become a relaxed 'to let pass' and 'to let be.'"[6]

If the growing child is not permitted free choice within protected circumstances, or if his basic trust has not sufficiently developed, the child may turn inward his need for autonomy. His conscience may become overly restrictive and prohibitive, or he may take control of his environment by maintaining strict order, by keeping everything just so.

Shame and doubt are the twin dangers of the second stage. According to Erikson, shame is the feeling of being self-conscious, exposed, and noticed. The child who experiences shame does not want others to look at him but desires to become invisible. Erikson says that shame "is essentially rage turned against the self."[7] Shaming is used to teach, but this methodology can lead the child to try and get away with things when he thinks no one is watching. Doubt, the second danger of Stage Two, also contains an aspect of self-consciousness. The child realizes that others are attempting to control his bodily function of elimination. He views this as an affront to his autonomy and may fight vigorously to maintain control of his own body. Erikson states,

> . . . this stage, therefore, becomes decisive for the ratio of love and hate, cooperation and willfulness, freedom of self-expression and its suppression.

> From a sense of self-control without loss of self-esteem comes a lasting sense of good will and pride; from a sense of loss of self-control and of foreign over-control comes a lasting propensity for doubt and shame.[8]

In addition to negotiating shame and doubt during this stage, the child takes his first tentative steps away from his mother and towards independence. The degree of his success is closely linked to the quality and type of parental care he receives. If the mother has been successful in encouraging her child's independence by providing a safe environment for exploration, and by enabling the discovery of new physical and mental skills, the child is more likely to develop a favorable balance of autonomy over shame and doubt.

Stage Number THREE -- Initiative Versus Guilt

In stage number three, Initiative versus Guilt, personal autonomy is given direction as the child learns how to master new tasks. Activities now begin to show thought, planning, and purpose, according to Erikson. At this time, the youngster is able to walk alone, to speak, and to utilize imagination to fantasize and expand dreams, as well as to become frightened by innate thoughts and desires. The child is ready to attack and conquer a task, another child, or the world. Erikson claims that intrusive behavior dominates as the child intrudes into space by walking. He intrudes into the unknown through curiosity. He intrudes into other

people's consciousness through speech. He intrudes into other people's physical beings through direct attacks on their person. Most scary of all, in his thoughts, the young boy intrudes into the female with his penis. Young girls go through all but the last of these intrusions. For boys this stage encourages their sense of competitiveness or attack; for girls their sense of catching or becoming endearing is developed. Both of these behaviors initially utilized in childhood are traditionally part of adult sexuality. For the first time the child becomes aware of sexual differences and according to Erikson it is a time when:

> Infantile sexuality and incest taboo, castration complex and superego all unite here to bring about that specifically human crisis during which the child must turn from an exclusive, pregenital attachment to his parents to the slow process of becoming a parent, a carrier of tradition.[9]

During Stage Three the child becomes divided within between the power of instincts and the fact that they must be limited and controlled as one becomes a thinking responsible being rather than a slave to urges. The child's final failure to retain mother or father just for himself or herself, daydreams about doing that which is still beyond, can lead to the danger of this Stage namely feelings of guilt and anxiety.

Erikson believes that the superego, the guardian of morality, for the child, is, in Stage Three primitive, cruel, and uncompromising.[10] If the young child senses that parents do not live up to the standards they advocate, lifelong

conflicts can begin. Since the superego sees only right or wrong with no in-between, the child may develop a hatred for his or her imperfect parents. As the superego or conscience matures, it sets limits for the child and aid in the understanding of how childhood dreams can become realities in adulthood.

Society institutionalizes Stage Three's admiration and anticipation of adult roles through people in uniform with whom the child can identify. This is the period during which children are awed by the policeman, fireman, or nurse, and they begin to fantasize what they will be when they grow up. Erikson states that during Initiative versus Guilt, the child is eager to learn from teachers and to work with other children in planning and making things. The growing child is gaining a sense of purpose to be fully utilized in adulthood. Erikson believes:

> . . . that there is little in these inner developments which cannot be harnessed to constructive and peaceful initiative if we learn to understand the conflicts and anxieties of childhood and the importance of childhood for mankind.[11]

Stage Number FOUR -- Industry Versus Inferiority

Stage Four in this schema is concerned with the school age child who is ready to receive formal instruction. According to Erikson, the child is now ready and willing to learn new skills and tasks. He develops an ability to utilize

adult tools and he begins to learn the skills of his society. During this stage the child learns the importance of perseverance and diligence and the rewards that accompany a job well done.

Industry versus inferiority occurs during the time between the onset of infantile sexuality and sexual maturity. Erikson characterizes Stage Four as "the lull before the storm of puberty," and he claims that unlike the other stages, Industry versus Inferiority contains no "inner upheaval to a new mastery."[12] The more complex the society, the more skills the child must master. Hence the period of latency is longer. By now the youngster realizes that there is no future for him within the confines of his family so he must learn the skills necessary to live and work in society. The child temporarily "forgets" about his sexuality and concentrates on learning in order to do so.

The danger of this period is that the child may experience a sense of inadequacy because he may not be able to sufficiently master the necessary skills at the same rate and to the same degree as his peers. The child may also feel inferior because he failed to adequately deal with the challenges of the first three stages. He may simply still need his mother more than he needs the satisfactions derived from work. A sense of inferiority can be fostered if the family has not properly prepared the child for school life, and later on, if the school does not adequately prepare the

child for success in his society.

Stage Four is of utmost social importance because for the first time the child, in our country, is continually in school with his peers. In school he socializes, competes with other children, and learns to measure his own successes or failures. At this point, a sense of inferiority can also grow if:

> . . . the schoolchild begins to feel that the color of his skin, the background of his parents, or the fashion of his clothes rather than his wish and his will to learn will decide his worth as an apprentice, and thus his sense of identity.[13]

A final danger of this stage is that the child may learn to define his worth only in terms of what he can produce. His work becomes the best measure of himself as a person. According to Erikson, such a child may lose playfulness and imagination. He may continually strive to excel at work. This striving is not for self-fulfillment. Rather, it is visible proof of self-worth. For continued positive identity growth to occur a child needs early school experiences which will help reinforce his sense of industry while teaching him to distinguish between the importance of his work and his value as a human being.

Stage Number FIVE -- Identity versus Role Confusion

According to Erikson, childhood ends with the advent of puberty; then adolescence begins. The major task of this stage is the development of ego identity which Erikson defines as:

> . . . the accrued confidence that the inner sameness and continuity prepared in the past are matched by the sameness and continuity of one's meaning for others, as evidenced in the tangible promise of a 'career.'[14]

The physical growth and development of Stage Five is equal to that in Stage One. Erikson believes that the adolescent must relive the previous stages and once again grapple with all their concomitant developmental issues. He hypothesizes that the adolescent, whose mind is somewhere between childhood and adulthood, retravels Stage One by attempting to find adults and ideas in which to place his trust, and to whom, in turn, they can prove their trustworthiness. Adolescents are generally very idealistic and see the world in terms of good or bad without perception of, or tolerance for, unclear moral areas. Continual striving for independence is an integral part of adolescence. During Stage Two, Autonomy versus Shame and Doubt, the teenager seeks greater autonomy but fears being made to do anything which would shame him in the eyes of his peers. Situations make him uncomfortable and cause him self-doubt. Paradoxically, the teenager will act shamelessly when he freely chooses to do so. As he strives for self-actualization, the adolescent begins to

determine his life's work and does not want any boundaries placed upon his hopes or dreams. Initiative versus Guilt is re-enacted as the adolescent places trust in peers and adults who will help him imagine his limitless future possibilities. The idealistic teen wants to choose a life's work that will offer him the chance to excel at something special and unique. Jobs which only offer financial rewards will be unattractive to some teens who will prefer not to work at all rather than work at a job which fails to enhance their self-esteem. Adolescents, Erikson believes, are:

> . . . primarily concerned with what they appear to be in the eyes of others as compared with what they feel they are, and with the question of how to connect the roles and skills cultivated earlier with the occupational prototypes of the day.[15]

In Stage Four, Industry versus Inferiority, the young person was wrestling with a career choice which, to him, is more than merely choosing how to earn a living, but an indication of his ego strength.

The danger of Stage Five is role confusion which most frequently results from the necessity of making an occupational choice. Disorientation in this fifth stage may also stem from doubts concerning one's ethnic or sexual identity. If there are long-standing feelings of hopelessness, which can develop as the child realizes the discrepancies between the ideals he has been taught and the realities he discovers, serious identity problems can occur.

One of the negative characteristics of many adolescents is intolerance. Erikson feels that intolerance is unavoidable during adolescence because of the numerous physical changes, the onset of sexual maturity, and the necessity of making future choices from a myriad of possibilities. While not justifiable, narrow-mindedness is the teenager's defense mechanism against identity confusion, and they will exclude:

> . . . others who are "different," in skin color or cultural background, in tastes and gifts, and often in entirely petty aspects of dress and gesture arbitrarily selected as the signs of an in-grouper or out-grouper.[16]

Paradoxically, in their search for identity the young person may over-identify with his peer group leading to what appears to be a loss of identity.

Democracy as a social institution becomes significant during Stage Five. Erikson states as follows:

> Democracy, therefore, must present its adolescents with ideals which can be shared by young people of many backgrounds, and which emphasize autonomy in the form of independence and initiative in the form of constructive work.[17]

Autonomy and initiative in the job market may be difficult to achieve in a society which places greater and greater emphasis upon mechanization and less emphasis upon the contributions of each individual. Society is failing its youth if it does not capitalize on their individualism, idealism, and motivation. Youth in turn may disappoint us by becoming disillusioned, angry, and non-productive if they find their opportunities do

not live up to their expectations. The interrelationship and interdependence of society and its youth must be understood for the optimal growth of both to occur.

Stage Number SIX -- Intimacy Versus Isolation

Stage Six in Erikson's theory is called Intimacy versus Isolation. During the sixth stage the young adult must develop the capacity to form deep-seated long lasting commitments regardless of the sacrifices and compromises entailed. In order to achieve these goals one's ethics must have matured and one's sense of ego must be firmly established. Erikson states that one's ego must be strong enough:

> . . . to face the fear of ego loss in situations which call for self-abandon: in the solidarity of close affiliations, in orgasms and sexual unions, in close friendships and in physical combat, in experiences of inspiration by teachers and of intuition from the recesses of self.[18]

Despite the fact that there can be other relationships that require intimacy, the main thrust of this stage is establishing a loving, fulfilling, and sexual affiliation with a life partner. Erikson posits a "utopia of genitality" which should include:

1. mutuality of orgasm
2. with a loved partner
3. of the other sex
4. with whom one is able and willing to share a mutual trust

> 5. and with whom one is able and willing to regulate the cycles of a. work, b. procreation, c. recreation so as to secure to the offspring, too, all the stages of a satisfactory development.[19]

Erikson reiterates that the young adult must be able handle some sexual frustration without undue problems. It is recognized that the "utopia of genitality" is a goal toward which one strives, but the actualities of life convince one that it is necessary to adjust to the fact that we settle for much less. To have a positive self-image in adulthood may encompass not losing sight of the ideal. Yet, one must not become unduly frustrated by the real. Furthermore, Erikson believes that this conception of utopia is not an individual task but a cultural or societal goal.

The danger of Stage Six is isolation. Some people are unable to risk the ego loss involved in true commitment, and, therefore, they avoid situations which could lead to intimacy. Others may shun intimacy out of fear of procreation and child-rearing. Those who cannot cope with intimacy may also try to protect themselves against it by over emphasizing minor differences "between the familiar and the foreign."[20] These prejudices can and have been exploited by political systems to justify wars. A final peril of Stage Six, which is appropriate in adolescent development but inappropriate in young adulthood, is that a person may experience intimate, competitive, and combative relations with and against the same person. Those who fail to master the developmental tasks of

young adulthood may never achieve the positive goal of intimacy and may spend their lives isolated and alone.

Conclusion

Erikson has outlined an important theory of identity formation which explains the difficulties that can occur during the normal course of maturation. According to Erikson, no one undergoing a stage of development will totally reflect its positive characteristic. Nor will they reflect only the negative characteristic. All growth is seen as a combination of positive and negative. Both will be evident at different times. In order for healthy identity formation to occur, one should acquire a favorable balance of positive over negative during each stage. The greater the integration of positive qualities compared to negative qualities in each stage, the healthier the self image.

Erikson's ideas help us to see where the normal course of identity formation may be interrupted, delayed, or postponed. The adopted child faces both the ordinary challenges outlined by Erikson as well as those particular challenges inherent in being adopted. As a consequence of the additional factors with which the adoptee must deal, the development of a positive self image may be a more complex and difficult process.

ENDNOTES

1. Erik H. Erikson, Identity Youth and Crisis (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1968), 105.

2. Ibid.

3. Erik H. Erikson, Childhood and Society (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1950), 250.

4. According to Erikson, each stage of development is institutionalized by society. For the purpose of this study only religion, the institution which corresponds to the First Stage, is relevant. Erikson believes that in adulthood trust may become the capacity for faith. This trust is institutionalized by society in the form of organized religion.

5. Erikson, Childhood and Society, 252.

6. Ibid., 251.

7. Ibid., 252.

8. Ibid., 254.

9. Ibid., 256.

10. Ibid., 257.

11. Erikson, Identity Youth and Crisis, 120.

12. Erikson, Childhood and Society, 259.

13. Ibid., 260.

14. Ibid., 261-262.

15. Ibid., 261.

16. Erikson, Identity Youth and Crisis, 132.

17. Ibid., 133.

18. Erikson, Childhood and Society, 263-264.

19. Ibid., 266.

20. Erikson, Identity Youth and Crisis, 136.

CHAPTER FOUR

UNDERSTANDING ERIKSON'S THEORY OF DEVELOPMENT IN THE CONTEXT OF ADOPTION

Adoption is an alternative way in which parents and children, unrelated by blood, can become a family. Joan Spector, who has worked extensively with adopted children and their families, defines adoption as follows:

> Being adopted means a child is told by adoptive parents that he was not born to them, but instead once had other parents who were unable to care for him; and because of that he became part of a new family.[1]

Once an adoption is finalized, civil law treats the relationship the same as if it were based upon blood-lines. "The adoptive child enters the family with all the legal rights of a biological child."[2] Despite the legalities, raising an adopted child is not the same as raising a biological child. It is vital that this fact be acknowledged and accepted by both the adoptee and his parents. Spector emphasizes these differences when she tells us:

> The situation of non-relative adoption is problematic because the absence of a blood tie creates the potential for family stress. In no other family constellation do parents have the task of helping their child integrate cognitively and affectively the reality of having two sets of parents.[3]

Because of the reality of adoption, the adoptee has extra

challenges to face as he matures. In addition to handling the usual developmental tasks, the adoptee must also come to terms with his adoption. The extent with which an adoptee deals with adoption issues will affect the success of his development of a positive identity. The pattern of identity development described by Erikson may be interrupted or interfered with because of the pitfalls inherent in adoption.

Deborah Silverstein has studied the relationship between adoption, identity, and Jewish identity. Silverstein believes that there are seven core issues which present the adoptee with additional hazards. These issues will:

> surface at different life cycle and developmental stages . . . 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. [4]

These core issues are unavoidable and exist throughout the adoptee's life, but they vary in intensity depending upon developmental stage and other variables. Silverstein believes that during adolescence all seven concerns are present and much more intensive. Many of Silverstein's core issues, such as loss, rejection, guilt and shame, intimacy, and identity are also part of Erikson's stages of development. As is readily discernable, adoption issues can become intertwined with identity issues and thereby impeding the normal course of development.

According to Erikson's Theory of Identity, the individual goes through five cumulative stages by adolescence and, in each stage, a new developmental challenge and correlating danger unfold. The greater the degree of mastery of the positive quality over the negative, the greater the positive identity growth in each stage. Identity is comprised of both the positives and negatives of each stage, but it is the relative proportions of each that determine a ego strength and hence the ability to succeed in the next stage. Erikson states that every stage is present, to a greater or lesser degree, throughout an individual's life, and there is much overlapping of stages.

During the first three of Erikson's stages it is the parental handling of the child, rather than the child himself, that influences his identity. In Stage One, Trust versus Mistrust, which lasts from birth to approximately age two, it is, according to Erikson, the quality of maternal care, its consistency, continuity, and ease which will foster the development of trust.[4] Adoptive parents may be unable to provide the necessary quality of care due to many factors concerning the adoption process. The parents may not yet have come to terms with their inability to procreate. The emotional issues that accompany infertility can be detrimental to both the parents and the adopted child if they are not appropriately handled and understood. According to Michael Gold, who counsels infertile couples:

> It is important to recognize that infertility involves a loss that is similar to the loss of a loved one. There are grief and mourning, anger and guilt, all the emotions that we associate with a death. . . .[5]

In addition, couples may have to work out feelings that may threaten the sexual aspect of their marriages. Many people think that the inability to bear children reflects their sexuality. Prospective parents may question their "right" or "ability" to raise a child if they are unable to give birth. Parents may not feel "entitled" or "able" to parent due to their lack of fertility. Infertility can place great stress upon a marriage, can make the partners feel that they have lost control over their lives. These are complex issues which can inhibit the quality of parental care by adding much anxiety and stress during the first crucial years of life.

Adoption laws in many states, including New York, also tend to make adoptive parents anxious during the first formative months of their new child's life. Adoptions frequently take as long as nine months to become final; during that period of time, the biological mother has the right to reclaim the child. Consequently, some adoptive parents are afraid to love their new child completely, because they fear that he or she could be legally taken away. Therefore, they may hesitate to become too attached to the child, to really allow themselves to love the child unconditionally as their "own." If the adoptive parents cannot completely bond with their child, and if they cannot trust that this child will

always be theirs, it may interfere with the quality of care they are able to provide.

Erikson's Stage Two, Autonomy versus Shame and Doubt, occurs when the child is approximately ages two to four. Likewise, unresolved infertility problems may also interfere with parental handling of a child in Stage Two. Since adoptive parents may have had to struggle long and hard to become parents, they may be reluctant to allow their child to grow up. They realize, as do all parents, that time goes too fast, and they may wish to keep the child "little" and dependent upon them. Erikson says that loss of control or foreign control leads to shame and doubt.[6] Adoptive parents may be over-protective and over-controlling of their child. Instead of allowing the child some degree of freedom to explore the environment, they may try to "protect" the child from every minor mishap, inadvertently inhibiting the child's autonomy and perhaps leading the child to doubt his own capabilities.

Between the ages of four and six, the young child begins to establish his own personality and to relate to others beyond immediate family members. This is the time span Erikson includes in Stage Three, Initiative versus Guilt, and it brings fresh challenges for both the adoptee and his parents. However, the adoptive parents may or may not be pleased with their child's budding personality and behavior. They may disclaim responsibility for the child's actions

resorting, at least privately, to the "bad seed" theory, blaming unacceptable behavior or characteristics on the child's heredity. The parents may feel confused or hurt that the child does not seem to fit into their family. They may exert pressure to try and change the child's nature or conduct. Some adoptive parents may push their children to achieve beyond their capabilities, showing dissatisfaction when the child does not measure up to their standards. While all the above factors may be true of any parent and child relationship, they are more crucial and possibly more detrimental in an adoptive family.

Beginning with Stage Four, when the child is age six to eleven, identity begins to develop as a direct result of the child's thoughts, behavior, and abilities, rather than, as was previously the case, primarily a result of parental influences. It is possible that the adoptee may not have attained a strong positive self-image, due, partially at least, to the parental care he has already received. Feelings of inferiority may also result from his failure to have adequately mastered the challenges of Erikson's first three developmental stages.

With the onset of Industry versus Inferiority, as Erikson calls Stage Four, the child is launched into the world and must fend for himself. The adopted child may face numerous challenges adjusting to the discipline of school and the interaction with peers. Adoption issues may also interfere

with identity development at this stage. According to Spector's research, a child's capacity to understand the concept of adoption begins to develop around age seven.[7] Thus, the school age adoptee, in addition to facing the adjustment, regimentation, and discipline required in order for learning to occur, may also need to deal with the many highly emotional issues which surround adoption. This is the age during which a child begins to become aware of what adoption means. Many children tend to personalize their adoption and mistakenly believe that they were rejected for themselves rather than as a mere result of circumstances.[8] Such personalization can lead to feelings of doubt, shame, and inferiority and can lead the child to wonder, "What was wrong with me that they didn't want me?" It is possible that the adopted child may experience feelings of not fitting in, of being "different" from other members of his family or his peer group. His physical appearance may be dissimilar to his adoptive family in terms of hair or eye color. There may be contrasts between the adoptee and his family or peers in characteristics such as athletic or artistic ability, intelligence, or general likes and dislikes. While these differences may be present in biological families, they can be even more crucial in adoptive families.

In addition to coping with the necessary adjustments in school, the child is now beginning to understand the process of birth, so he is able to understand the rudiments of

adoption. However, research has shown that the child may not yet understand the legalities of adoption, particularly its permanence.[9] Some children may be overwhelmed by thoughts, questions, and fears regarding adoption, all of which could impede both formal learning and the continuing process of identity development. Erikson tells us that during Stage Five, Identity versus Role Confusion, the adolescent, ages twelve through nineteen, retravels all the previous developmental stages.[10] According to Erikson, the teenager is idealistic and is searching for adults in whom to place trust.[11] The idealism of this stage also leads the adolescent to view the world in terms of extremes, seeing things in absolutes such as good or bad, right or wrong, black or white.[12]

The fact that the adopted adolescent may experience more difficulties at this stage of life than at any other, could result from the fact that, for him, so many issues are converging simultaneously. Every youngster faces the expected, though difficult, challenges of adolescence such as confusion, self-doubt, and intolerance as well as the issues surrounding physical and sexual maturation. In addition to contending with the aforementioned, the adopted adolescent must also struggle with all of the issues regarding adoption. For the first time in his life, he is able to understand the sexual and biological implications of adoption. He can now conceptualize the loss of his birth-family. As a result, he

may experience feelings of anger, sorrow, and deprivation. Silverstein tells us that:

> 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.[13]

An adopted child may feel as if he deserves the rejection of his biological parents, and "the sense of deserving such rejection leads adoptees to experience tremendous guilt and shame." [14] Silverstein also indicates that:

> 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, leading to a lowered sense of self-responsibility.[15]

Silverstein clearly indicates some of the extra challenges faced by the adoptee all of which may interfere with the development of a positive self-image. Erikson also discusses how feelings of guilt, shame, loss of autonomy, and lack of self-worth can impede positive identity formation. In order for the adolescent to formulate an identity he must mentally relive the previous stages of development. The adoptee must go through all the dangers of the developmental stages and must also deal with the issues inherent in adoption which here-to-fore he was unable to fully conceptualize.[16] The adopted child has many sensitive and emotional challenges

to face in addition to the developmental tasks faced by all children. Consequently, the actuality of adoption may interfere with developmental stages and may make the development of a positive identity more challenging for adoptees.

ENDNOTES

1. Joan Spector, "Adoptive Status And Level Of Thinking About Adoption In 5-13 Year Old Children" (Ph.D. diss., Adelphi University, 1986), 31.

2. Michael Gold, And Hannah Wept: Infertility, Adoption, and the Jewish Couple (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1988), 152.

3. Spector, "Adoptive Status and Level Of Thinking About Adoption," 2.

4. Deborah Silverstein, "Identity Issues in the Jewish Adopted Adolescent" Journal of Jewish Communal Service 61, no.4 (Summer 1985): 322.

4. Erik H. Erikson, Identity Youth and Crisis (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1968), 103.

5. Gold, And Hannah Wept: Infertility, Adoption, and the Jewish Couple, 56.

6. Erikson, Identity Youth and Crisis, 109.

7. Spector, "Adoptive Status And Level Of Thinking About Adoption In 5-13 Year Old Children," 84.

8. Silverstein, "Identity Issues in the Jewish Adopted Adolescent," 322.

9. Spector, "Adoptive Status And Level Of Thinking About Adoption In 5-13 Year Old Children, 85.

10. Erik H. Erikson, Childhood and Society (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1950), 261.

11. Erikson, Identity Youth and Crisis, 128.

12. Erikson, Childhood and Society, 263.

13. Silverstein, "Identity Issues in the Jewish Adopted Adolescent," 322.

14. Ibid.

15. Ibid., 323.

16. Spector, "Adoptive Status And Level Of Thinking About Adoption In 5-13 Year Old Children," 85.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPORTANCE OF JEWISH IDENTITY

Defining Jewish Identity

There is no one, timeless, accepted definition of "Jewish Identity." What Jewish identity meant to the ghetto Jew during the Middle Ages or to the new immigrant to America in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century is vastly different in meaning than our use of the term today. Judith Klein, a psychologist who has studied ethnicity particularly as it applies to Jews, tells us:

> Without overt anti-Semitism or ghetto walls to insure solidarity, without orthodox religious ritual to insure cohesion, without poverty and the immigrant experience to fuel a collective fervor, Jewish identity has to be redefined. Being a Jew is no longer settled by the fact of being born a Jew; Jewish identity now offers a range of choices, and, consequently, confusion.[1]

Bernard Reisman, an educator prominent in the area of values clarification and Jewish identity, also states that our conception of Jewish identity "is undergoing a watershed change."[2] Referring to the American Jewish community, Reisman agrees with Klein by saying that "Jewish identity is not a static phenomenon. It has been redefined periodically as a result of two persistent tensions inherent in the Jewish condition. . . ."[3] These are: living in two cultures and having multiple Jewish options.[4]

As Reisman suggests, the influence of the dominant Christian culture upon Jewish identity in America must be recognized. The problem of retaining Jewish identity and not assimilating, while fully participating in American society, must be solved individually. Reisman claims that American Jews must "seek to define a Jewish identity which is a blend of the two cultures."[5] Fred Berl, a consulting psychologist at the Jewish Family service of Baltimore, also recognizes the importance of the non-Jewish in the formulation of one's Jewish identity:

> Jewish identity is not mature unless it includes a secure relationship to the non-Jewish world in a positive and realistic way. However, this inclusion requires a process of its own. In such a process the non-Jewish may take on different meanings and values to the Jewish child. It may be seen, experienced, defined, interpreted, suspected as a danger and painful, as one's being unwanted, rejected, pushed out, subject to arrogance, overbearing and prejudicial and at times vicious. It may also be seen, experience, wanted as the 'great world' as a source of knowledge, insight, vast creative manifestations and involvements. The positive may easily outweigh the negative, and a reaction of anxiety on the Jewish side is felt by this strong pull of the positive in the non-Jewish direction. Jewish identity is vitally affected and deeply impregnated by its non-Jewish component.[6]

In today's society, Jews can freely decide how to express their Jewishness. Reisman believes that this freedom of choice constitutes the second tension of modern American Jewry. The four basic elements from which Jews can choose

are: the religious, the national, the ethnic, and the historical.[7] For Reisman, the religious element consists not only of prayer, rituals, faith, spirituality, and synagogue affiliations, but interpretations of Judaism, which range from traditional to liberal. The national option centers around Israel and the degree of attachment one chooses from aliyah to financial and moral support. The ethnic element includes "Jewish foods, holidays and customs (observed in a secular sense), language (Yiddish or Hebrew, or phrases therefrom), jokes, friends, and "feeling Jewish."[8] The fourth segment, the historical, provides "a sense of rootedness and pride in almost four millennia of history. . . . It is part of the Jews' consciousness of a shared destiny. . . ."[9] Reisman believes that the modern Jew will select various combinations of the religious, national, ethnic, and historical options in order to formulate a personal Jewish identity.

Psychologists, such as Klein who has studied the relationship between ethnicity and self-esteem, expand the concept of Jewish identity to include theological, ideological, cultural, sociological, psychological, and geopolitical aspects. In her research, Klein found that:

> Jewish identity contained dimensions ranging from concrete body image to the abstract notion of identification with historical figures. Those [people] with positive Jewish identity had Jews among their closest friends; actively participated in family observances of Jewish holidays and remembered those events with positive affect; accepted their body image, not wishing to change a

> great number of features to appear more 'WASP'; associated valued personal traits with their Jewishness; expressed a willingness to defend Israel if its survival was at stake; and connected to the Jewish past through identification with a Jewish historical or mythic figure.[10]

In other words, Klein states that positive Jewish identity is comprised of many different aspects such as: satisfaction with physical appearance, pleasant memories of shared occasions or events, having Jewish friends, assessing Jewish "traits" as valuable and good. According to Klein's reasoning positive Jewish identity is feeling good about the totality of oneself as a Jew. In summary, Jewish identity is how we view ourselves as Jews. It is how we feel about ourselves as members of the Jewish group. It is how we feel about our heritage, our religious observances, our life-style, our values, our customs, our culture, our life-cycle events, our relationship with the State of Israel. It is always present and colors our daily life. It is "a collective experience that lives inside every Jew today and that will get passed on to our progeny."[11]

Ethnicity and Self-Esteem

Ethnicity is an important aspect of identity. Many Jews primarily define themselves as being members of an ethnic group. One of the most vital psychological aspects of ethnic identity is the feeling of belonging to the group. In her

work, Klein describes how belonging to an ethnic group leads to ethnic identity. She tells us that:

> An individual, through conscious and unconscious processes (such as self-definition, definition by others, social interaction, and unconscious transmission of style, conflicts and themes) develops an attachment to his ethnic group. This attachment produces a consciousness of peoplehood among group members who then come to share many characteristics which may be as diverse as body language and a common historical perspective. . . . The product of the individual's conscious and unconscious attachment to his ethnic group is an ethnic identity.[12]

In her research, Klein has demonstrated that those subjects with the highest self-esteem showed a high positive relationship to their Jewishness. Her study offers "new and impressive confirmation that how you feel about your ethnic background has a direct relationship to how you feel about yourself."[13] In other words, those individuals who feel secure in their ethnic group and do not try to fight or deny their heritage are more likely to be at peace with themselves and to feel good about themselves. Acknowledging one's heritage is part of the process of coming to terms with who and what one is and being satisfied with it. Self-acceptance is an important facet of emotional health and well being. Conversely, those individuals who deny or fail to accept their Jewish identity are failing to be content with a part of themselves and this may lead to inner conflict.

Klein's theory is partially based upon the work of Kurt Lewin a Jewish psychologist, who was a pioneer in studying the

psychological and social problems inherent in the identity development of individuals in minority groups. Lewin claims that a person's actions are based upon his or her background. The person does not normally perceive the background, but is conscious only of his behavior. When referring to a person's behavior, Lewin emphasizes the importance of this "ground" when he tells us that:

> The firmness of a persons actions and the clearness of his decisions depend largely upon the stability of this 'ground.' . . . Whatever a person does or wishes to do, he must have some 'ground' to stand upon. . . . One of the most important constituents of the ground on which the individual stands is the social group to which he 'belongs.'[14]

Everyone needs to clearly understand what is required and, according to Lewin, this is determined by person's ground which provides security and orientation. A person's ground is composed of the many overlapping groups to which he belongs; such as his family, extended family, country of origin, economic status, political and religious affiliations, organizations, clubs, or job related groups.[15] Lewin explains that these groups vary in importance at different times in an individual's life, but they provide him with stability and "he knows more or less clearly where he stands, and this position largely determines his behavior."[16] For children, the family-group constitutes the main ground and that "instability of the background in childhood may lead to an instability of the adult. It generally requires a strong conflict for a child

not to be clear about his belonging or not belonging to a group."[17] An adoptee may be an example of a child who could be uncertain about belonging to his family-group and, thereby, lacks the stability of a firm ground.

Lewin explains that it is not belonging to many groups which can cause confusion "but an uncertainty of belongingness."[18] Lewin refers to a person who is unsure of the groups to which he belongs and is, therefore, unsure how to behave or make decisions, as a "marginal man." Lewin claims that there are people for whom uncertainty of belonging characterizes much of their life. He says that this can be true of people such as:

> the nouveaux riches or of other persons crossing the margin of social classes. It is typical furthermore of members of religious or national minority groups everywhere who try to enter the main group.[19]

Being a "marginal man" means one is on the perifery of both groups but belongs to neither. Being a "marginal man" creates stress and anxiety for a person because he is no longer certain how he is suppose to behave or what is expected of him. In the group he wishes to leave he knew the rules and expectations. One may even be aware of some of the accepted and unaccepted behaviors of the group he wishes to join. However, if one is a "marginal man" and belongs to no group there are no rules to follow, consequently, one does not know if certain actions are acceptable or not. When one is between groups there are no guidelines to help one learn and adapt as

a result one may experience insecurity or stress.

Lewin's Theory Regarding Minority Groups

Lewin's theory concerning the importance of a feeling of belonging impacts strongly upon minority group membership. While his theory is applicable to minorities in general, Lewin was particularly interested in studying the American Jewish community. Lewin realized that as long as the Jew remained in the ghetto, there was no confusion about belonging to the Jewish group because the boundaries between groups were clearly marked and impermeable. In America today, however, there are no clear-cut boundaries between the Jewish minority group and the majority group. Concerning this, Lewin tells us that:

> The boundary seems at least to be passable, because the difference in habits, culture, and thinking has become in many respects very small. Often there is, or at least there seems to be, almost no distance between the groups.[20]

A minority group, such as the Jews, are in some respects disadvantaged even in modern times. Consequently, there will be individuals who will attempt to leave the Jewish group and join the majority in an attempt to better themselves. These people may experience internal conflict between the natural forces drawing them toward their own group and the forces propelling them toward the majority. They may be angry because they feel that their own group is "keeping them down"

socially, in the job market, or in other subtle ways. Often these individuals are not accepted by the members of the more advantaged group they try to join. If this occurs, they may turn their anger inward towards their own group. For Jews this misdirected anger may take the form of Jewish self-hate or Jewish anti-Semitism. Such persons may become "marginal men" because they no longer fit into their old group, and they are not really accepted into the new group. Lewin informs us that:

> It is characteristic of individuals crossing the margin between social groups that they are not only uncertain about their belonging to the group they are ready to enter, but also about their belonging to the group they are leaving. It is for example one of the greatest theoretical and practical difficulties of the Jewish problem that Jewish people are often, in a high degree, uncertain of their relation to the Jewish group. They are uncertain whether they actually belong to the Jewish group, in what respect they belong to this group, and in what degree.[21]

Lewin's work clearly indicates that being a member of a minority group can be more difficult than being part of the majority. Because Jews are a minority group, being Jewish in American can, for some people, lead to confusion, uncertainty, and tension. Today, many adults are unsure or negative about their Jewish identity. Some actively resent Judaism and exhibit self-hate. Such conflicted feelings about being Jewish may be unconsciously passed from parents to children. There will be individuals who have not yet resolved the issue

of their own identities as Jews who will be responsible for parenting adopted children. These youngsters may receive very perplexing mixed messages concerning the value and importance of being a Jew. It is true that biological children are also parented by men and women who have not confronted their feelings about being Jewish and their children will also receive mixed messages about the value of being Jewish. For the born Jew this is less crucial because the child has no reason to doubt his heritage even if it's significance may be unclear.

Klein, like Lewin, also expounds on the difficulties faced by minority children. She explains that all children in the course of identity development must integrate the good and bad they see within themselves into a self-image which is "basically positive but can tolerate limitations."[22] Klein states that this process is more difficult for a minority child:

> Being a member of a minority group, especially a despised minority, often makes integration of negative self-images more difficult and dissociation more compelling. For example, one might want to avoid effects of prejudice by dissociating bad images of Jewishness from oneself, as for the Jew who says, 'I am a good Jew; the bad Jews deserve anti-Semitism.' It is more difficult for the minority child to resolve ambivalence and integrate good and bad self-images because of the socially-shared devaluation of his objects of identification.[23]

Klein's research concludes that minority children need to

master the same developmental tasks as all children. However, due to their minority status, these tasks, particularly integration and dissociation, are more difficult for a minority child. These tasks may be harder for the Jewish adoptee who has to contend with the added developmental difficulties which may result from his adoption as well as the developmental difficulties which may result from being part of a minority.

The Adoptee and Jewish Identity Development

The research of Lewin and Klein strongly implies that the adoptee, who is not a born Jew, will face additional challenges in the formulation of a Jewish identity. Both Lewin and Klein's findings suggest that identity development is more difficult for minority children. The adoptee is part of two minorities if he is both adopted and Jewish. The adopted child shares with other adoptees the unique circumstances of adoption and, in particular, the lack of a blood tie with their parents. Adoptees generally lack significant information about their biological parents which makes identity development more difficult. Silverstein, who has investigated some of the issues facing adolescent adoptees says:

> 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.'[24]

It is possible that being Jewish could be one of the "borrowed" portions of identity to which Silverman alludes. Finally, being adopted marks one as being "different" from the majority, but gives one a commonality with other members of the "adopted group."

The Jewish adolescent adoptee may be compared to Lewin's "marginal man." He or she may not <u>feel</u> Jewish or may not experience a feeling of belonging to the Jewish people. The adoptee may feel like an outsider looking in on the Jewish group and merely going through the motions. These feelings of alienation may be exacerbated if the child has been told repeatedly "You don't even look Jewish!"

The adoptee faces a no-win situation. Fellow Jews are denigrating his or her right to be Jewish, and yet, the adoptee surely does not belong to the gentile world. Having been raised by a Jewish family, even a Jewish family in name only, the adolescent adoptee probably cannot comfortably identify with the non-Jewish majority. The adoptee does not really "fit" into either religious group. Lewin discussed the relationship between positive Jewish identity and mental health. He says:

> . . . an early build-up of a clear and positive feeling of belongingness to the Jewish group is one of the few effective things that Jewish parents can do for the later happiness of their children. In

> this way parents can minimize the ambiguity and the tension inherent in the situation of the Jewish minority group, and thus counteract various forms of maladjustment resulting therefrom.[25]

Klein has confirmed that those subjects who showed positive identification with their ethnic group exhibited high self-esteem. The opposite was also demonstrated. Namely, those subjects who disclosed low self-esteem also showed negative Jewish identification. Klein's research has shown that self-esteem and Jewish identification are interrelated. According to the reasoning of Klein and Lewin, if the adoptee experiences difficulty in forming a positive Jewish identity, he may also experience lower self-esteem and additional tension or maladjustment.

An additional difficulty for the adoptee in the formation of a positive Jewish identify may be caused by his parents if they are unsure of their own relationship to Judaism. The adopted child may receive confusing and conflicting messages from his parents regarding the value and importance of being Jewish. While this could be problematic for any child, in the case of the adoptee, who may already doubt his "belongingness" religiously, it could be far more detrimental.

Halakhah and Jewish Identity Confusion in the Adoptee

Halakhah recognizes the importance of consanguinity, and its regulations were most probably implemented to safeguard

the rights of young children who were not being raised by their natural parents. However, in attempting to secure the minor's legal rights, Silverstein tells us that "Jewish law and tradition give both adoptees and their parents"[26] double messages. According to Silverstein, Jewish parents are faced with the following mandate:

> 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.[27]

This passage illustrates the halakhic limitations inherent in the conversion of minors. Since a minor's conversion is not final until the age of majority, and he or she can reject Judaism upon reaching maturity. Consequently, the child's religious status during the formative years is muddled. How difficult it must be for parents and for members of the Jewish community, who understand the halakhic implications of such conversions, to treat the adoptee the same as any other Jewish child. Jewish tradition recognized long ago what psychologists are confirming today; namely, that raising an adopted child is different in some important aspects from raising a child who is born into a family. How to parent the adoptee "as if he were born to you" while respecting and acknowledging his ethnic, religious, and biological inheritance is the unsolved problem.

There are other halakhic regulations which impinge upon the relationship of parents and their adopted children. For

example, Silverstein tells us that, "The adoptee is required to respect and honor the new parents but the laws of mourning apply only to the death of natural parents."[28] Michael Gold, an expert in the field of Judaism and adoption, also discusses the laws of mourning. He claims that while mourning is not required of the adoptee, it is not prohibited. Gold tells us that "one does not need to be a blood relative to mourn. In view of this, there is no barrier to an adopted child taking on the full obligations of mourning for his or her parents."[29] According to Jewish law, the adoptee is allowed but not compelled to mourn for adoptive parents.

As currently interpreted, halakhah informs us that the adopted child's status as a Kohen, Levi, or Yisrael is determined by the status of the biological father. If the child is converted to Judaism he or she assumes the status of Yisrael. Therefore, the adoptive father's status as a Kohen or Levi will have no effect upon the status of his adopted child. Gold emphasizes that "bloodlines can never be replaced. The facts of biology give a child his or her religious status, not a legal procedure in the civil courts."[30]

Gold suggests that Judaism's emphasis of the importance of bloodlines in determining religious status may be in the process of changing. He claims that "the Jewish community is moving beyond biology and developing new criteria for 'Jewishness.'[31] Further evidence for the decreasing

importance of consanguinity comes from the Reform Movement's position on the issue. Gold states that:

> The Reform Movement is already putting into practice a Judaism that goes beyond biology. It claims that biological facts are irrelevant in determining the status of a child. If a child is raised as a Jew, it is a Jew, regardless of the status of the mother. On the other hand, if the child is not raised as a Jew, the implication is that the child cannot be considered a Jew even if the mother is Jewish. . . . In addition, the Reform Movement has said that a child born of Gentile parents and adopted into a Jewish home will be considered a Jew, with no further conversion necessary. Long ago Reform Judaism removed the biological categories of kohen and levi, as well as mamzer. For them there are only two categories, Jew and Gentile, and they are based on upbringing and belonging, not on biology.[32]

If the trend Gold sees towards a Judaism that does not depend upon biology for religious status is accurate, then perhaps in the future many of the confusing implications of halakhah which bear upon adoption will be clarified. In the meantime it is certainly true that in practice some of the factors that determine one's Jewishness are being examined and questioned by all Jews.

ENDNOTES

1. Judith Weinstein Klein, Jewish Identity and Self-Esteem (New York: The American Jewish Committee, 1989), 7.

2. Bernard Reisman, "On Jewish Identity," Pedagogic Reporter 41, no. 2 (Winter/Spring 1991): 3.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid.

5. Ibid.

6. Fred Berl,"Jewish Identity: Its Use for Clinical Purposes" Journal of Jewish Communal Service 42, no. 4 (Summer 1976): 350.

7. Reisman does not consider another possible modern Jewish option. In America today Jews can also choose to reject or ignore their Jewish identity either formally through conversion or informally through their lifestyle choices.

8. Reisman, "On Jewish Identity," 4.

9. Ibid.

10. Klein, Jewish Identity and Self-Esteem, 17.

11. Ibid., 6.

12. Ibid., 9-10.

13. Ibid., v.

14. Kurt Lewin, Resolving Social Conflicts (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1948) 145-146.

15. Ibid., 146.

16. Ibid.

17. Ibid., 146.

18. Ibid., 179.

19. Ibid., 148.

20. Ibid., 155.

21. Ibid., 148.

22. Klein, Jewish Identity and Self-Esteem, 13.

23. Ibid., 14.

24. Deborah Silverstein, "Identity Issues in the Jewish Adopted Adolescent" Journal of Jewish Communal Service 61, no. 4 (Summer 1985): 325.

25. Lewin, Resolving Social Conflicts, 183.

26. Ibid., 323.

27. Ibid., 324.

28. Ibid., 323.

29. Michael Gold, And Hannah Wept: Infertility, Adoption, and the Jewish Couple (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1988), 173.

30. Michael Gold, "Adoption: A New Problem For Jewish Law," Judaism 36, (Fall 1987), 443.

31. Ibid., 448.

32. Ibid., 449.

CHAPTER SIX

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

I conducted original anecdotal research to initiate an investigation regarding the challenges to Jewish identity faced by adoptees. This chapter will focus on my research methodology. The results will be analyzed. Finally, I will present conclusions. This research is designed to explore the impact of adoption upon Jewish identity development. An important goal of my analysis is that it provide direction for future investigation.

Research Sample

I chose to interview nine adult adoptees between the ages of twenty-two and fifty. Adults were chosen, because they have already navigated the shoals of adolescence. The investigation of teenage attitudes toward adoption would require the skills of a trained psychologist rather than an student investigator. There may still remain unresolved issues concerning their adoption with regard to their Jewish identity. According to Erikson's schema, these subjects should all have attained Stage Six, Intimacy versus Isolation,

lasting relationships with a life's partner. In keeping with Erikson's theory all but one of the subjects I interviewed were married. The single exception had been involved in a serious relationship that had not evolved into marriage due to unresolved religious differences. Since serious relationships commonly precede wedlock, I felt that this adoptee also conformed to Erikson's hypothesis.

In order to control for as many variables as possible, I attempted to locate subjects whose family backgrounds were similar. To this end, I utilized several criteria. All of the subjects except one were adopted in the United States as infants. The one exception was born in Canada and adopted from an orphanage at the age of three. Since, like the others, only the Jewish adoptive parents were known and remembered, I considered this subject acceptable for the purposes of this study.

Another criterion was that all of the subjects had to come from families who had no biological children. I felt that this would eliminate variables in response which might reflect stresses or sibling rivalry between adopted and biological children rather than the issues of adoption and Jewish identity being investigated. Half of the subjects had adopted brothers or sisters and half did not. Thus, I was not forced to separate out the challenges of children facing death or divorce. All of the subjects selected were from intact two-parent homes.

Since this study focuses on the adopted child who is not a born Jew, all the participants had to know or surmise that they were born from a non-Jewish birthmother. No attention was paid to the adoptee's birthfather. The number of available subjects would have been too limited: since the fathers are frequently unknown in cases of adoption. In addition, since traditional Jewish law traces the child's religious status through the mother, the father's religion was considered irrelevant for purposes of this study.

Since one of the issues under study was Jewish identity formation, all the adoptees had to come from families who perceived themselves positively as Jews. The Jewish education of the adoptees as children was one measure of the fostering of Jewish identification on the part of parents. The life-cycle ceremonies of Brit, Naming, Bar and Bat Mitzvah, and Confirmation also indicate the importance which parents place on Jewish identification. Family attendance at synagogue services as well as the home celebration of holidays and festivals also provides some insight into the emphasis on Jewish identification. For the purposes of this research, families who proudly called themselves Jewish, but lacked any synagogue affiliation and did nothing more formal than gathering at home to celebrate holidays, illustrate the minimally accepted degree of Jewish identification required. Only one of the subjects was reared in such a minimalist environment. The other eight participants came from homes

where the Jewish holidays were actively celebrated; families attended synagogue together either often or on special occasions. All of the subjects received some type of Jewish education; all but three celebrated a Bar or Bat Mitzvah. Six of the adoptees were students in Reform religious schools; one went to a Yeshivah; one attended an Orthodox camp for eight years and is currently studying to become an adult Bat Mitzvah; and one merely received tutoring to prepare for Bar Mitzvah.

The subjects interviewed had all been raised in middle to upper middle class homes in New York City, Long Island, or Connecticut. One subject had spent some childhood years in Florida before moving to New York.

In general, the adoptees comprised a very well-educated group. Nine of the subjects were college-educated; five have or are working towards advanced degrees. Eight of the subjects are working full or part-time outside of the home. This is particularly interesting because of the larger number of women in the group. Their occupations included: teacher, guidance counselor, social worker, cantorial student, construction project manager, nurse, chef, and assistant manager in a dry cleaners. The one subject who does not presently work outside the home, is a homemaker, engaged in rearing a young child. Seven of the married individuals have biological children. One woman has been married only a few months and has no children at present. Reflecting the

multiplicity of American Jewish experience, the degree of Jewish identification in the subject's homes varied from actively involved in all aspects of Jewish life to mere Jewish cultural identification.

Procedure

Prospective subjects were initially contacted by telephone. During the course of the telephone contact, the nature and purpose of this research was briefly outlined and the criteria for subjects were explained. Adoptees were then asked if they met these criteria. If they did, a personal interview was arranged. Two of the interviews were conducted over the telephone. The Adoptee Questionnaire and the Interview Background Data were utilized during the personal interviews. (Both of these documents are included in the appendix.) Each interview was tape recorded for further study and analysis. Following each meeting, the salient points of the individual responses to each question were transcribed and analyzed. (These data have also been included in the appendix.)

Conclusions

The Challenge of a Non-Jewish Birthmother

The adoptees interviewed appeared to be productive and well adjusted adults. Except for the one student, they had all established their own homes, families, and careers. In general, the adoptees exhibited a variety of opinions and emotions in their reactions to the challenges of the Jewish identification of adoptees. There was the general lack of concern on the part of the participants as to the religion of their birthmother. Several adoptees were more interested in their birthmother's country of origin than they were in her religion. They wanted to know if they were of Irish, Italian, or English descent. They seemed curious about their ancestry and their national roots. This seems to indicate that when one knows one's ancestry, one is able to discover that missing piece of information that helps them define who they are. The respondents in this study all believed that Judaism as a religion was learned behavior. Thus, this aspect of their background seemed of little importance. Yet, they still pursued information regarding their ethnic background. Some adoptees stated that had never thought much about the religion of their birthmother until they participated in this study and did not feel it was of significant importance nor did it have any effect upon their attitude towards their own Jewishness.

One man expressed this by saying, "Being adopted and being Jewish don't overlap. I always assumed my birthmother was not Jewish and it never interfered with my Jewishness." These individuals articulated the thought that having been raised as Jews, Judaism was all they knew and all they had learned. Knowing or discovering that their birthmothers had not been Jewish did not in any way alter their well-established religious attitudes or beliefs. The majority of those interviewed expressed the opinion that religion was learned rather than inherited; a person was a member of the faith in which he or she had been raised. One subject responded:

> It's learned, it's learned behavior. I mean if it were inherited I'd be . . . Anglican, it'd be Church of England, which is . . . the English church my parents probably would have belonged to. So, I know its not inherited. Jesus is not waiting in one of my genes to flower one day and make me into a believer. And I've read Jung and all those other guys and I don't believe in that racial memory.

Another adoptee grew up knowing his birthmother was not Jewish. This fact never troubled him, but it did bother his best friend, a Christian, who made many attempts to teach him about Christianity in an effort to "get him back." Despite his friend's efforts at conversion, and despite the minimal Judaism he experienced in his home, this individual grew up with a strong positive Jewish identity. Today, he is an active member of a Reform synagogue where he has taught the Confirmation class for many years.

One man indicated that he had never been curious about the religion of his birthmother whom he now knows was a Catholic. He also told me, "If I had a choice, if I was born nothing and I gained a little bit of knowledge, I would pick Judaism." This man gloated about the fact that he had been born a gentile but was raised as a Jew by saying:

> Hey look, I was one, [a Christian] but I'm not. I sort of think it's better to be Jewish than to be anything else, you know? It's sort of like being born poor and becoming rich. . . . I feel that I got something better. A better deal, you know? I have a big problem with these other religions. I don't go for them at all.

For these participants, knowledge about their lineage (such as their birthparents' country of origin) was an important unchangeable fact, whereas the religion of the birthparents was not important, because they considered religion to be learned behavior. On the other hand, according to these individuals, ethnic identity is inherited. It is a part of their identity which is unchangeable.

However, for two individuals, the religion of their birthmother was a significant concern throughout their lives. At the age of seven or eight, one woman was already asking her mother, "What if I'm not Jewish?" Her mother answered by saying, "Your birthmother wanted you to be with a Jewish family." Not satisfied with that reply she asked, "Does that mean she was Jewish?" She always got vague answers and she "always wondered." When she pressed them, her parents finally said that they thought her birthfather was Jewish, but

she never really believed them. This woman felt it was important for her birthmother to have been Jewish, but she always had a feeling that she was not Jewish. At age twenty-nine, she learned that her birthmother had been a Catholic and the confirmation of her lifelong suspicions greatly bothered her. She studied for eight months with an Orthodox rabbi and underwent a halakhic conversion. Prior to this, she says: "I never really felt Jewish. Completely." Now, for the first time in her life, this woman who was raised as a Jew from infancy, "feels" entirely Jewish. Conversion as an adult freed her from the uncertainties which had formerly plagued her. The conversion process enabled her to feel really Jewish. Although she had been raised as a Reform Jew, she went through a halakhic conversion because she did not want anyone to have any reason to question her Jewish identity. She wanted to be absolutely certain of her acceptance and belonging on the part of <u>all</u> Jews. As is the case with this adoptee, the process of conversion may help build a positive Jewish identity. A Yeshivah-educated young woman whose mother, in particular, tried to make Judaism an important part of family life also expressed feelings of alienation from the Jewish people. She claims that she had always been curious about the religion of her birthmother, and her parents had always told her that her birthmother was Jewish. Despite the reassurance of her parents, which later proved to be unjustified, this child always felt she "just didn't belong."

Her feelings were particularly poignant when the family gathered to celebrate Passover:

> Passover, that was like the time that I really felt it. I would be sitting at the seder table with like twenty-five other people at my aunt's house or wherever we were having it that year and everybody would be singing and doing all the stuff which I knew by heart because I went to Yeshivah and I couldn't sing it or say it. And they would say to me " . . . , what 's the matter with you just sitting there?" And I would just feel like I didn't belong there. I had the feeling that that wasn't me. There was something wrong and I shouldn't be at that table cause it just wasn't in me. It was a very weird a very weird thing. And then I didn't relate it then to the adoption. I just said there's something wrong. Because, you have to understand, I grew up with my parents telling me that my birthmother was Jewish and I always believed my parents. So I did not think "Oh, she wasn't Jewish and I shouldn't be here," but I had the feeling that I just didn't belong there. That it just couldn't come from my gut to do those things. . . . I knew the prayers, I knew everything by heart, I had learned it backwards and forwards. And I would sit there and say, "I can't do this!" And everybody would be doing everything and I would just sit there. So they said that I was a moody kid but that wasn't it.

These articulated feelings reflect the general difficulty which some adoptees face in developing a positive Jewish identity. This young woman received a basic Jewish education, was raised in a family who practiced Judaism in their home and in their daily lives. Despite this background, from a very young age, she was plagued by doubt, by feelings of alienation. While she could not articulate her feelings,

something just did not feel right. She did not experience a sense of belonging like the other members of her family.

An unexpected but interesting fact regarding the adoptees concern with their birthmothers emerged during the interviews. Two women indicated anxiety about the possible involvement of their birthparents or grandparents in the Holocaust:

> Wouldn't it be like a great movie . . . if this adoptee raised in a Jewish family finds out that they're [birthparents] like actually German and the biological birthgrandparents were pro-Hitler or something. That would just be such a wild contradiction! I wanted to know that she was Jewish.

The second expressed her anxiety over the same issue as follows:

> My mother is also a holocaust survivor. The one class I remember about Sunday School was Holocaust. . . . Watching films and knowing that her father was killed as well as the rest of her family. Her mother survived as well but he did not. And they always spoke about what an Aryan was . . . and I remember going through a horrible time and thinking what if my biological parents . . . its very possible that they could have been Germans and even if they weren't its very possible that being Christians and living at that time and living over there they could have been either Nazis or believing in the Nazis. . . . You can characterize me as Aryan and I went through a really horrible guilt phase thinking that I might have been the product of that kind of hate.

Physically these women, both of whom have very light brown hair, blue eyes, and fair complexions, see themselves as conforming to Hitler's stereotype of the Aryan. It appears to

be only their own self-perceptions that link them to the Holocaust because there is no evidence connecting their biological lineage to the slaughter of European Jewry. These two adults seem to be personalizing the Holocaust in much the same way as adoptees often tend to personalize their adoption. Children frequently wonder: "What was wrong with me that they gave me away?" They are assuming responsibility for doing something wrong which caused their birthparents to surrender them. This can lead to feelings of guilt. These two adults seem to be personalizing a Jewish experience, the Holocaust, and saying to themselves: "What might I, or my biological relatives, have done to harm the Jewish people to which I now belong?" If the adoptive parent is a Holocaust survivor the feelings of guilt could become even more complicated because the adoptee could assume responsibility for the death of his or her own relatives. They could imagine that their biological relatives were responsible for murdering their adoptive relatives! Such emotions could operate either for or against the formation of a positive Jewish identity. The individual might attempt to compensate for the guilt feelings by becoming the "best" Jew possible, or he or she might turn away from all religions because they do not know how to deal with the guilt they feel. In the cases I studied, both individuals resolved these conflicts through strong Jewish identification.

This issue is also interesting for another reason. The

biological children of survivors also experience guilt related to the Holocaust. Since the second woman is the daughter of a survivor I wonder if part of her guilt can be traced to this fact. Did she acquire these guilt feelings in the same way as do biological children of survivors? In her case, however, the guilt is compounded by adoption. In the cases under study these women appear to have resolved this conflict and have embraced a Jewish identity that was not theirs by birth.

In summary, it appears that having a non-Jewish birthmother and being raised as a Jew was not generally problematic for the subjects under study. These people believed that religion was learned behavior. They claimed not to have experienced any conscious conflicts concerning this matter. However, this research also indicate that there were individuals who encountered serious concerns as they tried to deal with the challenges of Judaism and adoption. The issue of ethnicity seemed more disturbing to these adoptees than the issue of religion. An evaluation of their ethnic concerns will be presented at the end of this chapter.

Further investigation, utilizing larger subject groups would be advantageous so that the results could be expanded. Such research could determine the impact of adoption upon Jewish identity development in the general adopted Jewish population. Whether or not the issue of having a non-Jewish birthmother and being raised as a Jew is an area of concern for many adoptees remains to be clarified by future research.

The Challenge of Dealing With Adoption Truthfully

Many parents and children encounter difficulty when discussing adoption or its ramifications. The importance of parental honesty was affirmed by the adoptees in this study. Yet, in all but a few cases, these individuals claimed that their adoptive parents were either very reluctant to divulge information about the biological parents or in some cases actually lied about it. One young woman explained that her parents were not anxious to tell too much about "her" [birthmother]. In trying to understand this hesitation, particularly regarding the religious background of her birthmother, she indicated that "They're probably afraid that I might even go that way, question my religious faith that I was brought up in." She told me that no such thoughts had never entered her mind when she asked these questions. She did wonder what it might have been like to have been brought up by Catholic parents, "but nothing that ever would push me to convert or to go to Catholicism at all." This young woman is currently searching for the best Jewish religious school for her two children.

Another young woman explained that she learned not to discuss any aspect of adoption with her parents. The few times she had attempted to do so her questions went unanswered, her queries led to hysterical outbursts by her mother as well as accusations that this adoptee was

"ungrateful." She quickly perceived the "emotional message which was don't ask."

Lack of parental honesty contributed to the maladjustment of one adoptee both as a youngster and as an adult. During childhood he had been told that both of his birthparents had died. (His mother was to have died on the delivery table and his father died during the course of army service.) He confided that this misinformation had "screwed him up for many years." After years of therapy, he concluded that:

> It had been okay for me to do things that were wrong because the first thing I did was kill my mother coming into the world and after that how do you weigh anything else?

He realized that this "story" protected his adoptive parents, but it caused him years of guilt and misery. He was angry when he discovered that his birthparents were still alive. This adoptee understood and eventually forgave the insecurity of his adoptive parents which caused them to lie. However, he stated that parents "should have confidence in the child they raised." Moreover, in his opinion it is preferable not to tell a child about his or her adoption at all, because it can make the boy or girl feel different. He said: "the connection is made by the people who raise you." In this instance someone who suffered so intensely as a result of dishonesty is advocating dishonesty. He was angry at his parents' lack of honesty, yet his current opinions reveal a dichotomy which is the adoptive parent's dilemma. They can hurt their child by telling the truth or by lying and avoiding

it. If parents reveal too much information too soon the child may suffer feelings of alienation from his family. If they are not truthful or silent, the child may still experience these feelings! Either way, the adoptive parent faces potential pitfalls. Despite the difficulties, being honest appears to be the best option. Honesty builds an important sense of trust between parent and child which is vital in any family.

In maturity, at age thirty, one female adoptee discovered that her parents had lied to her about the religion of her birthmother. She was not shocked, because she had always questioned the story they told to her. She reported:

> Blond hair, blue eyes, from Idaho and Jewish didn't seem very likely even though it might be possible. The conclusion I came to is that it didn't really matter. Religion to me is more what you are brought up in. Religion is not a matter of birth.

In the study, the adoptee who experienced the most severe and life-altering reactions regarding her non-Jewish birthmother admits that it could have been her parents' lack of honesty which worsened her torment. She feels that her attitude towards Judaism today might have been more positive had her parents initially told her the truth. According to her, it is imperative that adoptive parents be honest with their children. She said:

> Be honest with them [adopted children] from the beginning. I think it makes a big difference. It's very possible that a lot of what I feel is because I feel

> that I was not told the truth. When you are growing up you look upon your parents as the ones you can always trust even if the whole rest of the world turns their back you have your parents and when your parents tell you something and then it turns out not to be so that's where the problem is.

Today this young woman lacks any sense of positive Jewish identification. The alienation she experienced as a child has continued into adulthood. She explained:

> I don't really have feelings for any religion. I just do what I do in the Judaism because I have kids. But I don't feel like I belong anywhere, not here, not there, not anywhere. I just don't. In my heart I don't do anything. I don't fit anywhere. I don't like going to go to schul because I don't feel like I fit in, but, I'm not going to walk into a church because I don't fit there either.

There may be other adoptees who feel estranged from Judaism and experience a sense of isolation and of not belonging. Likewise, there may be many born Jews who share this adoptee's feelings of religious alienation. However, the reasons behind a born Jew's estrangement from Judaism and the adoptee's estrangement may be very different. The born Jew may also fail to develop a positive Jewish identity because he or she may understand that Judaism is not a priority for their parents. Even if the children attend religious school there is frequently so great a dichotomy between what is taught in school and what is observed at home. The child learns that Judaism is not really important. In some cases where parental support is present, the child, because of emotional or

psychological factors, may still fail to achieve a positive Jewish identity. In the born Jew, as in the adoptee, there can be many reasons for this failure. However, the important difference is that the born Jew never has to question his or her Jewishness. He or she may choose not to belong to the Jewish people and to ignore Judaism. For the adoptee, it can be much more complicated. The adoptee does not automatically belong. Judaism is not his or her birthright to accept or reject. Frequently, adoptees may have to prove their Jewishness to strangers, to fellow Jews, or even to themselves. The revelations of this woman confirm the need for more extensive research. Ways need to be found to integrate into Judaism adoptees and other Jews who perceive themselves as alienated. This topic will be fully considered in the next chapter.

Honesty between parent and child is vital in <u>any</u> family because it builds trust in a child and the knowledge that parents are people who can be depended upon. Honesty is the foundation upon which strong family relationships can be built.

Erikson[1] tells us that developing a favorable balance of trust over mistrust is the child's first crucial step in identity development. He also says that the adolescent retraces all the prior developmental stages, including trust versus mistrust, before reaching adulthood. If an adoptee discovers that he or she has not been told the truth regarding

some aspect of adoption, the effects can be devastating. The entire foundation of family trust can be destroyed and the adoptee may feel that there is no longer anyone he or she can believe. If the adoptee is an adolescent when the lack of truth becomes known, the results can be even more distressing because he or she may be in the process of grappling for the first time with a mature understanding of adoption, in addition to undergoing the normal identity crises of adolescence. Deborah Silverstein, who has studied the interaction of adoption and Judaism upon the identity development of the adolescent, tells us:

> 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.[2]

Although individuals in this research suspected parental dishonesty concerning adoption for many years, only one person discovered as an adolescent that her parents had lied to her. She was both angry and hurt that they had not told her the truth. Today her relationship with her parents is less than ideal, although I would estimate that this is not strictly a result of their dishonesty but a result of a combination of factors in her formative years. The other adoptees under study confronted the proof of parental dishonesty as young adults and their reactions were severe. It is possible that

despite their chronological ages, in terms of some aspects of identity development namely the issue of trust, they responded as would adolescents. Perhaps they had not yet achieved, or more likely discovering the truth interrupted the achievement of a favorable balance of trust over mistrust. Coping with parental dishonesty, adoption issues, and adolescence or young adulthood all at the same time was onerous for some of these people.

In the individual cases under study, the effects of parental dishonesty were far more hurtful than the factual information that was uncovered. It is understandable that in discussing adoption the truth can sometimes be difficult and painful. However, the people who participated in this study indicated that the effects of dishonesty can cause long-lasting pain and even permanent alienation. Honesty in adoption issues requires courage. Some adoptive parents may benefit from professional guidance to help them make constructive choices in raising their child.

Physical Appearance

It seems likely that there are many other adoptees who, like some of the subjects interviewed, feel estranged from Judaism. Often this sense of estrangement can be intensified by the person's physical appearance. All of the adoptees questioned had repeatedly heard the comment "You don't look

Jewish." These words had been addressed to them from the time they were children up to and including the present day. Some claimed they are still told this "almost every day" of their lives. Their reactions to this statement were varied. The minority indicated that they didn't care and it really didn't bother them. One woman said:

> All my life people have said that. It's kind of a curious question. Jewish people look very differently. There is no size or shape to being Jewish. These comments made me curious as to why someone would say that. It has been mostly Jewish people who have said it to me. There seems to be a preconceived notion as to what Jewish people look like.

Another stated that this remark makes her "mildly annoyed" today:

> You wouldn't believe what I hear because people don't think I'm Jewish! It makes me feel mildly annoyed. I guess because I know biologically I'm not, I am, but I'm not. They say the child is the religion of the mother. I fluffed it off. It was nothing I took to heart.

Even this woman quoted above, who appeared to have coped well with her adoption voiced some confusion regarding her Jewish identity when she said, "I am [Jewish according to my opinion], but I'm not [according to the opinion of some other Jews]." Although she was raised from infancy in an observant Jewish home, participated in the life-cycle ceremonies of Bat Mitzvah and Confirmation, married a Jew and is raising her children as Jews, and knows nothing other than being Jewish, halakhically she is not a Jew. While the traditional

legalities of this situation do not trouble her, she is aware of the fact that some of her fellow Jews do not regard her as Jewish.

One male adoptee claimed that "even today" people tell him he does not "look Jewish." He related the following story to emphasize his point:

> When I was a kid I use to deliver packages in the neighborhood, and, anyway, I'll never forget this because it's like ingrained. And I had a tee shirt on with a little Jewish silver Jewish star which I always wore. And this woman actually attempted to tear it, to grab it, to take it from my neck. An old Jewish lady. And she said, "Why do you wearing this for? Why do you doing? Goyim! You shouldn't be wearing this!" And my other friends were all there and they were laughing. They thought it was funny. And I said, "But I am Jewish." [To which she replied] "Well you don't look Jewish, and you shouldn't be wearing this around your neck!"

This same person told me he never encountered the problem of being picked on because of being Jewish which did happen to some of his Jewish acquaintances. He also said that he liked the way he looked and "nothing traumatic" ever occurred because of his appearance. This statement seems contradictory because he previously had told me that the incident is "ingrained" (see above). His behavior today reflects the possibility that he is aware of his "non-Jewish" appearance. This man is "extremely intensely proud of being a Jew." He is a Reform Jew who today wears a kippah and a Jewish star outside of his clothing because: "I want people to know I'm

Jewish. I don't want any mistakes made." It appears as if his strong Jewish identity combined with his physical appearance may have an influence upon his behavior. Whether or not this individual would have worn a kippah if he had looked more "Jewish" remains an interesting but unanswerable question.

Three of the female respondents were definitely offended by the frequent comments alluding to their non-Jewish appearance. One young woman who was often told she looked Irish, said that these statements "made her sad:"

> I wanted to be Jewish. I liked being Jewish. That's why I went through the conversion when I found out that she [birthmother] wasn't. I wanted to be officially something, cause I always wondered was she Jewish, was she Catholic, was she Irish, was she French, Italian? What was she? And that was when I found out she wasn't Jewish. It was a way, by me going through the conversion, it was a way for me to be real. To be officially something and not just wonder about it. It felt good.

This woman described a sense of not belonging to a group which according to Lewin's[3] theory is a characteristic of the "marginal man," a person who remains on the periphery of groups and does not fit into any group. Lewin claims that not belonging creates anxiety because behavior and expectations are not defined for the marginal individual. This woman did not know her biological ancestry, her biological group, therefore a big piece missing from her life. She was not certain where her biological parents or grandparents had been

born. She was not certain of their religious background. These unknowns made it very difficult for her to deal with identity issues. In essence, she was unable to belong, because she did not know where she belonged or to which groups she belonged. The thoughtless comments regarding her looks served to solidify in her mind the fact that she was different, that she did not fit. She did not want to be different. She wanted desperately to belong to "her" group, the Jewish people. After her conversion, she finally experienced the long sought-after sense of belonging she craved.

"Almost every day of my life to the present day," is the way one female subject answered when I asked her if people ever say to her she does not look Jewish. As a child and young adult she heard many hurtful remarks such as:

> You don't look Jewish. You don't look like your parents. You can't be theirs. And I got to a point when people would say to me "Who do you look like?" I'd say, "My dog!" That's how fed up I was! . . . I actually had a fight with a professor in Brooklyn College because he said to me, "There's no way you're Jewish!" And I said I was wearing a Jewish star one day in school, which I don't like to wear. Like maybe like two times in my life I wore it. My mother bought it for me and it's gorgeous, but I just have this problem with wearing it. And I had worn it that day for whatever reason and he said to me, "You're not Jewish, why are you wearing that?" And I said, "Yes I am." And we had a fight because this professor said, "Look at your face. There's just no way." And I said, "You don't judge a book by its cover. How dare you say to me that I'm not! I am."

It seems apparent that such cruel and ill thought out statements may have had damaging effects upon this child's attempt to bond with her adoptive family. As a youngster, any feelings of not really belonging to her parents may have been reinforced by the continual reminder that she did not resemble her parents. Constantly being told "you don't look Jewish," could interfere with the bonding between an adoptee and the Jewish people. Frequent comments referring to one's non-Jewish physical appearance can become a self-fulfilling prophecy and can have a detrimental effect upon an emerging Jewish identity. If an adoptee is told often enough that he or she does not look Jewish, then this too, may become part of his or her self image. Even in college the individual quoted above faced ignorance and stupidity and the continual necessity of proving her Jewishness! Incidents such as these seem to confirm the idea that adoptees can face great challenges in adjusting to their families and in adjusting to Judaism .

Another woman's reaction to this question presents an interesting dichotomy of which she herself is aware. on the one hand, she admits to being "always very proud" to hear that she did not look jewish because she "loves smashing stereotypes." She enjoys saying:

> You think you've never met a Jew, then you tell me I can't be Jewish. Well, if you've never met a Jew, how do you know what a Jew looks like? And they describe

> this stereotype, at which point I say, "well look! Notice! it doesn't have to be that way!"

However, the other side of the issue is that this woman is also conscious of her need to be identified as a Jew as she indicated:

> Especially now that I am in the cantorate, I find myself trying to prove to other people that I am a Jew. I sit on the subway and I see men with a kippah or men studying some Jewish text or women wearing a wig or a head covering of some sort and I feel some need to let them know somehow. I mean, I don't know if everybody looks around and says "I wonder how may Jews are in this car?" And that automatically they'd count me out and I want people to know. I went to the Touro Synagogue recently in Rhode Island and everyone was waiting to go on this tour, and I was so sure, in fact I heard it a couple of times "Shiksah, shiksah. You know, no big deal. It's just someone who wants to see this historic building." And I felt like you know, "Hey, I'm a Jew! What are you saying! I'm more Jewish than you are. I'm going to cantorial school: I could tell you all about this place. And then I find myself blurting things out like, "Oh look! They use the Art Scroll Siddur!" . . . and using Hebrew or Yiddish or something. And I don't think anyone really cares whether or not I'm Jewish, I just feel it's still an identity thing for me because of my looks. It bothers me.

It is interesting to speculate as to what effect these emotions had upon her choosing the cantorate. She admits this by saying, "The fact that I'm becoming a cantor may say something." It is obvious that her chosen career will prove her Jewishness to the world. No longer will explanations be required because as a cantor she will work in an environment

that will confirm her Judaism on a daily basis. Moreover, as a cantor her appearance will also help erase the "Jewish" stereotype of which she is so conscious.

This individual is still grappling with identity issues. She appears to be engaged in a struggle to come to terms with her strong Jewish identity and her non-Jewish appearance. Her acute sensitivity regarding her appearance is an aspect of her identity development related to adoption which is still to be resolved. The personal interview took place at her graduate school and she assured me that I'd have no trouble finding her because she would be the only one there with blond hair. During the course of our meeting I told her, "You know, I had trouble picking you out this morning. There were three blondes that I saw when I entered." She found this truthful admission "very interesting." It certainly suggests that her perception of herself as constantly standing out in a group as the "non-Jew" is not always correct.

All of the adoptees in this study had heard repeated allusions to their non-Jewish appearances. A few claimed such remarks had no effect upon them. However, most of these individuals did experience a negative reaction which varied from mild annoyance to acute distress.

It is true that some children who are born Jews are also told from time to time that they do not "look" Jewish and this statement can also be upsetting to them. Constant reminders of one's "non-Jewish" physical appearance can adversely affect

the development of anyone's positive Jewish identity, because, in essence, this comment suggests to a person that he or she does not belong. However, in the case of the child who is a born Jew, the remark may be less detrimental. This child is aware of his or her parentage, and the child can be secure in the knowledge that he or she is Jewish. In an adoptee, however, there may be many doubts concerning one's Jewish identity. Remarks concerning a "non-Jewish" physical appearance addressed to the adopted child can confirm the alienation that he or she may already feel. Remarks concerning the physical appearance of adoptees may, therefore, be far more threatening than they are to the born Jewish child.

Summary of Conclusions

One of the main objectives of this research was to determine whether having a non-Jewish birthmother negatively impacted on the development of a Jewish identity for the adoptees under study. It seems that the religion of an adopted child's birthmother is irrelevant. The adoptees interviewed believe that religion is learned, not inherited. Regardless of the religion of one's birthparents, the faith community in which one is raised becomes one's faith community.

For some however, the religion of one's birthmother is

significant; it actually contributed to what they perceived as estrangement from Judaism. It stands to reason that in the general adopted Jewish population, there are others for whom the religion of a non-Jewish birthmother also impacts negatively on the development of a secure Jewish identity.

The unarticulated dilemma of the adoptees in this study reflects a tension between an ethnic perspective on Jewish identity, on the one hand, and a religious Jewish identity, on the other. Rabbi Henry Cohen, who has written on many aspects of Jewish identity, offers the following definition:

> It is generally agreed that Jews are a people historically traceable to the tribes of Israel, that this people over the centuries developed a language, literature, and folkways, and-above all-a religion that gave meaning and purpose to its existence.[4]

According to Mordecai Kaplan, founder of Reconstructionism among others, Judaism, unlike other faiths, is more than a religion. Although religion is Judaism's central and most vital aspect, there are other aspects, as well, involving important ethnic elements. The adoptees I interviewed seemed to have little trouble with their religious Jewish identity. However, the ethnic element, understood primarily in terms of their physical appearance, seemed much more problematic. Judith Klein, who has studied the relationship between Jewish identity and self-esteem, believes that:

> An ethnic group consists of people who conceive of themselves as being of a kind. They are united by emotional bonds and concerned with the preservation of

> their type. . . . they speak the same language, . . . and they share a common cultural heritage. Since those who form such units are usually endogamous, they tend to look alike. Far more important, is the belief that they are of common descent, a belief usually supported by myths or a partly fictitious history.[5]

While the adoptees use the vocabulary of religious Jewish identity, it is really the ethnic aspect of their Jewish identity which troubles them. It seems that it is more difficult for an adoptee, or a convert, to "feel" Jewish. The physical appearance of an adoptee often does not conform to what the adoptee perceives to be the stereotype of a Jew, what it is necessary to look like to really belong to the Jewish group. Jewish identity confusion can become exacerbated during an adoptee's adolescence, because, in addition to facing the normal developmental tasks of the teenage years, the adoptee must cope with the ramifications of adoption as well. Jewish identity development may also be impeded by a perceived non-Jewish physical appearance. Silverman says:

> If the child, . . . 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.[6]

Jews as a people claim a folk history that dates back to biblical times. Since an adoptee does not share the adoptive parents' biological legacy, therefore, it appears difficult for him or her to identify with the ancient Jewish people. Klein informs us that:

> There are two sources of definitions for ethnic group membership. One is the definition-by-other, or the majority group's definition. The second source is the ethnic group members' self-definition.[7]

If an adoptee is told that he or she does not "look" Jewish then he or she is being told that according to this artificial standard, he or she does not look like he or she is a part of the Jewish people.

Klein's study of the identity development of minority group children says:

> Children of various racial, ethnic and religious minorities have the same developmental tasks majority children do, but certain problems are exaggerated . . . The task of creating an identity out of various identifications is the same, but for minority children it appears to be more complicated and more conflictual, . . .[8]

Klein's[9] research implies that since in America Jews constitute a religious minority, it will be more difficult for <u>any</u> child to develop a positive Jewish identity. The adoptee, in addition to struggling with the issues of adoption and questions of Jewish identity, also has to deal with the implications of being raised in a minority faith. The adoptee has to fight against the majority culture to be Jewish, only to have fellow Jews question his or her status as a Jew. Silverstein agrees:

> 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 by being adopted, then by being Jews, and finally, by being a gentile or "stranger" within the Jewish community.[10]

The adoptees under study are trying to discover how to become part of the Jewish people while focused on a misunderstood sense of Jewish ethnicity. Presently, in America, born Jews are also grappling with this issue. Today Jewish identity is a rather ill-defined phenomenon. It is reflective of a community which has acculturated well with few new immigrants. Jewish religion has replaced ethnicity as it impacts on Jewish identity.

The individuals selected for this study had similar family backgrounds. Most of the subjects, seven out of the nine interviewed, were recommended to me by Jewish professionals. These adoptees were all from affiliated families who participated actively in Jewish life. These individuals, with one exception, were raised by parents who supported the development of Jewish identities in their children. Yet, despite their support, obstacles to the formation of a positive Jewish identity were found even in this select group of individuals.

In the group under study, there was often a lack of honesty between parents and children concerning adoption. Parents frequently avoided discussing adoption issues, and in some cases, even lied to their children. Adoptees often find themselves caught between a desire for information concerning their birthparents and a fear that their questions could hurt

or be misunderstood by their adoptive parents. Parents are also caught in the middle. All of the subjects I interviewed told me repeatedly that they felt whatever questions they had regarding their biological heredity merely represents a desire to know the missing pieces of their background. These adoptees were looking for information, they were not trying to replace their adoptive parents. Honesty in adoption can be difficult and painful but, as illustrated by the experiences of this group, dishonesty can negatively impact on the psychological development of the individual as well as on his or her Jewish identity.

Perceptions concerning physical appearance and Jewishness were found to be the most troublesome area for the individuals in this group. Some of the individuals under study were lightskinned, lighthaired, and blue-eyed. Other adoptees I interviewed had dark complexions and dark brown or black hair. A dark featured individual is most often cited as the Jewish stereotype and yet both dark featured and light featured adoptees experienced ridicule. These comments are ill-logical, senseless, and hurtful. Stereotypes such as this one concerning Jewish physical appearance can be altered through awareness and education. The ramifications of this conclusion and the others will be discussed fully in the next chapter.

In summary, this research has important implications for the adoptee, the adoptive parents, Jewish professionals, as well as the general Jewish community. The material I have

presented can be reassuring to the adoptee. The comments of other adoptees, particularly as documented in the appendix, will show that many of the feelings of alienation, many of the situations and experiences revealed during the interviews, are similar. For adoptees, the knowledge that their experiences and feelings are not unique or strange, can be helpful. For adoptees, as for anyone, the understanding that others shared your problems or experiences can provide a sense of comfort reassurance.

The results of this study can be insightful to adoptive parents or grandparents. Adoption should be dealt with honestly and openly. As one reads the accounts of the adoptees in this study, this perspective is confirmed. Parents should not be threatened by the questions concerning birthparents which their adopted children ask. The adoptees in this study insisted over and over that their inquiries were merely for information to fill in the missing pieces of their background. The adoptees were <u>not</u> looking for new parents. This research also indicates that intrinsic to adoption are particular challenges which must be faced by the adoptee and the adoptive parents.

The results of this research helps raise the level of awareness of Jewish professionals concerning adoption and Jewish identity development. Many teachers, rabbis, or principals may not realize that there are populations, such as adoptees, within our schools or congregations who may benefit

from a keen awareness of the potential challenges they face concerning Jewish identity. Specific implications of this study for Jewish professionals will be discussed at length in the next chapter.

While the phrase "You don't look Jewish," may appear quite harmless, it reflects a lack of understanding among those who make such remarks. Others can learn from this study that Jewish identity development can be more difficult for individuals such as adoptees, children of intermarriages, and Jews-by-Choice. Once understood, then positive action can be taken. Ways of integrating and helping these specialized populations feel welcome and at home in the synagogue as well as the religious school can be developed. Recommendations for such action will be included in the final chapter of this thesis.

ENDNOTES

1. Erikson's theory is discussed extensively in Chapter Three of this thesis. Erikson states that everyone goes through eight stages of identity development. These stages being in infancy and continue throughout life. This thesis is concerned only with the first six stages in Erikson's schema which extend from infancy to young adulthood.

2. Deborah Silverstein, "Identity Issues in the Jewish Adopted Adolescent" Journal of Jewish Communal Service 61, no. 4 (Summer 1985): 321.

3. Lewins's theory is discussed in Chapter Five of this thesis. Lewin's term "marginal man" refers to a person who no longer fits into his or her old group, yet is not really accepted into the new group. The individual who questions her birthmother's country of origin and religion appears to be trying to discover "her" group. She articulates her desire to "belong" and to be "official." She desires to really belong to a group and not to be marginal or between groups.

4. Henry Cohen, Why Judaism? (New York: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1973), 3-4.

5. Judith Weinstein Klein, Jewish Identity and Self-Esteem (New York: The American Jewish Committee, 1989), 9, citing T. Shibutani and K. Kwan, Ethnic Stratification (New York: Macmillan Co., 1965), 40.

6. Silverstein, "Identity Issues in the Jewish Adopted Adolescent," 327.

7. Klein, Jewish Identity and Self-Esteem, 9.

8. Ibid., 53.

9. Judith Weinstein Klein's research on identity development in children of ethnic or religious minorities is discussed at length in Chapter Five of this thesis. Klein states that it is harder for minority children to develop a positive self-image. In her doctoral study she investigated the relationship between Jewish identity and self-esteem. She found that Jews with a strong positive Jewish identity exhibited high self-esteem. Klein's work is based upon Lewin's theory which is also discussed in Chapter Five.

10. Silverstein, "Identity Issues in the Jewish Adopted Adolescent," 327.

CHAPTER SEVEN

RECOMMENDATIONS

Deborah Silverstein, who has studied the impact of adoption upon the adoptee, the adoptive parents, and birthparents, says that "adoption is such a common experience" that it is worthy of investigation, and "Jews are over-represented in the large number of adopters."[1] Aspects of the impact of adoption on Jewish adoptee may be applicable to an even larger population. It is probable that children of mixed marriages may also experience Jewish identity confusion. I believe that some children of mixed marriages, feel estranged from Judaism for reasons similiar to those of the adoptee. Some children of mixed marriages, like some adoptees may not "look" Jewish. Like the adoptee, these children have a non-Jewish birthparent. Children of an mixed marriage, raised by a non-Jewish parent, with non-Jewish grandparents and other relatives, may receive perplexing and often mixed messages regarding Judaism and Jewish identity. In the case of a mixed marriage, the Jewish identity of the child may not be nurtured by both parents. Since the child from a mixed marriage may share much of the Jewish identity confusion found in the adoptee, I believe that further research among both groups is recommended. Furthermore, training is needed for Jewish educators who will be working with these specialized populations if they are going to have a positive influence in

developing the Jewish identities of these children. Teachers need to be aware of the challenges and needs of the Jewish adoptee. To help principals and teachers better integrate specialized populations into the classroom multi-session courses or workshops should be offered by organizations such as; the National Association of Temple Educators, the Coalition for the Advancement of Jewish Education, the Board of Jewish Education, and Hebrew Union College. Educators need to be taught to identify and to help children in the religious school, for whom the development of a positive Jewish identity may be very complex process.

A second recommendation of this study concerns the act of conversion. Since the act of conversion was perceived as helping individuals in this study, I suggest that this option be discussed by rabbis as part of their spiritual counseling or by knowledgeable educators if this issue arises in their contacts with parents. There were individuals in this study who achieved a positive Jewish identity through the act of conversion as adults. The conversion ceremony may help an adult adoptee to "feel" more Jewish and, therefore, I recommend that it be suggested as a viable option. I would strongly encourage parents to have their adopted children undergo a halakhic conversion during the first few years of life. Jewish professionals can help the adoptive parent by advising infant conversion as the first step in helping the child attain a positive Jewish identity. In my opinion,

halakhic conversion should be recommended because it is the only way in which the child can be considered a Jew by the entire Jewish community. If the adoptee is Jewish to some Jews and not Jewish to others, identity confusion may occur. One adoptee reflected this confusion when she told me that she realizes she is Jewish according to some Jews and not Jewish according to others. Throughout the interviews, numerous anecdotes were related to me of adoptees being told by a teacher, in front of the entire religious school class, that they were not "really" Jewish since they had not undergone conversion. Such incidents can threaten the Jewish identity development of the adoptee. Even in adulthood the realization that not everyone considers an adoptee Jewish can be painful. Yet some of the adoptees under study were not even aware of the fact that if they did not undergo a halakhic conversion, despite being raised as Jews, they were not considered to be Jewish by traditional Jews. One adoptee I interviewed seemed both surprised and bothered by these facts.

In the future if questions concerning the religion of the birthmother occur to the growing child, they can be answered honestly but without casting any doubts upon the Jewishness of the adoptee. A parent can explain honestly to his or her child that despite the religion of the birthmother, he or she is absolutely Jewish and became Jewish through the act of halahkic conversion.

As a Reform Jew, my position of support for the act of

halakic conversion reflects a tension in American Jewish life. Like the adoptees in this study, I believe Judaism is learned and not inherited. I do not believe that the act of halakhic conversion itself makes a child Jewish. It is the upbringing and the education of the child which fosters the development of his or her Jewish identity. I advocate halakhic conversion not out of belief, but out of necessity until Reform Judaism's position on this issue can be accepted by all Jews. I advocate halakhic conversion because I believe that the secure Jewish identity of an adoptee is the priority, and I view the act of halakic conversion as a means to achieve this end. I believe, it is in the best interests of the adoptee to eliminate all questions as to his or her authenticity as a Jew by having him or her under go the act of halakic conversion.

Despite the advantages, there are tensions in Jewish law which halakhic conversion does not resolve. Halakhah places adoptive parents in the dilemma of raising the child as if it were born to them, while still recognizing the importance of bloodlines or biological inheritance. For adoptive parents who adhere to Jewish law the dichotomy is very real. Rabbi Michael Gold, who has written extensively on adoption, and his wife, are obligated to treat their children as if they were their "own." Conversely, halakhah informs Rabbi Gold that his children can reverse their conversion when they reach the age of majority. They are permitted to marry one another since they lack a blood tie. His son can only have the status of

Yisrael[2] regardless of the status of his adoptive father. His daughter is not permitted to marry a Kohen.[3] Of greater importance than these specific prohibitions is the acknowledgment of the hidden message. Jewish law seems to be self-contradictory. It seems to be saying the child is to be raised as your "own" and yet he or she is not completely your own. Halakhah seems to be giving the adoptee and his family a mixed message. For the adoptee and the adoptive parents who adhere to halakhah, and, to a lesser degree, even for those Jews who do not follow it, an additional source of confusion must be faced. The knowledge that according to Jewish law parents are to raise the child as their "own," while at the same time remembering that the biological heredity of the child is not their own, illustrates the unsolvable dilemma of the adoptive parent.

Honesty in adoption was problematic for the people in this study. Psychological intervention, perhaps individual, family, or group therapy, might have been beneficial for some of these individuals and their parents to help them deal with the issues of adoption. Support groups under the auspices of hospitals, mental health clinics, or adoptive parents groups, can often provide help for the adoptee and the adoptive parents. Jewish social service organizations or Jewish communal organizations should offer counselling regarding adoption issues. Silverstein agrees that the Jewish community must do more to help all parties in the adoption triad:

> 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. . . . Interventions . . . should concern themselves with stabilizing and nurturing the child . . . many problems in bonding, conversion, and Jewish identity should be dealt with . . .[4]

Adoption issues can be extremely difficult to cope with because of the anxiety, guilt, fear, and other emotions which understandably are present. Perhaps the challenges which are intrinsic to adoption could be more easily overcome if professional assistance was sought.

In the Reform movement, there is in existence a Union of American Hebrew Congregations Committee on the Family. Within this framework more should be done to assist the Jewish adoptive family. Lehiyot publishes a newsletter and sponsors conferences to assist Reform Jewish parents whose children are learning disabled. While it is inappropriate to make a direct comparison between these two groups, publications, seminars, and conferences could and should be offered to adoptive parents as well. The Union of American Hebrew Congregations provides speakers for congregations and encourages the development of support groups for the intermarried. Speakers and support groups are also needed by our congregations for the adoptive family. There is a need to have questions concerning adoption answered from a psychological perspective and from a Jewish perspective as well, particularly if we are trying to help <u>all</u> children develop positive Jewish

identities.

Physical appearance presented universal challenges to the adoptees in this study. Individual subjects indicated that such comments regarding their non-Jewish appearance were and are offensive. Such remarks convey to the adoptee that he or she does not belong, does not fit in, is unlike other Jews. Children of mixed marriages, like some adopted children, may not "look" Jewish. They, too, may find themselves having to prove to others their Jewish parentage. For both the adoptee and the child of a mixed marriage, such remarks can be hurtful and can interfere with positive Jewish identity development.

A stereotype of what a Jew looks like obviously exists in the minds of many people. The process of stereotyping individuals is essentially wrong. Attitudes need to be changed through education. The religious school staff must be made aware of the detrimental effects comments regarding physical appearance can have in the case of the adoptee or the child of a mixed marriage. Teachers can be taught to utilize the wide varieties of physical appearance within their classrooms to draw attention to the fact that Jews look very dissimilar. In addition to demonstrating the physical diversity of American Jewry, new curriculum illustrating the various population groups in Israel, such as the Sephardic, Yemenite, and Ethiopian will further illustrate that there is no one way in which we "look" Jewish. Special units, textbooks, or library books can be written for religious

school use which will help destroy the stereotype by showing the physical diversity of Jews. Media must be developed which will show the variety of physical appearance within the Jewish community.

Adults in our congregations also need to be educated in order to eliminate the perpetration of this stereotype. This can be done in a variety of ways such as: sermons, adult education courses, family education programs, lectures, and bulletin articles. As is the case with children, the education of the adults in our synagogues must be continuous and ongoing if we are to succeed in destroying this stereotype. The question of physical appearance was the most troublesome area uncovered in this study and it is the one area which is relatively simple to ameliorate. I think awareness within our congregations on all levels, professional staff, teachers, parents, congregants, and children is the solution. Attitudes can slowly be changed by means of persistent and continuous education. I recommend that further research on the development of Jewish identity in the adoptee be undertaken. It could benefit not only the Jewish adoptee population but the ever increasing population of children of mixed marriages in whom we hope to develop strong Jewish identities.

One eleven year old boy distinguishes between being adopted and being born into a family as follows:

> The child who is born into his family is like a board that is nailed down from the start. But, the adopted child, him the parents have to nail down, otherwise he is like a loose board in mid-air.[5]

Not only is this adoptee able to visualize and articulate the difference between being born into a family and being adopted into a family. This child reflects the findings of this study: an adoptee faces many challenges and adjustments. For an adoptee to become part of his or her family, developing a positive identity as well as a positive Jewish identity is difficult. This child shows an understanding of the parents' vital role in the development of the adoptee. I would add that in the case of the Jewish child, it is up to Jewish professionals as well as the entire Jewish community to assist the adoptive parents in this process of "nailing him down." As illustrated in this study the adoptee, because of the nature of adoption, faces many additional challenges throughout his or her lifetime. However, with a better understanding of adoption and identity issues by parents, adoptees, and Jewish professionals; with patience and great love, I believe, the adoptee can be helped to surmount these challenges and realize his or her potential as a human being and as a Jew.

ENDNOTES

1. Deborah Silverstein, "Identity Issues in the Jewish Adopted Adolescent" Journal of Jewish Communal Service 61, no. 4 (Summer 1985), 321.

2. The terms Yisrael, Levite, and Kohen are biblical hereditary classifications of the ancient Israelites which are still adhered to by those who follow halakhah. The Yisrael was the ordinary Jew. The Levite was a descendent of the tribe of Levi. The Levite assisted the priests and had a higher status than the Yisrael. The Kohen was descended from Aaron, the high priest and possessed the highest status. According to halakhah, the adopted child cannot have a higher status than Yisrael even if his adoptive father is a Levite or a Kohen.

3. Michael Gold, "Adoption: A New Problem For Jewish Law" Judaism 36, (Fall 1987), 443.

4. Silverstein, "Identity Issues in the Jewish Adopted Adolescent," 328.

5. Joan Spector, Adoptive Status and Level of Thinking About Adoption in 5-13 Year Old Children (Ph.D. diss., Adelphi University, 1986), 91, citing Jonassohn Kirk and A.D. Fish, "Are Adopted Children Especially Vulnerable to Stress? Archives of General Psychiatry 14, (1966), 291.

APPENDIX A

Interview Background Data

ADOPTION AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF JEWISH IDENTITY

Interview Background Data

No._____

Date_____

1. Age_____

2. Sex_____

3. Education: (circle highest grade completed)
   9 10 11 12 Bus. school 1 2 3 4 College 1 2 3 4

   Advanced Degree_____ Other_____

4. Occupation: (title and description of work)

   _____

   _____

   _____

5. Jewish Synagogue Affiliation: Orthodox_____Conservative_____
   Reform_____ None_____

6. Is there any other information or personal experience which you feel could be useful for the purpose of this study?

   _____

   _____

   _____

APPENDIX B

Thesis Interview Questions

Thesis Interview Questions

1. When you were growing up how were the Jewish holidays treated in your home? Did you and your parents attend services together? Were your parents active in the temple or synagogue? Did your parents support or work for any Jewish organizations? Do you think Judaism was/is important to your parents? Why or why not?

2. Did you attend Religious School? Was the school part of a Reform, Conservative, or Orthodox synagogue? How old were you when you started? Did you like it?

3. When did you first become curious about the religious background of your birthmother? Did you talk about it with anybody? How important was it for you to know whether or not your birthmother was a Jew?

4. Did you ever talk about it with your adoptive parents? What was it like talking about it? What do you think it was like for your parents?

5. Did you have any feelings about being raised as a Jew after you found out that your birth-mother was not Jewish?

6. Do you know if your parents ever had a conversion ceremony for you? Do you know what it was like?

7. Did anybody ever say, "You don't look Jewish!" How did your respond? Did you tell your parents about it? What was their response?

8. Did you become a Bar/Bat Mitzvah? Were you confirmed? What were these occasions like for you? During these life-cycle ceremonies did you ever think about the religion of your birthmother?

9. Do you feel it is important for you to marry a Jew? Why or why not? Do you feel it is important to bring up your children as Jews? Why or why not?

10. Do you feel religion is inherited or learned?

11. Is becoming a Jew something of which to feel proud? Can a person who has converted to Judaism become the same kind of Jew as one who is born Jewish?

12. Should a Jew ever hide his Jewishness? Why? When?

13. What do you think it means to be a Jew?

14. Is Judaism important or unimportant to you? Why?

15. What advice, help, or recommendations would you give to Jewish parents who have adopted a child whose birthmother was not Jewish? How can they help their child to truly "feel" Jewish?

16. Can you share with me any anecdotes, stories, or experiences from your life that are relevant to this study?

APPENDIX C

Data Obtained From Thesis Interview Questions

Data Obtained From Thesis Interview Questions

1. When you were growing up, how were the Jewish holidays treated in your home? Did you and your parents attend services together? Were your parents active in the temple or synagogue? Did your parents support or work for any Jewish organizations? Do you think Judaism was/is important to your parents? Why or why not?

A. Her family was together on the holidays. Her parents did not go to work. She went to synagogue services occasionally but only with her father. Sometimes, most of the time, she went to services with friends. She did not remember attending services with both of her parents. Her family was not active in the synagogue. Her mother was a member of B'nai Brith.

B. Her family celebrated every holiday. They were observant Reform Jews. She went to temple with her parents and the holidays were always celebrated at home. She grew up in Jewish home. Went to services with parents and family regularly. Her parents were not active in the synagogue or in Jewish organizations.

C. Her parents were very strict about celebrating the holidays. She wasn't "into it" [holiday celebrations] very much. She said that her parents over-emphasized everything to involve her in it. She knew Judaism was very important to her parents. She stated that her family "had a lot of religion on the major holidays," and that, "Synagogue services bored me to death." She felt her parents really over-emphasized the tradition. She said it was almost like a game of show-and-tell. She felt as if her mother was saying, "These are my kids, they're just like me." She stated that her mother "had an unspoken problem with adopting us. I think she adopted us to make my father happy. Every time I asked why we were adopted, I got vague answers." She realized at a young age that adoption was a very touchy subject. She and her siblings all knew that they were adopted but the particulars were a very "touchy" subject.

D. He remembered celebrating Chanukah, Sukkot, and Pesach as a child. His parents weren't practicing Jews when he was young. The holidays were geared more to the temple than to the home when he was young. When he began religious school that changed. His parents became more involved as he got older. He remembers the holidays through observing them in temple rather than through family celebrations at home. Today, his parents are active in synagogue life. His parents support Jewish causes. His mother was active in Jewish organizations and was president of Hadassah and B'nai Brith. He took Judaism for granted when he was young. He wasn't

aware there were non-Jews when he was growing up. His Jewish identity was important to him. He felt he was "not religious." The rabbi of his congregation gave a speech in which he said that Judaism asks you to listen, not to believe. He responded to this idea and always remembered it.

E. Her family celebrated the High Holidays. They went to temple together. They celebrated most of the holidays at home such as Chanukah and Passover. She went to synagogue with her parents. Her grandparents on her father's side were Holocaust survivors. Her parents belonged to a temple, but they were not active members.

F. The holidays were not really observed to any extent in his family. His parents were liberal and assimilated Jews. He went to grandma's for "culinary Judaism." He remembers having a Christmas tree when he was young. He never went to services except once on Simchat Torah with his father. His parents were not affiliated with a synagogue and were not active in any Jewish organizations. His parents merely identified themselves as Jews without actively participating in Jewish life.

G. Her parents celebrated all the holidays. She particularly remembered Chanukah and Passover as a child. She was raised as a Jew and knew nothing else. Being Jewish was just normal to her. Every Friday night she went to services with her parents who were very involved in the temple. Her parents were president of sisterhood/brotherhood of their temple. Her parents were honored by the UJA. She knew that Judaism was very important to her parents.

H. He remembers that the holidays were all observed at home. He attended synagogue with his parents each Shabbat and on the holidays. He felt that Judaism was important to his parents.

I. The holidays were all observed in her home. She grew up in a traditional household. In preparation for Pesach, she remembered that her mother "changed the house." On Shabbat, she and her brother couldn't go out and ride bikes. They were not shomer-Shabbat, but her parents observed Shabbat. She attended an Orthodox synagogue with her parents, but they went mainly on the holidays. They did not go every Shabbat. She recalled the separate seating of men and women in her synagogue. She attended a yeshivah, and her mother was active in the school. Her father had no religious training. He couldn't read Hebrew. Her father was a passive person. Her father was interested and learned from her. She knew Judaism was important to her parents. It was particularly important to her mother, ridiculously important. She felt her mother "shoved it [Judaism] down her throat." She believed that her mother pushed it too much.

2. Did you attend Religious School? Was the school part of a Reform, Conservative, or Orthodox synagogue? How old were you when you started? Did you like it?

A. She did not attend religious school as a child. Her parents claimed she had been enrolled and didn't want to continue because most of her friends weren't Jewish. She remembers being in a religious school class with much younger children. She attended a camp for 8 years which was run by observant Jews. During these summers she really learned about Judaism for the first time. Her experiences at camp had a big influence upon her Jewish identity.

B. She began religious school on Sundays at age 10. Later on she attended Hebrew school during the week until Bat Mitzvah. She continued her religious education in her synagogue school until Confirmation. She then attended an Orthodox high school. She remembered very little about her Jewish education as a child. She considered herself just like anyone else. Religious school to her was boring, and it was extra schooling which she could have done without. She didn't want to be there.

C. She attended religious school as a child. She was bored, disinterested, felt as if she was forced to go. She had problems with some of the other kids who made fun of her. She had moved in the 6th grade and she felt as if she didn't dress as well as the other kids. She was a "tomboy." The kids in religious school harassed her, and she took it personally. These experiences played a part in "turning her off" from religious school. She was the "class clown," and she enjoyed causing trouble in class. She began religious school in kindergarten. Her parents were active in the synagogue.

D. He started religious school early, probably in grade 2,3, or 4, in a large Reform congregation. He didn't like learning Hebrew. He stated that when he was young, he was obstinate and didn't like anything people were trying to teach him. He liked religious school. He liked learning about the Holocaust and things dealing with persecution of the Jews, such as ghettos and pogroms. He read books such as <u>The Wall</u> and <u>The Last of the Just</u>.

E. She attended a Conservative synagogue school. She was enrolled at age 6 and continued through Hebrew High School. She had a Bat Mitzvah. She didn't learn much Hebrew until she went to Israel. Her general feeling regarding religious school was positive.

F. He had no religious instruction as a child. He insisted at age 11 that he wanted to become a Bar Mitzvah. He went to a tutor briefly for religious instruction. He read the

prayers and Torah portion for his Bar Mitzvah service in transliteration. Even though he did not learn Hebrew, he remembered feeling good about becoming a Bar Mitzvah. Had he not asked for it, he might well never have had a Bar Mitzvah. Hebrew was totally foreign to him. It was the essence of Bar Mitzvah that was important to him.

G. She attended a Reform religious school from the time she was in first grade until her Bat Mitzvah. She was also confirmed. Learning Hebrew was not easy for her. She never loved religious school, but she never hated it either. Her parents wanted her to have a Jewish education so she attended.

H. He was enrolled in a Reform religious school. There were four or five classes on Saturdays and Sundays. When he was older, he attended on week-nights. He became a Bar Mitzvah and was also confirmed. He wasn't always thrilled to go to religious school, but he stuck with it to please his parents. He enjoyed religious school around the time of his Bar Mitzvah.

I. She attended an Orthodox yeshiva from kindergarten through 12th grade. She went to an all-girls high school. She hated religious instruction in first grade. Her teacher told stories which affected her sleeping. The teacher told the girls that if they didn't say the Shema before bed, big bugs would come out of the closet and eat them. She and others in her class didn't sleep nights. The teacher also told them that if they didn't cut off one of their doll's fingers, playing with dolls was idol worship. In grades 2-5, religious school was okay, but in high school she got turned-off. She attended a very religious high school, but her home was <u>not</u> religious. At school, she was criticized for her lack of observance. Her family was not <u>shomer-Shabbat</u>. There was a conflict between home and school regarding observance of Shabbat/Judaism. She was called an apikoras, the worse kind of a Jew, because she knew halakhah but did not follow it.

3. When did you first become curious about the religious background of your birthmother? Did you talk about it with anybody? How important was it for you to know whether or not your birthmother was a Jew?

A. When she was age 7-8 she asked her mother, "What if I'm not Jewish?" Her mother replied that her birthmother wanted her to be with a Jewish family. She wondered if that meant her birthmother had been Jewish. She only got vague answers to these questions. It was important to her that her birthmother was Jewish. She liked the fact that her birthmother wanted her to be with a Jewish family. She was concerned with her ethnic background. She wondered, "What if an adoptee raised in a Jewish home, had biological parents who were German. What if her grandparents were pro-Hitler!" She felt that would have been a wild contradiction! The religion of her birthmother bothered her, and she talked about it with her mother. Discussing the adoption, in general, caused her mother anxiety. When pressed, her mother said she thought her birthfather was Jewish. She never really believed that.

B. She was in junior high school when she first thought about the religion of her birthmother. Before that, it never occurred to her. She always knew she was adopted, but she never thought much about it. She was brought up as a Jew, and there was nothing else she knew besides Judaism. When the identity "thing" came up, she asked her parents questions. She assumed it [identity crisis] happened to all adoptees, no matter how happy their lives were. She asked questions such as, "Where did I come from? Why was I adopted in the first place?" Her parents honestly told her that her birthparents were not Jewish. They had very little other information. For conversion purposes, her parents had wanted to know the religion of her birthparents. They wanted her to undergo conversion so that the rest of the world would consider her Jewish. She underwent conversion at age 8.

C. She stated that she had never thought about the religion of her birthmother. She had wondered about her heritage and the ethnic background of her birthparents, but she had never wondered about their religion. It wasn't important to her.

D. He was never curious about the religion of his birthparents. If he had been given a choice, he would have picked Judaism. As an adult, he discovered that his birthmother was Catholic. He also found out that his parents had not told him the truth about his birthparents. He was told that his father was a soldier who was killed in Korea. His mother died on the delivery table. This story was told to him as a child and it "screwed him up for many years." He was told this story too young. He grew up with the idea that it was okay to do things that were wrong because he believed he

had done the ultimate wrong by killing his birthmother. He understood his innocence after years of therapy. The story protected his adopted parents. He expressed the thought that it is better not to tell a child that he or she is adopted. He said that the connection is made by the people who raise you. Being told that you are adopted gives you an opportunity to feel different. He said, "When you're adopted, you feel different." He was teased and harassed in school because of the fact that he was adopted. He was an only child, and his parents were older. He discovered the religion of his birthmother when he was 21-25. His parents were secretive about the details of his adoption. Not knowing his roots was hard in school as a kid. It made him feel different. He said, "You don't know who you are." He now knows his heritage is Scandinavian and Italian. Both of his birthparents were Catholics. He is proud of being Jewish. He can say he was born a Gentile and raised a Jew. He felt it was better to be a Jew.

E. At age 30, she discovered her parents, who said she was adopted from a Jewish adoption agency, had lied to her. She had questioned their story anyway because it just didn't fit. Adopting a blond hair, blue-eyed Jewish infant from Idaho seemed very unlikely, even though it might be remotely possible. The conclusion she came to was that it didn't really matter. Religion to her was a matter of how you were raised. Religion, she felt, is not a question of birth.

F. He always knew that his birthmother wasn't Jewish. Most of his friends were Christian. His best friend tried to influence him when he heard he had been born a Christian. His friend thought that maybe he could "get him [this adoptee] back." They tried to convert him and tried to teach him about Jesus and the Crucifixion. He never discussed it with his parents. They told him about his adoption at age 7. He was adopted at age 3. In Canada, he was put up for adoption as an infant and went from one home to another. He was finally adopted by New Yorkers.

G. She asked her mother in her early teens about the religion of her birthmother. She had to pry it out of her mother. Her parents were not anxious to reveal too much about "her" [birthmother]. Her birthmother was Anglo-Saxon Protestant. She found it very hard to ask her mother questions about her adoption. She never pursued finding her birthmother because she didn't want to hurt her parents. It was probably difficult for her parents, too. She felt that her parents might have been afraid that she "might go that way and question my religious faith that I was brought up in." No thoughts like these entered her mind when she asked these questions.

H. He had general curiosity concerning his birthparents. He never asked questions about their religious background. It wasn't important to him. The nationality of his birthparents concerned him, and he asked questions about it.

I. She always asked questions about the religion of her birthmother, even as a young child. She remembered sitting at a Passover Seder and everyone was singing. She couldn't sing or say the prayers. Her family would say to her "What's wrong with you?" She felt she didn't belong there. That wasn't her. It just wasn't in her. She felt that there was something wrong. She felt she shouldn't be at that table. She grew up being told her birthmother was Jewish. She felt in her gut that she didn't belong. They said she was a moody kid. She said, "I didn't think"-"Oh, she wasn't Jewish and I shouldn't be here" [because she had been told that her birthmother was Jewish]. She feels today as if she does not belong anywhere-"not here, not there." In her heart, when she goes through the motions of observing Judaism, she doesn't do anything. She stated, "I don't like going to synagogue because I feel I don't fit in, but I'm not going to church. I don't fit in there either."

4. Did you ever talk about the religion of your birthmother with your adoptive parents? What was it like talking about it? What do you think it was like for your parents?

A. Frequently, she questioned her parents about her birthmother. She wanted information. Her parents gave her vague answers like, "We think she was Jewish," or "Your birthfather may have been Jewish." Her parents tried to avoid discussions concerning her birthmother's religion.

B. Her parents were honest and at ease discussing adoption issues. She talked to them freely. Her parents told her what little they knew concerning her non-Jewish birthmother. Her parents seemed comfortable discussing adoption issues.

C. She was not concerned with the religion of her birthmother. She knew all adoption issues were very "touchy." She wanted information, but she was aware that her questions made her parents uncomfortable. She did not want to hurt her parents, so she eventually stopped asking questions.

D. He never asked about the religion of his birthmother. At age 25, he found out that his birthmother was not Jewish. He also discovered that his parents had lied to him all along concerning his biological parents. He believed his adoptive parents felt threatened by the existence of his biological parents, so they told him that his birthparents were dead.

E. She never discussed the religion of her birthmother with her parents or friends. Maybe it was discussed briefly with her husband, but it was not something that concerned her "all that much."

F. He never discussed the religion of his birthmother with his parents. He knew he was adopted, and he knew his birthmother was not Jewish. He stated that he had no problems with adoption issues.

G. She discussed the religion of her birthmother with her parents. They were not anxious to talk about it, and she had to "pry" the information out of them. It was very hard for her to ask questions, because she knew her parents found it difficult to discuss adoption issues.

H. He knew he was adopted, but the issue was not readily discussed at home. His parents were not at ease discussing adoption. The religion of his birthmother was not important to him, so he never discussed it with his parents or friends.

I. She was always curious about the religion of her birthmother. It was an important issue to her. Her parents lied to her, telling her that her birthmother was Jewish. She feels her parents could not cope with the truth. At 27, she found her non-Jewish birthmother and was very angry to learn that she had not been told the truth by the parents she trusted.

5. Did you have any feelings about being raised as a Jew after you found out that your birthmother was not Jewish?

A. She found out at age 29 that her birthmother was not Jewish. It bothered her a great deal. She studied for eight months with an Orthodox rabbi and formally converted to Judaism. She thought it was strange that her birthmother would have wanted her to be raised as a Jew if she herself was not Jewish. She always had a "feeling" that her birthmother was not Jewish.

B. She did have feelings about being raised as a Jew and having a non-Jewish birthmother. She claimed she doesn't fit the stereotype of what a Jew is suppose to look like since she's fair and blond. Her mother is a Holocaust survivor whose father and other relatives were killed. She remembered learning about what an Aryan was in a Sunday school Holocaust course. She worried that her biological parents or grandparents could have been German. They could have been Nazis or they could have believed in the Nazis. She went through a horrible guilt phase thinking that she might have been a product of that kind of hate, and here she was growing up with a parent whose family was killed in the Holocaust.

C. She never found out the religion of her birthmother, although it is extremely doubtful that she could have been Jewish. If she knew for a fact that her birthmother had not been Jewish, she believed that it might have changed her attitude toward being raised as a Jew. She was not sure how she would feel. She did not know if she would want to continue [being Jewish], or if she would resent the religion in which she had been raised. She expressed a desire to experience "something else and to decipher the differences" [Her meaning is unclear. Does she want to experience the differences between Christianity and Judaism?]

D. He found out at age 25 that his birthmother was not Jewish. He strongly suspected that he was not a born Jew. It was alleged by his parents. He "gloated" about his non-Jewish background. It was his way of snubbing the Gentiles by saying, "I was one, but now I'm not." He felt it was better to be Jewish than to be anything else. He said, "it's like being born poor and becoming rich. I feel I got something better. A better deal. I have a problem with other religions."

E. To this adoptee, religion is a question of the way you are brought up and not a question of birth. Knowing that her birthmother was not Jewish did not influence her own feelings about being raised as a Jew.

F. The fact that his birthmother was not Jewish was never even considered by him to be an issue. It was not a problem and still isn't for him. The religion of his birthmother makes no difference to him. He was raised as a Jew and that is what he considers himself to be.

G. She had questions about what it might have been like to have been brought up by her Catholic birthparents. She stated that her curiosity would not have pushed her to convert or go to Catholicism. She claimed that she did not feel confused, just curious. She said that she had a very happy childhood.

H. Having a non-Jewish birthmother and being raised as a Jew never bothered him. He felt you were Jewish if you had been raised as a Jew.

I. She lost all feeling for religion after she found out that her birthmother was not Jewish and that her parents had lied to her about it. She doesn't feel as if she belongs anywhere-not here, not there. She does what has to be done "Jewishly" for her children. She wanted her kids to have a sense of belonging. In her heart, she doesn't do anything. She doesn't like going to synagogue, because she doesn't feel as if she fits in; but she is not going to church, because she doesn't fit there either.

6. Do you know if your parents ever had a conversion ceremony for you? Do you know what it was like?

A. She under went halakhic conversion as an adult. The act of conversion enabled her to truly "feel" Jewish for the first time in her life. As an infant, she had been named in a synagogue, and this was considered to be enough of a conversion ceremony for her parents.

B. She underwent conversion at the age of eight. She was not told what was happening and, to this day, her parents cannot explain why they didn't tell her about her conversion. It was a school day and she, her sister, her parents, and the rabbi all went to the beach. Her father and the rabbi were dressed for work and she remembers thinking that they were wearing strange clothes for the beach. She and her sister were dunked in the ocean by her mother. Both girls were scared and cried. She remembered wanting to play in the sand following her "swim", but her mother reminded her that she had to go to school. It was a very strange day. Years later during B'nai Mitzvah class, as her rabbi explained conversion she realized what had happened that day.

C. She had a naming ceremony in a temple. She doesn't think there was any conversion ceremony.

D. He knew he had a bris, but he did not know if there was any conversion ceremony.

E. She doesn't know if she had a conversion ceremony. She was named in a temple.

F. He did not have a conversion ceremony. He believed that even his circumcision was merely a surgical procedure. He realized that "technically" he was never converted to Judaism.

G. She doesn't know if there was any kind of conversion ceremony for her. Before she married, her future mother-in-law said something to her father regarding the fact that she should convert since she was not a born Jew. She remembered her father becoming very angry. Her father informed her future in-laws that his daughter had become a Bat Mitzvah and she had been confirmed. According to her father, she was "more Jewish than most people." She does know that there was a baby naming ceremony for her in her parents' synagogue.

H. He doesn't know if he underwent conversion or if there was any kind of naming ceremony held for him. He had a bris.

I. She under went halakhic conversion prior to marriage. She was very angry because she had been told all her life that her birthmother was Jewish. Her adoption papers stated that her birthmother had been Jewish. The lawyer was her godfather, so she felt that these papers may have been inaccurate. Her adoptive mother claimed that the conversion was necessary "just to be sure." All her life she had been assured that her birthmother had been Jewish, now, just prior to marriage, her mother claimed she wasn't "sure." She felt as if she was already a Jew. She was furious, but she went along with the conversion ceremony for the sake of her future children. She wanted to remove any doubts as to her children's authenticity as Jews.

7. Did anybody ever say, "You don't look Jewish!" How did you respond? Did you tell your parents about it? What was their response?

A. People always said to her, "You don't look Jewish, you look Irish." It made her mad. She wanted to be Jewish. She liked being Jewish. That's why she underwent conversion when she learned her birthmother wasn't Jewish. She wanted to be officially something. She always wondered about the religion and nationality of her birthmother. For her, conversion was the way to be real, to be officially something and not just wonder about it. After conversion, she felt good because she knew she was officially Jewish.

B. People have always told her that she does not look Jewish. In her new high school, she was shunned by her peers. The way she looked was a threat to them [She entered a yeshivah as a new high school student]. She didn't feel she had any kind of identity since she was being shunned by all these Jews who were supposed to be peers and classmates. She felt like a Jew. She was proud of being Jewish. She didn't know any other way. Even today, almost every day, she is told that she doe not look Jewish. Her reaction to this statement is more intense now than when she was younger. She was always very proud to hear it. She loved smashing stereotypes. She would reply, "You tell me you never met a Jew, then you tell me I can't be Jewish. If you've never met a Jew - how do you know what a Jew looks like? Look, notice it doesn't have to be that way. What do you think a Jew looks like?"

She finds herself trying to prove to other people that she is a Jew. She still feels a need to let others know somehow. She went to the Touro Synagogue and she heard "Shiksa." "It's all right, she wants to see what this historic building looks like." She felt like saying, " Hey, I'm a Jew. I'm more Jewish than you are! I'm going to cantorial school." She wants people to know she's Jewish. Then, in the Touro Synagogue, she finds herself blurting things out like "Oh look, they use the Art Scroll Siddur, why do they use that?" Or she uses Hebrew or Yiddish words. She doesn't think anyone really cares if she's Jewish or not. It's still an identity issue for her just because of her looks and it bothers her.

C. People have often told her that she does not look Jewish. When she was growing up, her friends had no idea that she was Jewish, judging by her appearance. When they found out she was a Jew, they told her that she did not act Jewish. She stated that everybody has a stereotype of Jews. She believes that Jews are viewed as stingy, very tight with their money, and selfish in a way. She felt that Jews are not really willing to give or do something without wanting something in return. Jews, she felt, are also thought of as being mean. She believes in treating people the way she wants to be

treated. People ask her, "Are you Italian?" She replies, "I don't know. I could be." People have said that she looks Irish, Italian, Indian, or Oriental, because of her small size. Nobody has ever said to her, "You look Jewish."

D. He always knew his birthmother was not Jewish because everybody told him he didn't look Jewish, didn't act Jewish, and, therefore, couldn't be Jewish. He believed them. He wondered about it but never asked. He was never told. There was a big void, a big hole. He was "pissed" when he found out his birthparents were still alive, and his adoptive parents had lied to him. He understood the insecurity on the part of his adoptive parents, but he felt they should have had confidence in the child they raised. It's a two-way street he claimed. He's not interested in finding his birthparents. He felt that this would not be fair to anyone. It's not a need for him. Not looking Jewish raised doubts in him as a youngster. He was able to blow it off and not let it affect him. He could shut it off. He was curious. He was glad to find out the truth and to confirm things. It felt good.

E. All her life, people have said that she does not look Jewish. She said that this is a curious statement because Jewish people look very differently. There's no size or shape to being Jewish, she felt. It made her curious as to why someone would say that. Mostly Jewish people have said it to her. Some people have a preconceived notion of what Jewish people look like. She did not discuss adoption, in general, with her parents because it was such a sensitive subject. Whenever she attempted to ask a question, the "emotional message" she received was, don't ask. Her questions weren't answered.

F. Even today people tell him that he does not look Jewish. As a kid, he delivered packages in the neighborhood. An old Jewish lady once tried to tear a Jewish star from his neck. She asked why a goy would be wearing a Jewish star. He said, "but lady I am Jewish." She answered, "You don't look Jewish and you shouldn't be wearing it!" He never had a problem being picked on because of being Jewish as were some others. He liked the way he looked. He never mentioned this incident to his parents. He felt it was nothing traumatic.

G. People tell her all the time that she doesn't look Jewish. Now that she's married and has an Italian last name, people certainly don't think she's Jewish. She claimed I wouldn't believe what she hears. People said she looked like her father. She really did! She is annoyed today because she knows biologically she's not Jewish, but she really is Jewish according to the way she was raised. She knows that if her birthmother was not Jewish, according to Jewish law, she's not Jewish. She becomes "mildly annoyed" at remarks referring to

her appearance. She never discussed this issue with her parents.

H. People told him he did not look Jewish when he was growing up. Today, people tell Jewish jokes in front of him because they don't think he is Jewish. Because of his last name, people often don't realize that he's Jewish.

I. She said that people tell her she does not look Jewish "almost every day" of her life. As a kid she was told, "you don't look Jewish. You don't look like your parents. You can't be their child." She became so frustrated upon hearing such comments that she finally replied, "I look like my dog." She wore a Jewish star one day to college. Her professor insisted she wasn't Jewish and questioned why was she wearing a Jewish star. She said to him, "You're right, I wasn't born Jewish, but I am now." As a kid, it bothered her because it conflicted with what her parents had always said [that her birthmother had been Jewish]. Remarks like that made her feel as if she was different and did not really belong to her parents. This bothered her more or less, according to her mood. She said, "People are really stupid when it comes to this stuff." Her parents heard comments regarding her appearance, and they never said anything about it. One person said to her father, "Oh, Harry, she's so gorgeous. There's no way she's your daughter. She's adopted or a foster child." She said such incidents were annoying. Her father and she would smile. It was said so many times to her. She claimed that it doesn't bother her now.

8. Did you become a Bar/Bat Mitzvah? Were you confirmed? What were these occasions like for you? During these life-cycle ceremonies did you ever think about the religion of your birthmother?

A. She never had a Bat Mitzvah. She is currently part of an adult Bat Mitzvah program. She plans to have an adult Bat Mitzvah in the near future.

B. She had a Bat Mitzvah and she was confirmed.

C. She had a Bat Mitzvah with her brother. She did it because her parents wanted her to. She couldn't avoid doing it. She felt that she accomplished something by having a Bat Mitzvah, but she wouldn't let her parents know. She was afraid that her parents would feel too proud of it. She thought they would get a mixed message, and she didn't want to mislead them or anything. If they felt she'd really accepted Judaism and found out she hadn't, they would be really disappointed. She tried to please them. Attending services is not what she wants. She's still trying to figure out what she wants. She would like to experience everything. Not knowing much information about her birthparents bothered her. She felt that there is a really big gap of mystery. She has a really large curiosity. She likes being her own person and making her own decisions, and she felt being adopted leaves a big gap and a big mystery. There is a lot about her life that she doesn't know. Part of her wants to reach out and grasp what she doesn't know so that she can experience things and learn. Knowing that the people who raised her are not her "real" parents plays a big part in the things she does.

D. He became a Bar Mitzvah and was also confirmed.

E. She had a Bat Mitzvah. She also graduated from Hebrew High. She never thought about the religion of her birthmother during her Bat Mitzvah.

F. At his insistence, he became a Bar Mitzvah. His parents made a little party to celebrate the occasion. From the age of 13 until his marriage, he had no formal Jewish education or synagogue affiliation. He had no thoughts about the religion of his birthmother during Bar Mitzvah ceremony.

G. She became a Bat Mitzvah and enjoyed the whole process very much. She had a very positive attitude about her Bat Mitzvah. It was a celebration! She didn't want to be Confirmed because she felt she had had enough religious education. She didn't want to go further. She became a Confirmand for "daddy." She didn't think of the religion of her birthmother until I called her, but she remembered asking her mother about it once. The religion of her birthmother is

not something she thinks about every day and constantly. She doesn't think about being adopted every day.

H. He had a Bar Mitzvah, but he said that he did not enjoy it. He felt it was like being in a bad high school play. He memorized his lines, but there was nothing behind the performance. He was nervous! He did not remember thinking about the religion of his birthmother or about adoption at the time of his Bar Mitzvah.

I. This adoptee was raised in a traditional household, and her family belonged to an Orthodox synagogue. Therefore, she did not have either a Bat Mitzvah or a Confirmation ceremony.

9. Do you feel it is important for you to marry a Jew? Why or why not? Do you feel it is important to bring up your children as Jews? Why or why not?

A. She was married in December of this year. She felt it is very important to marry a Jew. It is important not just for religious reasons, but for "cultural reasons." She doesn't want hassles over things like burials and Christmas. She felt that having two religions in a home could be very confusing to children. She expressed interest in Israel politically. She felt it was important to marry a Jew because only someone Jewish could understand her feelings. She intended to raise her children as Jews.

B. She felt it was extremely important to marry a Jew. She was very serious with a non-Jewish man. She believed he would have been a perfect match for her, but she could not marry him. He was willing to convert although she never asked him to. She knew he was very happy in his own religion; therefore, she couldn't allow him to convert. She would absolutely raise her children as Jews. She stated that if a Jew marries a non-Jew, the first stipulation should be to raise the children as Jews. She is concerned because the Jewish people is such a small group. Raising the children of mixed marriages as Jews means our religion would be carried on.

C. She did not feel it was important to marry a Jew. She thinks you should love people for what and who they are and accept them. She felt religion should not play a big role in choosing a mate. She stated that who one marries should depend upon the individual and what their values and morals are. She didn't think there should be any prejudice. She expected to let children experience both Judaism and Christianity and choose for themselves when they are old enough.

D. He stated that marrying a Jew is important. He doesn't believe in diluting the faith. He stated, "We're different and we belong together. For the continuance of the Jewish faith, it is important to marry a Jew. We must pull together." He felt that intermarriage is unfair to kids. He said, "We shouldn't mess with them [Christians] and vice versa."

He wants quality Jewish education for his children. His daughter has attended a Jewish nursery school since the age of two. When his daughter at the age of three said a "Brucha", he felt great pride. "There's nothing like that," he said. He felt that in nursery school, his daughter is integrating Judaism with general education. It is learning with a purpose, not the heavy "religious stuff." He and his wife are members of a synagogue near their home.

E. Marrying a Jew wasn't important to her because Judaism is not very important to her. If it were not for her parents, Judaism wouldn't be important to her at all. Mainly to please her parents, her husband converted to Judaism before their marriage. She felt that it is not important to her to bring up her children as Jews. She expressed a desire to pass on part of her ethnic heritage as a Jew to her children. She's an Atheist. She claimed not to believe in a God. She felt that there are wars and pain in the name of religion. Religion in her opinion has been divisive. She said that one's character and how one lives is more important than belief in God. She has planned no formal Jewish education for her child. She identified strongly with some of her family members who were killed in the Holocaust. She was aware that her attitude towards Judaism seemed like a betrayal of them.

F. He takes great pride in being a Jew. He criticized Gentiles. When he was growing up, he thought that Jews were nicer, (more ethical) and more intellectual. Yes, he felt it is important to marry a Jew and to bring up the kids as Jews. His boys went to a synagogue, and they went to religious school. There was no "instant" Bar Mitzvah for his sons. He became active in the synagogue and became a board member. He has taught in the religious school of his synagogue for ten or more years. Currently, he teaches the Confirmation class. One of his sons was confirmed; the other only had Bar Mitzvah. It means a lot to him to be Jewish and to steer his students towards being Jewish. He is more interested in raising the awareness of his students to the cultural aspects of Judaism than to the "heavy religious stuff."

G. She said that it is important to marry a Jew. She was raised as a Jew and that's the way she wants her kids to be raised. She married a Jew, and she wants to bring up her kids as Jews.

H. Marrying a Jew was not important for him. He stated that, in his opinion, organized religion is not important. He felt that the customs of the past are not binding. He experienced no pressure from the Jewish community to be more Jewish. He is unsure how important it is for him to raise his children as Jews. He wanted to let his daughter choose for herself which religion to follow. He claimed that his real religious belief formed when he was older, long after religious school. When he looked at other religions, he formed his own point of view and beliefs.

I. She felt she never had the option of not marrying a Jew. Her mother was adamant about her marrying someone who was Jewish. She married a Yemenite Jew who has dark features and culturally very different. She said she would have probably

thought of her future children and married someone Jewish, even if her mother had not been so adamant.

It is important to her to bring up her kids as Jews. She said that Judaism must give them something and must help them find out who they are. She stated that she felt she's raised her children with religion. Because she is an adoptee, it is difficult for her to tell her kids what or who they are. Doing a family tree in school was always difficult for her. She's conflicted and feels she's not being honest with her children about blood lines. There is nothing in her "blood" that resembles her parents blood.

10. Do you feel religion is inherited or learned?

A. She felt that religion is definitely learned.

B. She thought religion is both learned and inherited. Judaism is inherited only if your parents bring you up as a Jew. She felt that being Jewish comes through learning. She stated, "If it's normal for you to celebrate holidays, to attend synagogue, and to have a Jewish upbringing, it's subconscious learning and then it's just there and becomes a part of you." She felt a strong Jewish identity is a great start in the life of a child. She said that all this is a beginning, and religion is inherited, if you have that kind of an upbringing. She stated that, hopefully, one continued being involved in Judaism beyond childhood and kept the line going.

C. At first, she said that religion is inherited. Then she thought about it and felt it is both learned and inherited. In terms of inheritance, she stated that the genes can pass down some funny or unusual things. She believed that there's definitely a possibility of a tendency towards religion, a feeling or emotion, being inherited. She realized that religion is also something you have to learn. She stated that you have to learn to speak to God, but she did not think you had to go to a temple, synagogue, or church to do it.

D. Did he take Catholicism with him in his blood? He doesn't think so. Religion, he felt, is inherited in the soul of a person. He claimed that we all want a sense of belonging and direction. He believed that religion is taught through the culture in which one is raised. He said that religion gives us spiritual directions. It is a spiritual sign manual.

E. She felt that religion is learned.

F. He stated that religion is learned behavior. He said that if it were inherited, he'd be Anglican. He does not believe that Jesus is waiting in one of his genes to flower and make him into a Christian.

G. She said that religion is obviously learned. She felt that a child is the religion of the mother, but you learn whatever religion you're brought up to be.

H. He claimed that religion is partly learned and partly inherited. He did not feel that religion was genetically inherited. He explained that he believes one inherits a cultural background. Religion is instilled in us from such a young age that it become unconscious. You learn what makes up a religion. He said, for example, knowledge of the Bible is learned.

I. She stated that religion is both learned and inherited. Her feelings of not belonging to the Jewish people during the years she was growing up were inherited. She has learned a great deal about Judaism because she has received an excellent Jewish education. She felt that all she has learned about Judaism cannot change the feelings of alienation she has experienced since childhood.

11. Is becoming a Jew something of which to feel proud? Can a person who has converted to Judaism become the same kind of Jew as one who is born Jewish?

A. She stated that becoming a Jew is something of which to feel proud. She felt that a convert can be more "Jewish" than a born Jew. She explained that if a person is a born Jew, they have a choice about whether or not to accept or actively participate in Judaism. A convert has to work hard to become Jewish. She had to study hard and learn about Judaism. She felt it meant more because it required a great deal of effort for her to become a Jew.

B. She felt that converts should be proud of becoming Jewish. She also stated that converts tend to be more involved with Judaism than many born Jews because they have chosen to be Jewish.

C. She had difficulty answering this question. Her statements during the interview indicated unresolved conflicts in terms of both Judaism and adoption.

D. He was proud of being Jewish himself but seemed unable or unwilling to speculate as to the feelings of others on this question.

E. She felt that converts should be proud of becoming Jewish. She believed that it was possible for a convert to be just as good a Jew as a born Jew. She knew converts who had done just that.

F. He stated that becoming Jewish was something of which to feel tremendously proud. He indicated that converts were probably better Jews because they can appreciate Judaism from a different point of view. A born Jew is like a Jew "by injection." A convert has to work for it. He believed that you can really appreciate Judaism if you stray from it and then come back.

G. She said that converts should be "somewhat" proud of becoming Jews. She felt that in today's society, one couldn't help feeling the anti-Semitism and that makes it sometimes hard to be Jewish. Anti-Semitism scared her, and she did not like hearing about it. She said, "Sometimes I think, I don't know, not that I'd be better off-[not being Jewish]-it's weird." She believed that converts are sometimes better Jews because they really want to be Jewish. They study for it and work hard for conversion. "Converts," she believed, "are probably better Jews than a lot of born Jews."

H. He stated that becoming a Jew is definitely something of which to feel proud. He added that if people did not feel proud of becoming Jewish, they would not convert. Converts must work harder at being Jewish than other Jews. He said that one's non-Jewish background [ethnic?] cannot be erased. He felt that converts are often more intense about Judaism.

I. She was angry when she underwent conversion. She had been told all her life that her birthmother had been Jewish. Just prior to marriage, the "story" changed, and her mother claimed she was not "sure" about her birthmother's religion. She felt she was already a Jew since she had been raised to be an observant knowledgeable Jew. Being Jewish was all she knew; therefore, she resented the conversion. She converted for the sake of her future children. She wanted to save them the frustration and anger which she experienced. She wanted her children's status as Jews to be unquestionable.

12. Should a Jew ever hide his or her Jewishness?

A. A Jew should never hide his or her Jewishness. Being Jewish is something to be proud of. She has experienced anti-Semitism in school among the students with whom she works. She felt strongly that it must be fought.

B. She felt that one should be proud, not ashamed, of being Jewish. She wants people to know she's Jewish and indicates that she's Jewish when she feels it might be questionable.

C. She was neither proud nor ashamed at having been raised as a Jew. She indicated that all religions had "good in them" and she wanted to "learn from them all."

D. He indicated that he is proud to be Jewish, but survival is the most important thing. He would hide his Jewishness if by doing so he would be able to survive to fight another day. He felt that this was not cowardly. He remembered reading that in Germany, Jews sang as they marched to the death camps. That, he felt, was "nuts." It is far better he stated to "lie and live to come back. Martyrs are not good."

E. She would never hide being Jewish because it is "nothing to be ashamed of." She felt being Jewish is a part of what you are.

F. He would never hide being Jewish unless it was a case of self-preservation. He is very proud of being a Jew. He placed his chanukiah in the window despite the fact that there had been anti-Semitic incidents in his town. His attitude was if vandals came and broke his window, he would find out who they were, and they'd go to jail.

G. She felt being Jewish was not something to hide. She said that we should be proud of who we are.

H. In general, he felt one should not hide his or her Jewishness. If it became a matter of preserving life, then he would hide the fact that he is Jewish. He felt that this is an individual decision, and it depends upon how important Judaism is to each person.

I. She felt that a person should not hide the fact that he or she is Jewish.

13. What do you think it means to be a Jew?

A. While she studied with the rabbi in preparation for conversion, she spent weeks discussing what it means to be a Jew. To her, Judaism is a religion that emphasizes deed over creed, concepts such as tzedakah and the importance of family celebrations in the home. She expressed a desire to have family over to celebrate the holidays or to go to their homes. She wanted to have a seder in her own home, since she has never liked those she has attended. She claimed that the seders she has been to are either too long or too short. She hoped to someday make hamantaschen with her children. She wants her children to enjoy religious school and to have a much more formal Jewish education than she herself enjoyed. She still argues with her parents as to why she did not attend religious school. Her parents never pushed her to go, although they may have enrolled her. She wished she had attended religious school as a child.

B. To her, being a Jew is a basis for one's life. Being a Jew is to have a Jewish identity through birth or conversion. She claimed that there are many unaffiliated but proud Jews who are missing so much. In her opinion, there's so much more to being Jewish than just saying you are a Jew. She indicated that there is a heritage and a religious side to being Jewish. She felt that Jews are an ethnic group, a people, and a nation. Judaism is a way of life to her. She felt that being Jewish was a mixture of everything she had stated. She believed that some Jews are more focused on one aspect of Judaism and some are more focused on another. Being Jewish to her meant having some kind of Jewish identity.

C. She was not at all sure what it meant to be a Jew. At times her answers indicated that she considered herself a Jew, but at other times they did not. She seemed very confused regarding her Jewish identity.

D. For him, being Jewish meant to work with his family to bring morals into the family. He felt that synagogues are social centers. He believed that God is an energy in everybody, like a mass when everybody was going in the same direction. God is not a tangible being but the good will generated by people. He does not believe in God as an almighty super power. He does not believe that God is watching any particular synagogue on Shabbat. He felt that he is religiously open-minded. He felt that there are different levels of Judaism which he indicated were Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform. He said that Reform Jews include them [Orthodox] in Judaism, but they don't necessarily include or respect us in their Judaism.

E. She considers herself a Jew, and she always plans to be a Jew. She does not believe in God, but putting that aside, she claimed she is a Jew. She is confused as to whether or not one must believe in God to be a Jew. She hoped not. She stated a strong attachment to the Jewish culture and heritage. She assesses people by what they are and not by their religion. She wants to help people personally and professionally as a social worker. In that sense, she's a very good Jew because she felt she is trying to help others and to be a good person.

F. Judaism is central to his identity. To him, being a Jew is a cultural thing, a literary thing, and a religious thing.

G. She has not thought about what it means to be a Jew, she has just accepted being Jewish. She was not sure about what it means to be a Jew. She felt that one segment of it has to do with a belief in a God. She does not have strong ties with Israel. She claimed that being Jewish is just what she is, and she does not think too much about it.

H. He felt that this was a very hard question. To be Jewish, he stated, was to embody the entire history of Judaism. He made no further comments.

I. She stated that she did not know what it meant to be a Jew. She stated that she feels she is a Jew, and she groups herself with Jews. She has a great love for Israel. She also indicated that being Jewish has something to do with persecution.

14. Is Judaism important or unimportant to you? Why?

A. Judaism is very important to her. In order to really feel Jewish, she went through a halakhic conversion. She wanted to be "really" Jewish. She wanted to be "officially something."

B. Judaism is very important to her. As a cantor, her life will be constantly involved with Judaism. Music and Judaism are two of the things she loves.

C. Judaism is not really important to her. She is not even sure she considers herself Jewish, despite the fact that during the interview she referred to herself as a Jew. She felt that her negative attitude towards Judaism has something to do with her parents "hounding" her about it and constantly telling her she was Jewish. She wants to make her parents happy as much as she is able. She also wants to make herself happy. Right now, she is open to all religions, even if they appear to have conflicting ideas. She stated that there are important values in Judaism just as there are in Christianity. She believed that there is good in all religions.

D. Judaism is absolutely important to him. It provided him with a sense of belonging and a sense of identity. He's claimed that he is very proud of being Jewish "most of the time but sometimes we do stupid things." Over all, he expressed great pride in being a Jew.

E. She had very mixed feelings about being Jewish. She stated that there are so many beautiful, wonderful things that are important in Judaism; teachings concerning the importance of education and family life. She did not know whether or not that was part of religion. She felt that what is right, good, and important should be what guides us in life. She rejected the idea of reward and punishment, which she thought was an important part of religion. Her father had told her that she must believe in God to be a good Jew. She seemed confused and unable to believe in God at present. Her husband, a Jew-by-choice, was told by his rabbi that belief in God is less important than other things which Judaism can teach. She agreed with this type of an attitude towards being Jewish.

F. Judaism is very very important to him, and he has always been very proud to be Jewish. He is a self-educated Jew and has taught in a Reform religious school for many years.

G. Judaism is important to her because it "tells us who we are." She expressed a desire to have her children receive a good Jewish education and participate in the life cycle ceremonies of Bar/Bat Mitzvah and Confirmation. She felt her parents were such excellent Judaic role models, that she is

unable to live up to the example they set. She wished she could strive to be like her parents were, but she doesn't think she can. Both of her parents were always very active in the synagogue. Her mother is a bubbly, out-going person, where as she feels that she is shy and unable to put herself in the center of things.

H. Judaism is important to him in his own way. He has not been active in a temple nor does he observe many of the "outer trappings of Judaism." He felt that much of his thinking is Jewish, and, in that way, it has an important effect upon his life.

I. She felt that Judaism was not important to her. Whatever Jewish customs or ceremonies she observes are for the sake of her children. She hoped that Judaism could one day be meaningful to them. She believed that the survival of Israel was important.

15. What advice, help, or recommendations would you give to Jewish parents who have adopted a child whose birthmother was not Jewish? How can they help their child to truly "feel" Jewish?

A. The first thing parents can do, she felt, was have the child undergo halakhic conversion. She said that her naming ceremony meant "nothing" in the Jewish religion. She favored conversion during infancy. She grew up with the question "Am I really Jewish?" She asked herself if it was enough to be Jewish because she was raised by Jewish parents. There was a nagging voice in her head which kept saying, "I don't think so!" She feels if parents have their children converted as infants, parents can answer truthfully adoptee's questions later in life. When an adoptee asks, "Am I really Jewish?" the parents can answer, "Yes, you are." Parents can then explain to the child how he or she became Jewish.

She felt education is very important in helping an adoptee "feel" Jewish. She also believed that the holidays should be celebrated at home and that they should be "fun times." Families should celebrate holidays together. She feels that parents must make Judaism mean something to their kids. They must not be hypocrites by sending their children to temple and not going themselves. Everyone in the family should attend together. She felt that the Jewish summer camp she attended as a child had a big influence on her Judaism.

B. She believed that adoptees just need to be brought up in a Jewish home in order to "feel" Jewish. She stated that, "You certainly don't have to do anything special to make them feel that way [Jewish]. If you go out of your way to pound it into them, they're going to feel more different."

She said that as an adoptee, you have your own identity problems. Her's has to do with how she looks. She's proud of the fact that she doesn't look like a Jew, therefore, she tended to hide the fact that she was adopted. She stated that she is proud of the way she looks and thinks it's great to break the stereotypes and to be different. She wanted to show the world. Show those ignorant people [that a Jew does not have to conform to a stereotype]. She realized that she is certainly not the only Jew who looks different, but sometimes she feels as if she is. It's all the attention she gets concerning her appearance. She never questioned her own identity as a Jew because of the way she looks. She just felt the need to let others know [she's Jewish] all the more strongly because of the way she looks.

C. She would not offer any advice to adoptive parents. If she were raising an adopted child, she would offer the child suggestions and word them so that the child would not be offended. She would take the best values from Judaism and discard the rest.

D. He advised parents not to tell their children that they were adopted. If parents felt it necessary to tell, then they shouldn't do it too early. He felt children should be told at an older age and that this information should not be broadcasted. He felt it was necessary to tell adoptees before they marry. He expressed serious reservations on this issue. He said, "I'm not so sure telling is necessary. Kids get screwed-up through telling too much too early. The longer parents wait, the better." He also indicated that his own mother had "broadcasted" the fact that he was adopted. He was teased and harassed by other children about it. He felt that such information should be kept a little private.

E. No comment. This young woman's upbringing was not very positive concerning the issue of adoption. It is interesting that she did not mention being honest with adopted children and allowing them to ask questions. Both of these areas were problematic during her own childhood.

F. He warned adoptive parents not to denigrate the memory of birthparents to their children. He felt that positive reasons for relinquishing a child should be offered. He stated that it is not necessary for a child to know negative reasons, such as rape or illegitimacy. He said that an adoptee should be raised as Jewishly as possible. He does not mean Orthodoxy but making Judaism a part of every day life. He feels parents must be very gentle about it. They should read their children Bible stories and make them aware of Jewish contributions to the world.

G. She felt that parents have a responsibility to get their children involved in Hebrew school. They should have a Bar/Bat Mitzvah. Parents should celebrate the holidays and see to it that their children have Jewish friends. Families should go to temple together, even though she admits she never liked being in temple. She felt that it's important to celebrate the holidays at home because it brings Judaism into the home.

H. He indicated that adoptees should be exposed to Jewish culture and history. He said that parents must teach by example. Children must see the faith that their parents have in Judaism. Being adopted and being Jewish do not overlap in his opinion. He always assumed that his birthmother was not Jewish, and it never interfered with his own Jewish identity.

I. She stated that parents must be honest with the child from the beginning. She admits that the alienation from Judaism which she developed may be because she was not told the truth. She said that parents are not obligated to volunteer information, but when a child asks, "Am I a Jew?"

parents owe them an honest answer. Problems start, she felt, when people make up stories. Children trust their parents to tell them the truth. When what they tell their children turns out not to be so, that's where the problem is. She doesn't know how much better the situation would be even with honesty. She felt that it might be better not to place non-Jewish children with Jewish parents. She stated that certain things are born in a person, and it is wrong to "mix things up." As an adult, she discovered that her birthfather had been Puerto Rican. She could not identify with a Puerto Rican father. She had already formed a negative opinion of Puerto Ricans and then she found out about her father. She did not know what to do with that information. It just did not fit. She believed that it is very wrong to "mess up people's heads by doing things like that."

16. Can you share with me any anecdotes, stories, or experiences from your life that are relevant to this study?

A. She had a very hard time finding a rabbi who would work with her for conversion purposes. She went "rabbi-shopping" for conversion to make it official to feel Jewish. An Orthodox rabbi told her she would have to undergo halakhic conversion, which included a trip to a mikvah, (ritual bath). A Reform rabbi told her, "to us you are Jewish." He indicated that there was no need for her to convert. She asked this rabbi, "What if I were your daughter? Would it still be good enough [being raised as a Jew without under going halakhic conversion]?" He answered that if she were his daughter, he would want her to undergo halakhic conversion. She was looking for a rabbi who would understand adoption issues and the identity crisis she was experiencing. She became discouraged and thought she would never find such an individual. She threatened to remain a "shiksa." Eventually she found a rabbi who had worked with adoptees such as herself. She studied with him for eight months and then underwent halakhic conversion. Today, she feels totally Jewish for the first time in her life. Until her conversion, she never felt completely Jewish. The act of conversion was important to her because she wanted to be official. She wanted there to be no question as to her Jewish identity.

B. Converts tend to be more involved in Judaism because they have chosen to be Jewish. She added, "The fact that I'm becoming a cantor may say something." She always loved music, and she always sang. As a youngster the cantor at her synagogue took her "under his wing." At thirteen, she substituted for the cantor during his summer vacation. It never entered her mind to become a cantor until she was an undergraduate. She did not even realize that the cantorate was open to women. She was majoring in music and religious studies at college. Articles discussing women in the cantorate were sent to her at college. After reading these articles, she knew what she wanted to do with her life. She knew the cantorate, which combined her two loves music and Judaism, was "it" for her.

C. At age 15, her parents told her some information about her birthmother. She learned that her birthmother had come to Nassau County from England and had worked for a family until the time her baby was born. After giving birth, she returned to England. What was strange about that is that this young woman has always had a fascination with things English. Before she knew about her birthmother's country of origin, she had always loved the British flag, the British accent, and pictures of England that she had seen. When she found out, she was surprised and hurt that her parents had not told her this information sooner. She said that she has not done

anything about finding her birthmother because she knows it would really hurt her parents. She described herself as being in a "catch-22 situation."

D. This adoptee had not previously realized some of the possible implications of not under going halakhic conversion. He asked, "What do other Jews think of me, born of a non-Jewish mother? I may or may not have had a conversion ceremony. Am I an outcast? A black-sheep in the religion?"

E. She remembered one interesting incident. She met a judge who had adopted a Jewish child and was raising him as a Christian. Because the judge knew her background he asked her some questions regarding religion and adoption. In particular, he wanted to know why his son who was a born Jew showed no interest in Judaism. She explained to the judge that the religion in which you are raised becomes your religion. The religion of your birthmother is not an important factor, but your upbringing is.

F. Throughout his life, especially as he was growing up, when people found out he was not a born Jew, they tried to influence him toward Christianity. Recently at his Long Island congregation, a discussion took place as to "Who is A Jew." The trustees were trying to decide if a convert should be permitted to hold an office on the board. The board was questioning whose "Jewishness" was valid. This discussion made him very angry, and he protested. He said, "If you say you're a Jew, you're a Jew! And if you practice it. If you want to go to an Orthodox synagogue [where the definition of one's Jewishness is determined by halakhah] fine!" He became a public school teacher to avoid the draft which would have sent him to Vietnam. He taught in the South Bronx and always wore a kippah. He did not experience any anti-Semitism. He thought that is maybe why he wore the kippah. He wanted people to know he was Jewish. He doesn't want any mistakes made. He is extremely intensely proud of the fact that he is a Jew.

G. She said her parents did a good job in raising her. She repeated that she "had a really happy childhood."

H. No comment.

I. She felt that being adopted kids start out with one negative. She does not know if you can be okay or "normal" with "all this stuff" [adoption issues]. She believed that life is harder with "all this stuff" [identity issues]. When religion came into it, she felt it made it harder still. When you are adopted, you grow up missing a piece. She indicated that you don't find the piece when you find the person [birthmother]. The piece doesn't ever fit. She claimed that

"you are so different from them [birthparents] that the piece doesn't ever fit right."

She related a very painful anecdote concerning adoption. Her father was dying, and his sister was emptying some tubes connected to him. The father seemed to be in pain so she said, "Stop that, you're hurting him!" Her aunt replied, "Who are you to say that to me! I'm his blood. You're nothing!"

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