CHAPTER III

A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE STUDY

3.0. INTRODUCTION

3.0.1. Any study which focuses on children and adoption, needs to be based on a sound theoretical base pertaining to child welfare and adoption. Adoption social workers have often used a pragmatic trial and error approach and borrowed theories from different disciplines to guide their decision making. Theories pertaining to adoption have appeared from time to time in the professional literature during the past ten to fifteen years. Theories from the fields of child development, genetics, mental hygiene and psychology have contributed to the social worker's understanding of the adoptive family's needs and functioning. Based on these borrowed assumptions and theories, social workers have instituted certain practices in carrying out the placement of children in adoptive homes.

3.0.2. Until today, social workers have not really been able to come to terms with and resolve issues like the heredity/environment controversy. However, it needs to be said
that in spite of several grey areas in the theoretical understanding of the subject, several successful adoption practices have been instituted as a mandatory part of the adoption process, and have proved to be beneficial to the interest of the child.

3.0.3. Adoption practices, as we know them today, have been significantly influenced by the developments in the West, specifically in the United States. The very first workshop, dealing exclusively with adoption, was organized by the Child Welfare League of America in 1948. During the 1950s, in America, a growing application of mental health principles to adoption practices resulted in certain fundamental theoretical assumptions being made (Lawder and Lower, 1969 : 12). Bowlby's monograph on the relationship between maternal care and mental health (Bowlby, 1951), was looked at seriously by all social workers. Bowlby had referred to the writings of several psychiatrists to highlight the damaging effects of early childhood deprivation on the personality of the young child. Following this proposition from Bowlby, there was a perceptible shift in emphasis from heredity to the environment and mental health issues. (In India, around the time significant changes were taking place in the West in terms of professionalising adoption, the adoption scene was still being dominated by the 'well meaning amateur'—a term used by Bowlby.
- and fears of the effects of genetic and hereditary factors were uppermost in people's minds.) Today, experienced adoptive parents are inclined to give significant weightage to hereditary factors in shaping the adoption outcome, especially with regard to the child's temperament, levels of intelligence, and so on.

3.0.4. By the mid-forties, several psychoanalysts and psychiatrists in the west, were beginning to theorize about the psychological effect of childlessness and infertility on the adoptive mother. Insufficiently resolved conflicts were believed to affect parent child relationships in subtle ways. The psychological effect of childlessness on the capacity to parent, the degree of tension experienced by the couple, the anxieties and ambivalent feelings experienced by the couple, were issues handled by a succession of women writers like Mary Fairweather, Helen Deutsch, Viola Bernard. These were a combination of psychological theories about ego defences, needs and their gratification, and sociological theories on role functioning, socialization and the completion of development tasks. The following are some of the important theoretical concepts which need to be addressed while dealing with adoption issues. They have been drawn from psychology and psychoanalysis.
3.1. SELF CONCEPT AND SELF ESTEEM

3.1.1. Self-concept, as a concept, was recognised and referred to by Socrates. His famous 'Know Thyself' was worked upon by later philosophers and social scientists. William James (1890) based his estimates of the self on astute, careful, everyday observations. By 1935, Kurt Kaffka of Germany included 'self' as an important topic to be addressed by Gestalt psychologists. Cooley (1902) and Mead (1934) also contributed to our understanding of this subject. Coopersmith (1967), Boomley (1977), Piaget (1980), Shantz (1975), have made significant observations on the subject.

3.1.2. The term 'self concept' includes the individual's evaluation of himself - i.e. self-image and self-esteem. A sense of self is not achieved in a single step; it is not something that is either present or absent; it develops by degrees and is a product of more complex understanding. There takes place a developmental progression in how the self is defined. Initially, children think of themselves in terms of appearance and activities (for example, I have black hair, my mother studies at TISS, I play tennis, and so on). In addition, children also include their sex as an element in self-description. They refer to themselves by the name by which they are addressed. The concept of 'I' comes much later.
Gradually, they begin to conceptualise themselves more abstractly (Maccoby, 1980: 266).

3.1.3. Montemayer and Eisen (1975) studied the development of self-perceptions in children and adolescents. They hypothesised that with increasing age, self-perceptions, or more accurately, self-descriptions, become less concrete and more abstract. It is suggested that young children primarily define themselves in terms of concrete characteristics such as appearance, and possessions, while adolescents conceive of themselves more abstractly, and describe themselves in psychological and interpersonal terms (Smart and Smart, 1977: 370). Smart infers that it would be useful to think of the relationship between increasing cognitive abilities and self descriptions as an attempt to more accurately and uniquely characterise the essence of the self. This period of later childhood is generally the period of self-discovery. It has also been found that the use of social comparison with the peer group, as a means of self-evaluation in children, increases markedly in the early elementary school years. The child's self-acceptance and self-image are closely associated with how he or she is accepted by the peer group (Hetherington, 1979: 492).

3.1.4. Research studies on the self-concept of adolescents have provided contradictory evidence. In Rosenberg's classic
study of 1965, adolescents who were found to be generally high in self-esteem, considered the following qualities as personal assets: self confidence, hard work, leadership potential, and the ability to make a good impression. Adolescents with low self-esteem, were characterised by a sense of incompetence in social relationships, felt socially isolated, believed that other people neither understood nor respected them, and were consequently not able to trust them. Also, the feeling that their parents took an active interest in their affairs, was significantly more apparent in those with high self-esteem. Trying to define self-concept, Carl Rogers (1951) has said that

It is an organized configuration of perceptions of the self which are admissable to awareness. It is composed of such elements as the perceptions of one's characteristics and abilities; the percepts and concepts of self in relation to others and the environment; the values which are perceived as associated with experience and objects; and goals and ideas which are perceived as having positive or negative valence.

3.1.5. On the other hand, Thurstone (1964) has stated that,

The integration of the self-concept consists chiefly in the development of realistic, organized and accepting psychological responses to self, and to self in relation to other people (Coleman, 1980:48).

3.1.6. In the majority of studies on self-concept, one has to decide what kinds of observations would be appropriate indices. Generally, verbal reports, taken under proper interviewing
conditions, appear to be the most appropriate indexes. Wylie (1974) has stated that in the majority of cases the reliability and validity of the measuring instruments of self-concept and self-esteem are neither inadequate nor unknown.

3.1.7. Are the terms self-concept and self-esteem interchangeable? Self-esteem is the sense of personal worth and competence that people generally associate with their self-concept. According to Abraham Maslow (Motivation and Personality), all people have a natural need for a stable, firmly based sense of self-respect and self-worth, and they need this esteem from themselves and others. This evaluation, which the individual makes and maintains with regard to himself, expresses an attitude of approval or disapproval, and indicates the extent to which s/he believes himself/herself to be capable, significant, successful, and worthy. As Coopersmith (1967: 4) summarises, self-esteem is a personal judgement of self-worth that is expressed in the attitudes the individual holds toward himself. Therefore, one can see why a lot of theoretical writing in the area of self-concept concerns self-esteem.

3.1.8. Coopersmith also noted that high self-esteem resulted from parental acceptance, the setting of limits, and freedom for action within agreed upon limits. In his work entitled 'The Antecedents of Self Esteem', he emphasised the importance
of love and belongingness in the broad pattern of family interrelationships. Interest, warmth, love and encouragement shown by parents were more important than ethnic group, religion, social class or even traumatic experiences in early childhood, as important contributors to one's self esteem. (This finding is of great importance for social workers involved in the adoption of orphan children, for adoptees and adoptive parents. The knowledge that damaging experiences of the past are not as critical as positive parenting and love in determining a child's self-concept, can be very encouraging and useful.) A major implication of Coopersmith's study is that a person's self-esteem is affected greatly by relationships with parents and parent substitutes, and with how these 'significant others' treat the child during his or her childhood years.

3.1.9. One's self-esteem evolves in the context of the different kinds of interactions that occur among family members. From a symbolic interactionist perspective, an individual's sense of self is a social product resulting from the appraisals of others, especially those of 'significant others'. It is generally assumed that parent-child conceptions of self are significantly influenced by the nature of their relationship with one another.
3.1.10. The family is, therefore, a critical context for concept formation, and by adolescence, children begin to view some part of themselves as they feel their parents view them, and conversely, parents come to see aspects of themselves as they perceive their adolescent children view them. Research findings by Demu et al (Journal of Marriage and the Family, Vol. 49 : 705), suggest that while role identities vary in importance, the ways in which adolescents view themselves as sons and daughters, is quite important to their self-esteem. An important point made by symbolic interactionists is that an individual's perception of or interpretation of others' behaviour, is more important to the individual's sense of self-esteem than is the actual behaviour of the others.

3.1.11. Another important point to note vis a vis adoption, is that research has shown that adolescents who report close relationships with fathers, are considerably more likely to have high self-esteem and a stable self-concept than those who describe these relationships as more distant (Rosenberg, 1965 : 44). Parental interest, Rosenberg found, closely related to the child's self-esteem. Marital rupture appears to be more associated with symptoms of anxiety and insecurity. Children from divorced and unhappy family backgrounds are about 18 percent more likely, than children from intact, cohesive families, to report four or more psychosomatic symptoms. Rushton (1980 :
83), referring to research and theorization about 'orientation to self and others', endorsed the following hypothesis: In general, people who tend to have positive moods, high self-esteem, and a positive sense of well-being, may be less preoccupied with themselves, have a greater sense of potency and strength, and, perhaps feel more kindly toward others, than individuals characterised by more negative moods, low self-esteem, and a poor sense of well-being. Consequently, the former may tend to be more helpful than the latter.

3.1.12. Wylie (1979) has reviewed studies examining the relationship between family variables and self-concept. She concludes that there is evidence for the claim that a child's level of self-respect is associated with the parents' reported regard for the child. The study by Hales (1979) indicates that for girls, self-esteem is higher if they have parents who exhibit warmth and acceptance, encourage independence, stress firm enforcement of rules, use clear directives, and require the child to assume responsibilities at home.

3.1.13. Bandura (1978) gave a scheme which is compatible with his view of the role of 'self-referent constructs' in his theory of social learning:

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\text{INTERNAL PERSONAL FACTORS} \\
\text{ENVIRONMENT} \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \Quad
3.1.14. According to this diagram, environment can affect behaviour, but behaviour can also affect the environment. Environment and internal personal factors can reciprocally affect each other, as is the case with behaviour and internal personal factors (Encyclopaedia of Psychology, 1984: 284). Reiterating the importance of a supportive home, William Glasser (Reality Therapy) states, that people have a need to develop a successful self-image, a 'success identity', versus a 'failure identity'. In the formation of one's self identity and self-esteem, others play a significant role in helping the individual see himself or herself as a success or failure. Having love and acceptance in the home is directly related to a 'success identity', lacking love and acceptance is related to a 'failure identity' (Encyclopaedia of Psychology, Vol. 3, 1984: 290). Children growing up in large, depersonalised institutions suffer from a 'negative self concept' and generally experience low self-esteem due to the general absence of this intimate, nurturing personal relationships.

3.1.15. An important factor closely related with the self-concept is body image. Satisfaction with one's body is correlated with positive attitudes to the self. It has been found that physical attractiveness plays an important role in the responses and evaluations of children and adults. Children
as young as 4 to 6 years of age can differentiate attractive from unattractive children, and are observed to judge these children on the basis of the same physical attributes as adults do (Hetherington, 1979: 496). Often, unattractive children are perceived by peers and adults like parents and teachers, to be poorly adjusted and to even have poor academic ability. They have also been known to score less on personality tests and on ratings of self-esteem. Hetherington suggests that, based on these studies by Lerner and Lerner in 1977, the negative expectations and the varied perceptions that peers and adults have of the children with unattractive faces or body builds, may foster the emergence of the very characteristics attributed to these children.

3.1.16. This point assumes special significance when we consider the physical differences of transracially adopted children. Does the fact of looking different from the majority of other ‘white’ children, adversely affect the adopted child’s self-image? While interacting with adoptive parents in the USA over the past five years, the author has been made aware that children of Indian origin are considered physically attractive and desirable. However, it is essential to undertake a study to ascertain the veracity of the statement.

3.1.17. Rosenberg (1979) has documented the effects of ethnicity, religiosity and social class on self-esteem. He has
found that it is primarily contextual dissonance which damages self-esteem, not one's ethnic or religious identification, per se. Therefore, if one must function in a dissonant comparison reference group, for example, a black child attending a primarily white school, self-esteem may suffer because one's abilities or achievements may compare unfavourably with the majority of members of the group. This point is also of interest to us as we look at the integration of adopted children of Indian origin in white, Anglo-Saxon families.

3.1.18. On the whole, studies which have been reviewed, indicated that only a relatively small percentage of the total population is likely to have a negative self-image or to have very low self-esteem and, that, if such disturbance manifests itself at any particular stage of the child's life and development, it is more likely to do so in the early teens, rather than during late adolescence. Donovan and Adelson (1966) made an important point when they noted that a normal adolescent has two conceptions of himself - what he/she is, and what he/she will be. The way he/she tries to integrate his/her future image into his/her current image, will be reflective of his/her current adolescent integration (Coleman, 1980: 49). Therefore, in this context, how does the adopted adolescent view his/her future in the society in which he/she lives? Does he/she feel positively about his/her present life, and does
The study will seek to answer some of these questions.

3.2. THE CONCEPT OF IDENTITY

3.2.1. The word identity immediately brings to mind the pioneering work of Erikson, the psychoanalyst, who was an adopted child, and who went through the crisis of identity formation, diffusion and resolution during adolescence. Today, Erikson is widely read by adolescents themselves, and his writings have made identity a household word. Erikson considers the problem of identity versus identity diffusion, as particularly characteristic of and central to adolescence. He focuses more on identity evolvement than on developmental factors.

The search for identity is particularly acute at this stage of development, when the rapidity of body growth equals that of early childhood, and because of the new addition of genital maturity. The rapidity of these changes, both qualitative and quantitative, increases the difficulty of achieving and maintaining a perception of the self as clearly defined and consistent, both internally and over a period of time (Conger, 1977: 93).

3.2.2. In Erikson's view, the beginnings of a child's ultimate identity, are already being shaped during the earlier periods of life, starting with the infant's initial orientation of basic trust or mistrust of the people and the world around him.
Therefore, a sense of identity develops gradually out of the successive identifications of childhood. These include individuals like parents, peer group, teachers, or they may include groups or cultural categories such as my gang, other Kannadigas, other adopted children, and so on.

3.2.3. However, identity is not merely a sum of all the earlier identifications. Although prior, continuing and future identifications all play a part and may importantly affect an individual's sense of identity (whether for good or for ill), they alone do not promote it. Something more is needed. And that something is the capacity to synthesize identifications into a coherent whole, a consistent and unique whole. This capacity to 'integrate' within oneself, is closely related to one's level of emotional and intellectual maturity.

3.2.4. Just as the quality of trust qualifies how an infant branches out into new childhood experiences, so an individual's identity formation is instrumental in creating the quality of decisions and commitments the individual will make as an adult. The kind of adult life we lead is very dependent on the kind of identity we have developed. This includes the degree of investment in the choice of work and in the work itself, personal alliances, and in the degree of involvement in one's neighbourhood and community (Maier, 1978 : 110). The adjustments we make at home and at work, the kind of
friendships we seek, are all directly related to the kind of identity we have evolved for ourselves.

3.2.5. For the adolescent, a sense of identity carries with it a sense of mastery over childhood issues - issues like learning to be cooperative, competitive, loving, giving, sharing. It also implies a readiness to face the challenges of the adult community as a potential equal. Identity development is closely related with the mastery of skills. As children physically mature into adulthood, they experience rapid physical growth, with important physiological and anatomical changes. The earlier trust in their bodies, and mastery of its functions, is suddenly missing, and needs to be regained (Maier, 1978: 111). They seek reassurance and approval from their parents and peers who are themselves in a state of flux.

3.2.6. One has frequently heard the phrase that what one is today, is based on one's yesterdays. The child's growing up years, his/her past, certainly have a critical influence on adjustment as an adolescent. But Erikson feels that the identity development of a young person is not based merely on the choices which he/she has to make because his emotions motivate him in a certain way, but also on conditions which pull him toward opportunities for recognition, accomplishment, and fulfilment.

The past is important and can be preserved, not in the form of conflicts buried in the unconscious, or of
memories or representations buried in the unconscious, but in the form of what I call action patterns and reaction patterns which are more like habit than memory. One gets in the habit of reacting in a certain way; one reacts in a certain way first towards one's family, and reacts again in the same way in analogous situations (Tanner and Inhelder, 1963 : 157).

3.2.7. All through his writings, Erikson has stressed the tremendous need of the younger adolescent to feel in tune with the world around him, to experience a feeling of peace and self-consistency.

A sense of identity means a sense of being at peace with oneself as one grows and develops; and it means an affinity with a community; a sense of being at one with its future as well as its history or mythology (Erikson, quoted by Maier, 1978 : 110).

3.2.8. What is meant is that some degree of being at peace with the world, and contentment with oneself, is necessary for a positive identity formation. Hence, a positive interaction with the environment is necessary for the positive development of self-concept as the person receives a positive feedback. A struggle with one's identity, or as it is generally referred to, as an identity crisis, is neither a fatal event nor a pathological condition. It is a necessary period of self-examination and emergence of one's beliefs, attitudes and sense of self. 'Better' means a coming together in a harmonious whole of the energies of the individual and his/her particular society or significant reference group, and 'worse' means a
prolonged period of identity confusion for the young individual, and the divergent efforts of the community pulling the adolescent in different directions. Erikson feels that identity confusion is, in many ways, a phenomenon of the second half of the present century, just as neurotic manifestations were a reflection of the personal dilemmas in life during the first half of the century.

3.2.9. Erikson rightly feels that a certainty of one's place in the present environment, and in the future as envisaged by the individual, assures individuals of their immediate confidence, and their advance beyond the previous levels of development. Acquiring a sense of identity, as well as overcoming identity diffusion, represents a polarity of the developmental phase of adolescence. At one end, there exists a striving towards an integration of inner and outer directions; at the opposite end, there is diffusion, leading to a sense of instability in the midst of many confusing inner and outer demands. This polarity of demands must be resolved within the period of adolescence, if adulthood is not to be complicated by a continuation of old struggles.

3.2.10. Writing in 'Healthy Personality Development in Children' in 1952, Erikson stated, 'Psychological identity is not feasible before and is indespensable after the end of adolescence' (quoted in Maier, 1978 : 110). All the earlier
strivings demand fuller attention. In his quest for identity, the adolescent begins to view himself as a separate and distinct individual. There is a universal need to perceive oneself as somehow separate from others, no matter how much one may share motives, values, and interests of others.

To find one's identity in late adolescence, means to find an orientation toward oneself and others, in which one feels most of oneself, where one has come to mean most to others; i.e., to those who are closest. As we grow, we move into a changing and expanding group of people. We select as we are selected and this interchange must lead at the end of adolescence to a feeling that what one means to others and what one feels one is, largely coincide.

3.2.11. This interesting point was made by Erikson in 1963, as part of a group discussion held at the Tavistock Clinic, in which several leading psychoanalysts participated. (Tanner and Inhelder, Ed., 1963: 142). This sense of identity is a sense of inner continuity and sameness of development, in that, what one was made to expect as a child and what one anticipates one will be, coincide with what one is. As Conger has said, when we speak of the integrity of self, we imply both, a separateness from others and unity of self - a workable integration of one's needs, motives and patterns of responding. In order to have a clear sense of ego identity, the adolescent requires a self-perceived consistency, not just at a particular moment, but over a period of time. In Erikson's words,

The younger person, in order to experience wholeness, must feel a progressive continuity between that which he
has come to be during the long years of childhood and that which he promises to become in the anticipated future; between that which he conceives himself to be and that which he perceives others to see in him and to expect of him (Conger, 1977: 93).

3.2.12. Any developmental influences that contribute to confident perceptions of oneself as distinct from others, as integrated, and as having a sense of continuity over time, also contribute to a sense of ego identity. By the same token, influences that may impair any of these self-perceptions foster identity-diffusion, i.e. a failure to achieve the integration of self-images.

3.2.13. An adolescent is apt to solve the dilemma of identity formation, by becoming deviant, choosing the identity opposite to the one society suggests, in preference to remaining a nobody/nonentity. This negative identity would comprise everything which a young person has learned he/she should not become. Some adolescents, when they feel that what they have been equipped to face life with, is not sufficient to create a positive identity, 'decide' on a negative one. For example, a young person can become a delinquent or an addict (Tanner and Inhelder, 1963: 151). This could be interpreted more in the way of a continuing search for identity. What they could not get through positive means, may be achieved through negative means.
3.2.14. In discussing identity diffusion, or any other developmental crisis, we really discuss a period of life when the past and future meet, when the patterns of the past have to be translated into possibilities for the future. Erikson has introduced another interesting concept of 'moratorium'. It means that adolescence extends childhood by a legitimate delay of adulthood. The moratorium sanctions identity diffusion as a temporary pivotal component of adolescent development. Individuals require time to find themselves, and for their integration into consistently acting, thinking, and feeling persons, as part of their adolescent development, for which society grants them this time (Maier, 1978 : 114). In our experience, the adopted child, adopted after the age of five, requires a longer period of 'moratorium' to make up for early childhood deprivations.

3.2.15. Erikson also reported that the identity development of a young person is not based merely on the choices which he/she has to make because his/her emotions motivate him/her in a certain way, but also on conditions which pull him toward opportunities for recognition, accomplishment, and fulfilment.

The past is important and can be preserved, not in the form of conflicts buried in the unconscious, or of memories or representations buried in the unconscious, but in the form of what I call action patterns and reaction patterns, which are more like habit than memory. One gets in the habit of reacting in a certain way; one reacts in a certain way first towards one's family, and reacts again
3.2.16. It is interesting for social workers to note that hardly any psychoanalyst has attributed importance to hereditary factors as influential in the formation of identity, or as an integrating force of one's personality. The environmental factors like the home, school, neighbourhood and the wider community have been considered to be important factors. Certainly, one's biological origins play a significant role in one's perceptions of oneself. As Jung has said, each individual carries within the self, the unconscious, a part of the person's rich heritage. What then is the position of the 'twice abandoned' adolescent, abandoned by the family and the country, who has been adopted outside his/her own country as a child?

3.3. IDENTITY AND THE ADOPTED CHILD

3.3.1. All individuals face a quest for identity. With such diverse forms of uncertain origins, adoptees seem to experience a strong need to come to terms with their identity. For those children who have been adopted across racial and cultural lines into a white society, the need to be accepting of and be at peace with their present life circumstances is keenly felt. Do serious identity problems exist for non-white children growing
up in white American homes? Do their very different appearances, their 'Indianness' subject them to unpleasant negative experiences, negative responses from others around?

We present below the highlights of some of the research studies undertaken in this field, in the USA.

3.3.2. Self-esteem among transracially adopted children was examined by Owen and Jackson (1983), when they did a follow-up study of children adopted through the British Adoption Project. They seemed to find no differences in the self-esteem or self-concept between black children adopted by white parents, and black children adopted by black parents, nor differences between black adoptees or white, as compared to other non-adopted adolescents.

3.3.3. Koh (1981: 111) feels that many adopted children reject their former life or culture (especially if they have been adopted after the age of five or six years), since they have memories of deprivation of their physical and emotional needs. However, within a few years of being adopted, they develop a need to try and understand and to come to terms with their life situation as it was, and as it is. Generally, it is felt that even though a child may have uneasy, unhappy feelings about the past, the longer he/she lives with adoptive parents in America, the greater will be his/her identification with them and with their culture.
3.3.4. Many American parents believe that if the child has a strong, emotional bond with his parents, he can cope with most of the stresses and difficulties in his life, in a successful manner. In her introduction to her book, Koh has stated that a successful adjustment for a child adopted across cultural and racial boundaries, is highly dependent upon his understanding of his new environment, as well as his parents' understanding of the culture in which he was earlier brought up. Therefore, parents have a tremendous responsibility in ensuring a relatively smooth transition for their child.

3.3.5. Their sensitivity and understanding and handling of his needs and desires, of his past experience, of the meaning his present environment has for him, will all determine the success of their child's adjustment. Therefore, we can hypothesise, that if the adoptive parents have been sensitised to the child's culture of origin, the child has a better chance of being more successfully adjusted to his life as an adoptee.

3.3.6. Another important point to note, is that in some parts of American society, there is more of an emphasis on the individual identity of a person. An individual has the freedom to be as unique and special as he chooses to be (this is not the case in India, for example). There is generally less pressure to conform to the group around, than in many other societies and cultures - in spite of the fact that the
pressures to conform to the peer group are strong. We may conclude that this may make it easier for children from racially and ethnically different backgrounds, to integrate into their American families and society. However, some theoreticians feel that much of white America is very conformist. Only large cities on the East coast and a few on the west, encourage individual identity formation and the freedom to be unique and special.

3.3.7. Wilkinson (1985 : 59) suggests that the self-esteem of adopted children is closely related to how they view their physical and cultural differences. When they feel positive about themselves, they tend to view their differences as something to be valued. But when these differences are considered negative, they have a negative effect on self-image and self-esteem. She feels that parents should pay special attention to these children's sensitivities, and for their tremendous need for adult approval and nurturing.

3.3.8. She speaks of five stages that adopted children go through before they are ready to accept and recognise their own racial and cultural heritage.

1. The stage of denial – an active avoidance of their own culture, coupled with an intense desire to bond with the new family.
2. The stage of inner awakening - the beginnings of a passive interest in their own heritage and culture.

3. Acknowledgement - taking an active interest.

4. Identification - they start to feel more comfortable with their cultural identity.

5. Acceptance - during this phase, a sense of inner equilibrium is achieved.

3.3.9. Speaking about the situation of adoptees in Sweden, Andersson (1986 : 8) feels that even though an adolescent adoptee is different from his parents, his/her ethnic identity, although always of significant importance, is but a minor part of his total identity, in a country like Sweden. Sweden has been receiving children in adoption for more than two decades. Generally, research has shown that adopted children from different countries do very well in Swedish society, after the initial adjustments and difficulties have been overcome. Most parents feel that the parent-child relationship is of primary importance. How this relationship came about, through adoption or birth, is of secondary importance. At school, she reports that teachers have not reported any observable differences in the behaviour of transracially adopted children. However, she has found that the children's abilities to speak and communicate in Swedish have been better than their abilities in written Swedish.
3.3.10. In a 1978 Swedish study on children adopted from other countries, results showed that three out of four children showed no significant difference to Swedish born children. During the first year after placement, 80 per cent of the children needed close physical contact and reassurance from their parents. Sleep disorders were common. With the background of growing hostility to foreigners in Swedish society, it was found that children of Indian origin were the most popular, in contrast to the unpopularity of other 'coloured' or handicapped children (ISS, 1982: 79).

3.3.11. John Triseliotis, in his paper entitled Identity and Genealogy in Adopted People (presented at the International Conference on Adoption, in Athens, 1986), has identified three important factors contributing to the development of identity.

The quality of a child's experiences with his natural or substitute family.

Knowledge and understanding about his background and genealogy - because a 'body image' cannot be achieved without knowing what our parents looked like.

Community perceptions and attitudes - an absence of racial discrimination from the rest of society around.

3.3.12. When adoptive parents share information about the child's background and genealogy, the sharing of information helps to strengthen the parent-child bond. Children learn to
respect their parents and trust them even more. It has been found that evasiveness and secrecy generates mistrust and increases unhappiness.

3.3.13. According to studies carried out by Triseliotis, the people who matter most to children, are those who care for them, and not necessarily those who give birth to them, unless they are one and the same person. A small but vital part of our identity formation, is knowledge about our background, the history of our family, our race and ethnic group. It is important for all children and adults who have been adopted, to be told the truth about their genealogy and circumstances of their upbringing. Far from undermining close and meaningful relationships with parents and parent substitutes, it is believed that such important information strengthens the bonds. Often adoptees have felt that the adults should have taken the initiative to explain things, without having waited to be asked by their children. Triseliotis found that the qualities that contributed to a secure sense of identity, were:

The quality of the family relationships

Awareness about their origins, and the circumstances surrounding their adoption.

The absence of racial and societal discrimination processes.

3.3.14. We feel that since ethnic identity is closely related to personal and social identity, those adopting children from a
different racial or ethnic group, have the added responsibility of helping their children develop their ethnic and racial awareness. For the adolescent, adopted from another cultural and racial background, the exploration of a 'sense of ethnic identity, therefore, becomes an important developmental task. American society has moved successfully towards increasing acceptance of cultural pluralism, and social workers need to be sensitive to the cognitive and affective impact of ethnicity on individuals.

3.4. THE CONCEPT OF BONDING AND ATTACHMENT IN CHILDREN

3.4.1. It is fascinating to study how an infant develops into a being who can grasp his/her own distinctiveness as an individual. The study of early childhood development is, in many ways, an inquiry into the parent-child relationship. As Maier has clearly stated,

It is only during infancy that the initial feelings about the self and others develop. Is the world a safe, responsive and exciting place? Or is it full of prohibition and unfulfilled needs? Are people helpful and encouraging, or do they only limit and coerce? (Maier, 1978: 6).

3.4.2. Socialization is an important concept that is closely tied up with bonding processes. Socialization is the process by which children acquire the habits, values, goals and knowledge that will enable them to function satisfactorily when they
become adults and members of society in their own right. The modality of mothering/parenting, the readiness of parents to include their child in their daily routine and social life, can give us helpful hints on the child's potential development and bonding.

3.4.3. Let us take a look at Erikson's approach. As an adopted child himself, who went through the trauma of separation and rebonding to a new set of parents, he has offered us unique and sensitive insights into this field. For Erikson, the quality of the parent-child relationship is very important. A child can be disciplined in a way that leaves a feeling of being loved, or in a way that leaves the child feeling hated. The difference is largely in the atmosphere of the home. What is important, is that children should feel that their own needs and desires are compatible with those of their parents and society. Only if the children feel competent and valuable in their own and society's eyes, will they develop a sense of positive wellbeing. This is an important point to remember for children adopted transracially and transculturally. The attitudes of different people in the child's environment are also an important factor in the child's socialization, besides the attitudes of the child's adoptive parents.
3.4.4. The theories of Freud and Erikson are epigenetic: they deal with processes that are inherent to the organization and describe the progressive development of these processes as they occur in each human being. The first object in the infant's external environment is the child's mother, who consistently accompanies the satisfaction of physical 'needs and the provision of erotic pleasure. The first object relation is referred to as 'primary identification'. The infant begins to associate the mother's presence with the pleasure resulting from hunger reduction and bodily pleasure. This constitutes the beginning of the attachment process. Eventually, the presence of the mother, even without the food, is enough to bring the infant pleasure (Lee, 1976 : 16). According to Anna Freud (1965), this relationship progresses from being directed towards the receipt of bodily physical satisfaction, to being directed toward the receipt of love, affection, and approval from the mother.

3.4.5. Erikson also adds that, as the environment responds to the infant in positive ways, the infant begins to develop the simple and naive concept of 'basic trust'. Along with the emergence of attachment to an external figure, comes a sense of mistrust that she will not always return when the infant needs her. This crisis of trusting v/s mistrusting the mother must be resolved in favour of trust in order to form a healthy
attachment relationship. The foundation for relationships of trust later in life, depend on this continuity of mother-child relationship, and a constant assurance of the reappearance of the mother.

3.4.6. Psychoanalytic theory, learning theory, ethological theory, have all tried to look at attachment from different angles. Bowlby (1973) and Sullivan (1953) have placed a lot of emphasis on the mother-child relationship. The mother/caretaker's attitudes have a lot of influence on the infant. Anxiety is one of the basic tensions the child comes into the world equipped to experience. Any anxiety experienced in the mother-child relationship will be prototypic for subsequent experiences in anxiety producing relationships and situations. The mother creates an anxiety in the infant, either by treating the infant unlovingly, or by being anxious herself. This is a significant point for social workers to remember in working with children who have been deprived of a normal family life during their early days.

3.4.7. In an institutional setting, very often, children are cared for by people other than their parents, are dependent upon adults whose responsibilities are vague, and who are themselves probably unstable in their jobs and positions. No one adult has complete responsibility for the child's welfare and care, in the way that is usually expected of a parent. Due to rotational
duties for caretaking functions, with shift duties for staff of eight working hours, bonding with any one adult becomes particularly difficult.

3.4.8. Interestingly, children in institutions form intense, protective attachments to one another, ignoring adult caretakers. Peer attachments have been known to be strong and positive, and take the place of the need for identification and sense of self which have been denied by the adult caretakers.

3.4.9. Maccoby has offered some interesting insights into the process of attachment. She states clearly that the child's choice of an attachment object need not be the biological mother. Adoptive children become firmly attached to their adoptive mothers. Almost always, the first and strongest attachment is to the mother or other primary caretaker. This first relationship sets the stage for future relationships. The child learns what he/she can and cannot expect from others. Children who do not experience a healthy give and take in this relationship, may not be able to experience it in others.

3.4.10. As children begin to understand the purposes of others, how to fit their own objectives into others' plans, and how to be responsive as well as how to demand responses from others, the attachment relationship between the adult and child is transformed into a more balanced partnership. At about the age of three or four years, the goal of attachment shifts from
simply maintaining proximity, to maintaining more distant contact, and trying to coordinate plans to better meet the needs of both, adult and child (Maccoby, 1980: 80).

3.5. SEPARATION, OR THE DISRUPTION OF AN ATTACHMENT RELATIONSHIP.

3.5.1. Some writers have argued that the disruption of an early attachment, leaves the child emotionally insecure, even if new attachments are formed. Bowlby (1973) has said that the early disruptions will show their effects in later years in the form of sudden depressions or anxieties that seem unrelated to the current life stresses (Maccoby, 1980: 8). His position has been taken to mean that the children should be allowed to remain with their accustomed caretakers under all possible circumstances - that continuity of an attachment relationship is the most important consideration in making decisions about children's lives. This view has had worldwide influence on policies affecting the placement of children who come under the jurisdiction of the legal system.

3.5.2. For example, in the interest of maintaining existing attachments, children have been allowed to remain in neglectful or abusive homes instead of being placed elsewhere. In fact, there was a lot of write-up in the British press a few years ago, about the wrong and damaging decisions taken by social
workers in their haste to send children back to abusive homes and parents, in the belief that longer separations were more harmful. Looking in retrospect at what the children suffered in those homes, a wiser choice would have been to remove them and facilitate the process of bonding in a new, more caring and nurturing environment.

3.5.3. More recent work, while not invalidating the finding that separation from an attachment figure is extremely distressing to young children and should be avoided as far as possible, has indicated that children can recover from separation quite fully if their new circumstances are adequate. To illustrate this point, Yarrow and Goodwin (1973) studied children who were placed in permanent adoptive homes before the age of sixteen months. At the age of ten years, the children were tested and interviewed, and their adoptive mothers were also interviewed. The findings showed that, although the experience of being shifted from one primary caretaker to another was clearly upsetting to children older than six months of age, lasting effects could not be detected ten years later (Maccoby, 1980: 98). Based on her experience and reading, Maccoby concludes that the child's later adjustment will be primarily determined by the quality of the relationship with the new caretaker, not by the experience of separation. If the child is distressed or resistive, or
excessively clingy at the time of entrance into a new home, the new relationship may get off to a bad or unpleasant start. Adoptive parents may find the child's behaviour difficult to cope with, and may sometimes find it difficult to express warmth and responsiveness in return. If this should happen, then the problems arising from separation will persist.

3.6. ADJUSTMENT

3.6.1. The biological concept of adaptation (which was a cornerstone of Darwin's theory of Evolution, 1959) is believed to have been borrowed by the psychologist and renamed adjustment.

3.6.2. Human behaviour can be interpreted as adjustments to demands and pressures generated from within the individual and from the environment. These demands tend to be primarily social or interpersonal, and influence the psychological structure and functioning of a person (Lazarus, 1961: 5). According to the Penguin dictionary of Psychology (1985: 13), adjustment as a term, carries clear positive connotations. Describing a person as being well adjusted, implies that the individual is involved in a rich, ongoing process of developing his or her potential, reacting on and, in turn, changing the environment in a healthy manner. It is a state of equilibrium between an organism and its environment, a state wherein all the needs are satisfied and
all organismic functions are being carried out smoothly. 'Learning' is also associated with the process of adjustment. Learning may be described as the formation of a habit or response, and results in the acquisition of new behaviour. In our study, we shall take a look at two types of learning processes that a child is involved in - the informal learning that takes place within the family, and the process of formal learning or 'schooling'. The learning of new skills and knowledge results in newer levels of adjustment. When we talk of 'good adjustment levels', we refer to the fact that an individual's feelings, responses, thoughts and behaviour, are well fitted to each other and to the environment. In this context, for example, disruption of an adoption, or adoptions which have failed to work, are a kind of failure of adjustment.

In our study, therefore, we shall study adjustment in terms of effective functioning at home, at school, with friends, and in the child's orientation to his/her environment. By identification, most children adopt many of their parents' attitudes and adjustment patterns, since, for children, parents represent love, power and success. In order to rear a child whose potentialities for self-development are well realised, Shaffer and Shoben (1956: 581) feel that parents need to live well-integrated lives, and be able to communicate this sense of equilibrium and adjustment to their children. Therefore, our
study will also look at the lives and adjustment patterns of the adoptive parents, since research has shown that their patterns of adjustment and behaviour have such a tremendous impact on their child's life.

3.6.4. Authors Shaffer and Shoben report that the finest satisfactions that parents may derive from the development of a well-adjusted child, is like that of a creative artist in his work. While granting freedom to their child to explore his/her world, parents need to maintain a warm and accepting relationship, that makes it possible for him/her to seek their help and advice voluntarily, when required. Therefore, possessiveness and an over-protective attitude towards children, hampers progress toward individuality and freedom. We may say that, as children or adults, we have many needs, and our activities are directed toward the satisfaction of these needs. The pattern of behaviour that emerges is usually referred to as the process of adjustment. We may take as a premise, for the purposes of our study, that if a family is generally well-adjusted and performing effectively in the community and society the adjustment of the child will also be of a positive nature.
3.7. PARENTAL ROLE FUNCTIONING

3.7.1. Early studies into adoption cases carried out by agencies had revealed that the quality of marriage appeared to be of vital importance in determining the successful outcome of an adoption. As stated by Richard Wittenborn (The Placement of Adoptive Children, 1957: 116) the evaluation of adoptive parents is central to the role of child placement workers. This is a responsibility which they can share with no other group; the evaluation of adoptive homes and adoptive parents is unique to the social worker.

3.7.2. This may explain why there is emphasis in understanding the background material on the parents' emotional experience of growing up, a discussion on infertility and what it has meant to them, the motivation for adoption, and the decision making concerning adoption; all this information is important in understanding the couple's wish for parenthood.

3.7.3. It is believed that a woman who is happy and at peace in her marriage, will make a better and more loving mother than a woman who is unhappily married. The quality of the marital relationship is a significant determinant in predicting the kind of home environment that will be provided for the child. These assumptions have been supported by several research studies which have consistently shown that in almost all successful adoption outcomes, the quality of the marriage had
been rated as very good during the home study process. It is heartening to note that these studies have also shown that social workers' judgments about the capacity for parental functioning, have been justified in the vast majority of cases studied (Lawder and Lower, 1969: 165).

3.7.4. Parental variables account for the major portion of overall post-adoptive family functioning. Three variables have been found to be critically important as determinants of successful adoption outcomes:

1. Satisfaction in the parental role
2. Acceptance of the adoptive role
3. Warmth and affection demonstrated toward the child.

3.7.5. The presence of these variables is reflective of adult maturity and the emotional maturity of the parents. The authors quoted above have stated that, "the motivation to bring up a child, is related to the acceptance of oneself as an adult and as a parent, the capacity to give and take, to enjoy a child, are indicative of a satisfactory sublimation of primary libidinal drives (libido theory)." When this capacity to desire, love and enjoy parenthood is combined with successful functioning as working adults, we can deduce (based on Freud's description of a mature individual) that an adult has successfully reached maturity. The main fallout of the findings of these studies, was that the earlier preoccupation
with the evaluation of the child to be placed in adoption, was replaced by increased emphasis on an evaluation of the adoptive parents and providing them with the necessary education and guidance for their future role as adoptive parents.

3.8. TO CONCLUDE

3.8.1. In this chapter, we have seen how the various theoretical concepts taken from sociology and psychology can provide a foundation for understanding the complex phenomenon of inter-country adoption.

3.8.2. The concept of self-esteem and self-image as inferred from verbal reports, from parents and adoptees, has been looked at carefully. The period of childhood is a period of self-discovery. The child's self-acceptance and self-image are closely associated with how he or she is accepted by the peer group and by parents. The importance of parental acceptance and regard, trust in the parent-child relationship, the importance of body image, and a positive interaction with the environment for a feeling of peace and self-consistency, are issues that have been explored in the chapters on bonding and attachment, and the adoptee's academic progress at school.

3.8.3. Theory has shown that the feeling that parents took an active interest in their affairs, was significantly more apparent in children with high self-esteem. An attempt has
been made to study whether the effects of early deprivation and neglect, can be offset by high levels of parental involvement later on in life. Previous research has demonstrated that the interest, warmth, love and encouragement shown by parents, were more important than one's ethnic group, religion, or social class, as contributors to self-esteem. It is important for social workers to explore whether traumatic experiences in early childhood are less critical determinants than subsequent positive parenting.

3.8.4. Our study will take a look at the kinds of individuals that adoptive parents are, their lifestyles and value systems. Do they tend to have high self-esteem, a positive sense of wellbeing, have a sense of potency and strength, and provide positive parenting experiences? The concept of socialization, drawn from sociology, has been an important area of concern for the study. The marital bond of adoptive parents, the parental role functioning, their satisfaction in the parental role, acceptance of the adoptive role, and the warmth and acceptance demonstrated towards the child, at the verbal and behavioural level, have been explored.

3.8.5. Identity is not merely sum of all the earlier identifications. The individual needs to synthesise successive identifications into a coherent whole, a consistent whole. This capacity to 'integrate' within oneself, is closely
related to one's level of emotional and intellectual maturity. How successful is the adopted child, who tends to be emotionally and intellectually delayed due to early childhood experiences, in making this important integration within himself/herself? Is there a longer period of moratorium required to make up for early childhood deprivations. Adoptees are functioning in a dissonant comparison reference group, for example, a brown skinned child attending a primarily white school. This kind of contextual dissonance has been demonstrated by previous research to affect self-esteem adversely. This point is also of interest to us, as we look at the integration of adopted children of Indian origin in white, Anglo-Saxon families.

3.8.6. Adopted children have been known to pass through different stages in their integration of who they are, with their current life situation. From a stage of active avoidance of the culture of his or her origin, the child progresses to an acceptance of his or her cultural identity. It becomes necessary for a child to be aware of his/her origins, to have information about circumstances leading to the adoption. Has this happened? These and other theoretical concepts covered in this chapter, were looked at by the researcher in the course of data collection and analysis.