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A study of the adjustment of twenty-two adolescent boys committed to Rhode Island Child Welfare Services who have been separated from their natural parents for a period of ten years or more.

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A STUDY OF THE ADJUSTMENT OF TWENTY-TWO ADOLESCENT BOYS  
COMMITTED TO RHODE ISLAND CHILD WELFARE SERVICES WHO HAVE  
BEEN SEPARATED FROM THEIR NATURAL PARENTS FOR A PERIOD OF  
TEN YEARS OR MORE

A Thesis

Submitted by

Anthony Vincent Orabone

(Ph. B., Providence College, 1948)

In Partial Fulfillment of Requirements for  
the Degree of Master of Science in Social Service

1953

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CHAPTER I  
INTRODUCTION

General Purposes

The main purpose of this study is to examine the current adjustments of adolescent boys separated from their natural parents for ten years or more. This will be studied on the basis of the total life adjustment, that is, from infancy to adolescence.

Other general questions which will be reviewed are as follows:

1. What were the factors or circumstances existing in the family prior to commitment or separation from the parents?
2. What was the part of the child's parents in helping him with his adjustment away from home?
3. Did the child show any behavior difficulties? When were these first noted?
4. What was the role of the social worker in helping the child with his adjustment?
5. What changes in living arrangements did the child experience from infancy through adolescence?

Sources of Data

Material for this thesis was drawn from:

1. Active child and family case histories at the Rhode Island Child Welfare Services.
2. Direct contact with the social workers presently handling the cases under study.

3. A review of literature in the field of social work related to this study.

#### Scope

This will include a study of twenty-two boys who were separated from their natural parents for a period of ten years or more by December 31, 1952 and have continued in care until the time of this study.

#### Method of Procedure

The writer obtained the cases for this study by reviewing the statistical cards of all the active cases of the children committed to Rhode Island Child Welfare Services. The names of every boy twelve years of age and over were listed. All these boys who had some contact, direct or indirect, with their natural mother or father within a ten year period were eliminated. The total number of such boys amounted to sixty-eight. The names were then arranged alphabetically and every third boy was chosen. This is the basis on which these twenty-two boys have been chosen for this study. The data collected and presented were obtained by the case-study method, with the use of a schedule. Some additional facts were obtained by direct consultation with the boys' social workers.

#### Limitations

In some instances the social worker was consulted directly for information, however; due to the changes in staff some of these workers were not available and the writer had to depend upon the recording.

Due to the rather large case loads and accompanying pressures, dictation was summarized in some cases and the recording of the intensive

casework done in helping parents was at a minimum.

The change in the agency philosophy from a punitive attitude or one of complete separation of the child from the parents to the present day thinking of rehabilitation or encouragement of any possible family tie must also be considered.

## CHAPTER II

RHODE ISLAND CHILD WELFARE SERVICESLaws and Policies

To meet the need for the care of dependent and neglected children under the custody of the State, in 1882 a committee with the establishment of such an institution as its goal recommended:

The establishment of an institution which shall be both a school and a home, entirely separate from all association with any places of a penal or pauper character, to which no stigma of arrest, conviction, sentence or previous misconduct shall be attached and where under favorable circumstances the attempt shall be made to educate such children into virtuous, self-respecting, and self-supporting manhood and womanhood.<sup>1</sup>

In 1885 the institution became known as the State Home and School. However, since July 1948, by a decree of the General Assembly, the State Home and School was changed to the Dr. Patrick I. O'Rourke Children's Center. The original purpose was written into the law in 1885 and restated in the many changes of the law.

The control and maintenance of the State Home and School for dependent and neglected children shall be vested in the Bureau of Children's Care, of the Division of Social Security, within the Department of Public Welfare. Said school shall be known as the State Home and School. The said bureau shall establish a system of government for the institution, and shall make all necessary rules and regulations for imparting instruction, and for the proper training of the children.<sup>2</sup>

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1 Henry J. Crepeau, R.I.: A History of Child Welfare Planning, A Dissertation, Catholic University, School of Social Work, 1941. p. 47-50.

2 General Laws of Rhode Island, 1923, Chapter 114; Public Laws 1917. Chapter 1470, Section 1.

The law indicated that the responsibility for the control and maintenance of the institution shall be vested in the Bureau of Children's Care since it was formerly the responsibility of the Department of Education as stated in the laws of 1885. The said "bureau" was later changed to "children's services", and is now known as the Children's Division in the Rhode Island Department of Social Welfare or, as it has been more recently titled, Rhode Island Child Welfare Services. The writer will refer to the agency by this latter title.

Said bureau shall receive, in accordance with the rules by it established, such children as may be declared vagrant, truant, neglected or dependent on the public for support, as provided in this chapter, who are under eighteen years of age, and who are in a suitable condition of mind to be instructed, and may release or discharge any such child from its care and custody to the child's relatives or others whenever the deputy chief of the bureau is satisfied that the object of the commitment has been accomplished and conditions appertaining to such child are deemed to justify such release or discharge.<sup>3</sup>

It is declared to be the object of this chapter to provide for neglected and dependent children, not recognized as vicious or criminal, such influences as will lead toward an honest, intelligent, self-supporting manhood and womanhood, the state, so far as possible, holding to them the parental relation. But if at any time in the discretion of the director of public welfare, the object can be better attained by placing a child in a good family of the same religious belief as the parents of such a child, said director of public welfare shall have the power to do so on condition that its education shall be provided for by such family in the public schools of the town or city where they may reside, or in some other suitable public school or private school; and whenever such a course is desirable or necessary said department of public welfare may pay such amount as may be agreed upon for the care and support of such a child. The director may in his discretion place any child requiring special treatment, training or oversight, in any institution controlled by persons of the same religious belief as the parents of such child, providing such special treatment, training

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3 Ibid., Section 2

or oversight, and may pay such amount as may be agreed upon, for the care and support of such child.<sup>4</sup>

All children committed to the Rhode Island Child Welfare Services are committed by the Rhode Island Juvenile Court. This is either on a petition of neglect or of dependency. Custody is given to Child Welfare Services up to the age of majority for both boys and girls, or until further order of the court. There is also a rather large group of children at Child Welfare Services who are not committed but who have been sent by the Juvenile Court for a period of detainment. For the fiscal year ending June 30, 1952 about seven per cent of the population were not committed.

In Section Three of the General Laws it will be noticed that provision is made for the foster home program and the use of other institutions wherever necessary.

#### Functions

Rhode Island Child Welfare Services carried the primary responsibility for the public child welfare program of the State. In contrast to the program offered by most other state child welfare departments, it provides direct care to some two thousand children including children committed to its custody and others in need of special study or consultant services. The Division carries the usual responsibility for coordination of public and private services to children more effectively to meet the total needs of all children of the State.

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4 Ibid., Section 3

1. Foster Care - Children who require long term substitute care because of the inability of their families to provide adequately for them are committed to the Children's Division through the Juvenile Court. Some of them are provided protective and preventive service in their own homes with relatives, while others must be placed in various types of foster care. This phase of the program consumes the greater portion of service, time and funds.

a. Institutional Group Care is provided at the Children's Center. It is now used primarily as a reception, study and training institution, where the needs of the child are evaluated to determine the most suitable plan and to give direction in case work planning towards the re-absorption of the child in the community with parents, relatives, or foster care, or towards more specialized treatment.

b. Foster Home Care is provided by the Child Placing Unit for such children as will profit from placement, and for whom homes can be found. Homefinding service is offered families wishing to open their homes to children.

2. Protective and Preventive Service through federal funds is offered to families and children in nine rural towns where other children's services do not exist.

3. Special Services - By law, all adoptions and child marriages are referred by the Juvenile Court for investigation and subsequent reporting to the court prior to hearing and decision. Inquiries from out-of-state agencies on matters relating to dependent or neglected children are handled for study and follow-up when indicated. Consultation service on any problems affecting children is made available on a state-wide basis.

4. Licensing Service - By law, the Children's Division licenses all child placing agencies, child care institutions and day nurseries, and private homes boarding children under the age of sixteen.<sup>5</sup>

As the Children's Center is such a vital part of Child Welfare Services, the writer would like to describe the functions of the Center according to its present plan of operation.

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5 Eighteenth Annual Report, 1951-52. Rhode Island Department of Social Welfare, p. 56.

The Children's Center was originally established in 1885 to care for dependent and neglected children on a long-time basis. In recent years, with the development of a foster home program to care for most of the children committed to the state's care it has become a Center for temporary care, intensive study, and treatment service for children in need of group living. Most of the new children received by the Children's Division, on commitment by the Juvenile Court, are admitted to the Center for special study and planning with the exception of infants. Children are returned to the community as soon as possible either to their own family or foster families. This study and treatment method within a group setting enables children coming from extreme neglected and broken homes to gain security and some understanding of their needs in preparation for life in the community. Children who consistently fail to adjust in foster homes are admitted to the Center for re-evaluation and study.

Although the trend is to admit children in terms of their individual needs in light of the therapeutic service which group placement can offer to particular children, large family groups are sometimes admitted in order to avoid sudden separation of the children. The children who are admitted to the Center usually have been known to other welfare agencies who may have worked with the families for years, but have been unable to achieve constructive results. Consequently, court action ensues and the public children's agency assumes responsibility.<sup>6</sup>

The Children's Center is organized on a cottage type system and has a capacity for about two hundred children. Last year the first of several cottages to be constructed under the new building program was completed. This was a modern type, one story building for the older girls with a comfortable capacity for approximately eighteen girls. A combination school-house and recreational building is now in the building stage and should be ready for occupancy in the Fall of this year.

The following, which was quoted from one of the administrator's recent articles, may offer the reader an idea of what the current philosophy is and the basis on which the agency operates:

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., Section 5

It is most important that each and every child have the opportunity to live usefully and happily when he grows up. The help of children's agencies is sorely needed both for parents and for children coming from these disadvantaged families. What we can do practically is vital. Wherever and whenever the welfare of a child is threatened, society cannot afford to leave a single stone unturned in his behalf. For this purpose greater study and consideration need to be given to the process and to the factors present in this triangle of child, family and foster-parent.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Lawrence C. Cole, "The Triangle in Child Placement: Parent, Child, and Foster-Parents," The Social Service Review, Vol. XXV, No. 2, June, 1951, p. 180.

## CHAPTER III

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In this chapter the writer will endeavor to present current thinking in four areas of this study, as follows:

1. The fundamental needs of the child
2. The meaning of separation to the child
3. The meaning of separation to the parent
4. The psychology of adolescence

#### The Fundamental Needs of the Child

One of our chief duties to the child is the development of personality.

The young child desperately needs the security of stable, persistently uniform situations, of dependable human relations, and of endless patience and tolerance ---. Probably the most general statement we can make about the child's needs is that he should be protected from distortions, from unnecessary deprivations and exploitations by adults-parents, teachers and nurses, physicians, psychologists, and others engaged in dealing with children. --- Every deprivation is a threat to the child, a source of anxiety which can be mitigated by affectionate reassurance which makes him feel that the deprivation is not a punishment and that he is still loved.<sup>1</sup>

John E. Dula states:

Today we recognize that every child, whether with his own family or away from home, has his own individual emotional and mental needs. These needs are potent and forceful in an individual's life --- . We don't know exactly what they derive from but we know they exist. They can be described in various

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1 Lawrence K. Frank, "Fundamental Needs of the Child," Mental Hygiene, Vol. XXIII, No. 3, July, 1938, p. 373.

ways, but briefly they may be summarized as the need to love and to be loved; the need to feel secure; the need to achieve.<sup>2</sup>

Abnormal personalities create difficulties. — Normal family life possesses rare resources for developing personality through right relations with other human beings.<sup>3</sup>

The parent-child relationship is of tremendous importance in the emotional development of the child, for its influence is reflected in the child from birth until the time he has completely established his own independence. The young child is endowed with certain instincts which are directed toward self satisfaction and self preservation. He must have his bodily needs and cravings satisfied. He sees in the mother figure the person who will satisfy these needs and who even anticipates them. Thus for him the mother represents the outside world. If he is secure in this relationship with the mother, he will have made an important step toward his future security and adjustment to the outside world.

The father is also of great significance in the child's life and the child also needs a father's love. In order to prepare himself for future life the child needs the affectionate attention of both parents to foster his good traits and to discourage his bad ones.

The infant's emotional relationship to its father begins later in life than that to its mother, but certainly from the second year onward it is an integral part of its emotional life

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2 John E. Dula, "The Child Away from Home," Journal of Social Case Work, Vol. XXIX, No. 4, April, 1948, p. 130.

3 White House Conference on Child Health and Protection, Dependent and Neglected Children. A Report of the Committee on Socially Handicapped-Dependency and Neglect. New York: D. Appleton-Century Company, 1933.

and a necessary ingredient in the complex forces which work toward the formation of its character and personality.<sup>4</sup>

The major contribution which the home and family make to the emotional life of the child is that security which the self sacrificing, harmonious love of parent for child brings to the child. In the family a sense of belongingness is imparted to the child. In the normal family setup the child's position is generally based on a conception of who he is rather than upon a consideration of his various attributes and potentialities. This security based on such a concept is a necessity for the individual in his early life. For as the individual takes his place in the outside world his position in society will be determined largely on the basis of his attributes in comparison with the members of society. As the child grows out of infancy he still clings to this sense of belongingness found in the family relationship which gives him a sense of security as he faces the strange world outside the family.<sup>5</sup>

Mary Sayles says:

For proper development, the child's personality needs the love the security of a home as much as his body needs physical care. The love and security found in the home are as a place of refuge for the young child facing a strange indifferent adult world. He needs a place where his individuality will be acknowledged and where he will be looked upon as a personality worthy of attention and regard.<sup>6</sup>

#### The Meaning of Separation to the Child

It must be accepted that the child does have an inner life in which he maintains a parent-child relationship. Numberless cases have proven that physical separation of parent and child is not a sufficient measure to interrupt the influence of the parents upon the child. A child's own home and family are the natural medium in which normal social and personality development can best be assured. — Every child who must leave his own home and live away from his own family suffers a profound

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4 Anna Freud and Dorothy T. Burlingham, Infants without Families (New York, International University Press, 1944), p. 103.

5 James S. Plant, M.D., Personality and the Cultural Pattern (New York, Commonwealth Fund, 1937), p. 96.

6 Mary Sayles, The Problem Child at Home (New York, Commonwealth Fund, 1932), p. 4.

emotional and social disturbance for which he can never be altogether compensated.<sup>7</sup>

On this basis every effort should be made to work with the child or his parents while he is still in the home. The child's own family should be assisted in every possible way to meet his needs in his own home; unfortunately many times these efforts to strengthen or regenerate the child's own home for the wholesome development of the child prove unsuccessful and the only remaining alternative is separation from the family. If for some reason these needs are unmet by the parents, the child usually feels that he is unwanted and unloved, and often thinks that he is in some way responsible for the fact that his parents have left him or given him up, if this should be the case.

Separation is a healthy experience when the child is ready for it. The obstacle in child placement is that he is seldom ready. In the normal situation, the child has received emotional satisfactions sufficient to liberate him for new experiences and new people. — But the foster child has almost never been accorded these satisfactions so essential for his growth: neither the love and admiration of a mother and father happily married nor the assurance of their continuous presence and reliability.<sup>8</sup>

This unnatural separation is spoken of as an "uprooting" experience and a "breaking" of family ties. Having parents is important and to be without them is to be without honor. The implication of this disturbing experience to the child is one of not belonging, or more serious, of not being loved. This removal from the home and the family unit with the inevitable thoughts of placement which follow are laden with emotions of

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7 Almeda R. Jolowicz, U.S. Children's Bureau, The Hidden Parent.

8 Dorothy Hutchinson, "The Parent-Child Relationship as a Factor in Child Placement," The Family, Vol. XXVII, No. 2, April, 1946.

fear, apprehension, anger, despair and guilt which may be expressed in as many ways as there are defenses.

However, whatever these feelings are, the child continues to maintain some kind of relationship to his parents long after separation from them has taken place. Foster home placement may provide a more favorable substitute home environment but seldom brings about a therapeutic change in the child's attitude toward his parents unless the child has been helped to accept the reality causing the separation.

It is when a child is being removed from his own home that casework focused in this area can be of greatest help to him. The worker who stands by at this time and explains why it is that his mother and father cannot look after him can often help more than at any time in the child's placement away from home. Continued freedom of expression by the child regarding his absent parents should also be permitted following his foster home placement. The worker should also make every effort to explain the separation and the present status of the parents in relation to this. The most successfully placed children are those who can see and understand the necessity of their own placement.

In a discussion of the boy who had never known his mother Almeda R. Jolowicz commented in connection with this that,

With some of the child's longing to know about his own parents settled, it is quite possible, if not probable, that his wish to belong, his loyalties, and his love tendencies could have been more securely fastened into the mooring of his foster home.<sup>9</sup>

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9 Almeda R. Jolowicz, op. cit., p. 6.

Some interesting comments made by other authorities on the effect of separation from parents are as follows:

It was learned in England that the child suffered more from being separated from his parents through the evacuation scheme than he did when he remained with them and underwent the experiences of the blitz. --- It seems that separation from the mother is more traumatic for small children than separation from the father

--- When a child has been separated from one or both parents there will always remain a psychic scar which will affect his relationships, happiness and success to a greater or less extent. However, the injuriousness of the effect can be ameliorated.

--- Children are less verbal and tend to use their vegetative and sensori-motor nervous systems rather than their psychological systems to express their emotions.

--- When a child is separated from a parent he passes through a period of mourning. Children often react to such a situation by regressive behavior, by disturbances of the gastrointestinal tract or by naughty behavior.

--- Every attempt should be made to encourage the child to talk about the absent person, express all his feelings verbally, whether these feelings be love, resentment, or hatred.

The passage of time will be helpful for the child --- but he should remain under skilled observation for many years.<sup>10</sup>

#### The Meaning of Separation to the Parent

Our culture does not easily release a parent from the responsibility toward his child. If the parent willfully chooses to avoid it, he is immediately labelled a "bad" parent. Up to a generation or so ago there was in the community, along with this critical judgment upon parenthood, a great deal more cohesiveness in the family as an institution than there is now.

In the eyes of the parent this idea of "loosing" the child connotes

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<sup>10</sup> O. Spurgeon English and Gerald H. Pearson, Emotional Problems of Living, pp. 97-98.

failure - which in turn stimulates guilt and may even produce hostility toward the "substitute parents." These hostile feelings are many times also directed toward the case worker involved, who "takes away his child."

The worker's role is one of helping parents understand and anticipate the realities in placement, and extends to helping them handle their conflicts about these realities. Parents' handling of their conflicts about separation and placement during this period, perhaps more than any one factor, forecasts the success or failure of the boarding home experience.<sup>11</sup>

So often the very set of parental emotions, illnesses, and limitations that make placement necessary, are the very ones that defeat or make impossible or inexpedient the child's return to his family.<sup>12</sup>

However, in spite of these parental limitations we have learned of the significance of the biological tie between a child and his parents and that there is no substitute for that deep, original connection, established once for all at birth. It is now known that whatever else we have to offer children, we cannot give them natural parents. It would then seem that if a parent has meaning for the child, he cannot be ignored and must be helped with his role of parenthood. These parents should not be excluded from the child's life unless it is absolutely necessary to insure the latter's future personality development and emotional growth. Many times in the past following separation the parents were not included in any future planning for the child and consequently were gradually removed from the picture. Present day thinking

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11 Inez M. Baker, "Caseworker Helps Child Use Boarding Home Experience," Child Welfare, Vol. XXVIII, No. 5, May, 1949.

12 Dorothy Hutchinson, op. cit., p. 48.

is now more fully aware of parent participation and the need to make parents feel important in planning for their child.

With the parent, our goal is to help him carry his parental responsibilities, derive satisfaction from his parenthood through placement, yet let his child benefit from living in a foster home. --- For the parent of the child remaining in care, the initial impact of the meaning of his separation from his child is to some degree diminished. If the child settles down in any way, there can be a diminution or quiescence of guilt for the parent. And for the parent whose relationship with his child was not too positive or gratifying, his ties to his child in placement can readily become more tenuous and more confusing.<sup>13</sup>

Eleanor P. Sheldon says:

Sometimes it seems impossible to believe of a parent that beneath the fear and hostility, the defensiveness and anxiety, there remains a spark of willingness to give his child anything. And sometimes, but far more rarely than we think, there actually is no such willingness, and our task is then to help the child live with that reality. --- the central truth remains the same: the best and most effective help to children lies in enabling their parents to help them to the extent that they can.<sup>14</sup>

Lawrence C. Cole says regarding this group of parents:

The parents who show some guilt, conflict or anxiety are the best "prospects" for case work. Rarely do they see themselves as part of the problem, but usually their problem is projected onto the child or someone else.<sup>15</sup>

Dr. Melitta Schmideberg says:

Some parents are desperately anxious to prove themselves 'perfect parents' as they once tried to become 'good children'

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<sup>13</sup> Elizabeth K. Radinsky, "The Parent's Role in Long Time Care," Child Welfare, Vol. XXIX, No. 2, February, 1950.

<sup>14</sup> Eleanor P. Sheldon, "Intake Practices--the Core of the Agency's Service in Helping Children and Their Parents," Child Welfare, Vol. XXVIII, No. 10, December, 1949.

<sup>15</sup> Lawrence C. Cole, op. cit., p. 171.

when they were small. They try to hide their ignorance, weaknesses, errors, and inconsistencies from their children, as they formerly sought to conceal them from their elders.<sup>16</sup>

Dorothy Hutchinson states:

Of all the types of parent-child relationships with which foster family care deals, the most difficult and complicated one is that of the guilty mother. She is more retarding to successful placement than the totally rejecting mother who completely ignores the child and steps out of his life with finality. She is more defeating because her rejection is accompanied by guilt, and her bad conscience causes her to disparage the foster mother while she continues to bribe and to allure her child with false promises of his return home. For the child in such a situation a psychological deadlock ensues. He is neither free to benefit by the foster mother nor to disentangle himself from the sadistic bonds of his own mother. This is the foster child who usually wears out a series of foster homes, and for whom the vicious circle of two counteractive mothers prohibits his growth and integration.<sup>17</sup>

Records are full of evidence of the difficulties of children in long-time care because so often their parents cannot let them feel themselves a part of the foster home.<sup>18</sup>

### The Psychology of Adolescence

Growing up is a difficult process. Every new period of growth awakens old difficulties, and this is especially so during adolescence. The child who has made a satisfactory adjustment in his infancy and childhood will nevertheless have some difficulties of adjustment in adolescence.

The period of adolescence in our society is one of unresolved contradiction between biological maturity and social dependency. The conflict is aggravated by emotional ambivalence

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<sup>16</sup> Melitta Schmideberg, M.D., "Parents as Children," Child Digest, September, 1949.

<sup>17</sup> Dorothy Hutchinson, op. cit., p. 48.

<sup>18</sup> Henrietta L. Gordon, "Long-Time Care," Child Welfare, Vol. XXIX, No. 1, January, 1950.

of the adolescent's parents, as well as of the adolescent himself toward the implications of his growing up.<sup>19</sup>

Some of the restrictions the teen-ager might feel about growing up are culturally based. In our American society, quite a dichotomy exists between what is expected behavior in childhood and in adulthood.<sup>20</sup>

Dr. Irene M. Josselyn says:

The child at this age objects to those aspects of reality he does not like and he attempts to circumvent these undesirable aspects if he can. If he cannot circumvent them he makes what is to him a realistic adjustment to them. He is less apt than a younger child to succumb to a neurotic solution of the problems he faces. It is not that a child never utilizes neurotic defenses at this age; it is rather that, relatively, considering the intensity of the internal conflicts and the frustrating reality, the child's ego, in spite of optimum functioning, may prove inadequate to the task at hand and neurotic defenses may develop.<sup>21</sup>

Adolescent neuroses tend to have two peculiarities. English and Pearson state the illness is either very stormy and the disorganization of the personality great, or it tends to attack the character so that the symptoms appear in the social and vocational spheres.

It is further claimed that since the id impulses of the adolescent are intensified and the superego is weak or inoperative, resulting in increased anxiety, there is need for limitations of freedom and for the use of firm authority.<sup>22</sup>

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19 Otto Pollack, Social Science and Psychotherapy for Children, p. 138.

20 John G. Milner, "Some Determinants in the Differential Treatment of Adolescents," Child Welfare, Vol. XXIX, No. 8, October, 1950.

21 Irene M. Josselyn, M.D., The Adolescent and His World, p. 17.

22 Frederick Hacker, M.D. and Elizabeth Geleerd, M.D., "Freedom and Authority in Adolescence," American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, 15:621-630, October, 1945.

It is well known that even a normal adolescence is accompanied by the strains attendant on adjustment to accelerated growth, to maturation and to the demands of society. But as Helen Ross states:

If the earlier emotional development was beset with difficulties from birth, or even before birth in the rejection of the mother, we can expect a disturbed adolescence.---

We can describe adolescent problems in terms of the character and severity of the anxieties of infancy and early childhood.<sup>23</sup>

Miss Ross goes on to review these anxieties as they develop chronologically in the life of the child as follows:

--- the fear of the loss of the mother's love, a loss that could mean annihilation. --- .

The next childhood fear is that which breaks out usually in the period of training the small child to conform to the demands of society, to develop the habits which the environment impinges upon him ---. This period is another strategic moment in the child's development which may result in aggressiveness, stubborn behavior or in discouraged withdrawal, both efforts to relieve himself of the anxiety engendered in the expectations and demands of the environment.

A third anxiety which follows and adds itself to the others comes with the development of the conscience, or super ego, which we see as an entity around six years of age. ---. The parents are the first law-givers: their authority is the first pattern and therefore of greatest significance in the formation of the child's inner authority, or conscience. Confused, inconsistent authority of the parents means a faulty development of the conscience.<sup>24</sup>

With an application of this understanding to the adolescent who was separated early in life from his parents and experienced a series of unfavorable foster home placements during those developmental years, a better understanding and acceptance can be had for any marked deviations

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<sup>23</sup> Helen Ross, "The Case Worker and the Adolescent," The Family, Vol. XXII, No. 7, November, 1941.

<sup>24</sup> Helen Ross, ibid., p. 231-232.

in his behavior. It is no wonder so many of these boys possess such an abnormal degree of anxiety-acting out as they do during this period of development. In relation to the process of emancipation from the parents which is part of this period, usually the adolescent is in no condition to take on a new set of parents while he is struggling to free himself of his own parents. If he has no parents to free himself from, he may assume a rebellious attitude toward substitute parental authority.

Since most adolescents are experiencing some emotional conflict about parental or substitute parental authority, it is particularly important that the initiative in asking help come from them and that the pressure that leads them to ask be clearly recognized as lying in their own circumstances.<sup>25</sup>

Lawrence K. Frank presents an interesting question. He comments:

One of the most important problems facing students of personality today is this question whether hostility and aggression are inborn characteristics of all individuals or whether they are the reactions of individuals who, as infants and pre-school children, were deprived of needed love and affection and security and so were driven by the unrelieved pressure for socialization to hostile, aggressive, destructive conduct.<sup>26</sup>

It is interesting to note the four areas an adolescent must deal with in preparing for adult life as listed by English and Pearson and to think of these in terms of the group selected for this study. They are as follows:

1. Decide upon a vocation and do some work in preparation for it
2. Effect an emancipation from his parents and family
3. Bring about a satisfactory relation with the opposite sex and at least begin to make some solution of his love life
4. Effect an integration in his personality for mature responsibility

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<sup>25</sup> Dorothy B. Doolittle, "Case Work with the Unattached Adolescent," The Family, Vol. XXII, No. 6. p. 93.

<sup>26</sup> Lawrence K. Frank, op.cit., p. 372.

## CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS OF DATA

In analyzing this group of twenty-two adolescent boys several areas will be explored. These are as follows: family situation, child's status, type of commitment, age at commitment, age at the time of the study, placement history, intelligence level of the child, age at last contact with the family, type of problems presented by the child and casework help in the area of family identity.

Family Situation and Status of Child

Eighteen of the twenty-two adolescents were of illegitimate birth. In only four cases was there a marriage. At the time of this study the whereabouts of the fathers or putative fathers in twenty cases were unknown; two fathers were deceased. Three of the mothers were at a school for the feebleminded; five other mothers were deceased; two mothers had married men other than the alleged father and would not make a plan for their sons. The whereabouts of nine mothers were unknown and the remaining three were committed to mental hospitals. In all twenty-two cases only two mothers eventually married but offered no plan for the child. The child in one of these situations, who had been separated since birth, was reunited with his mother after eighteen years, but at the time of this study no definite plans had been made for his permanent return. (Table I indicates the whereabouts of the parents at the time of this study.)

TABLE I  
WHEREABOUTS OF PARENTS

Whereabouts	Mother	Father
Unknown	9	20
Deceased	5	2
Mental Hospital	3	-
School-for-the-Feebleminded	3	-
Married	<u>2</u>	<u>-</u>
Total	22	22

Age of the Children at the time of this study

TABLE II  
AGE OF THE CHILDREN AT THE TIME OF THIS STUDY

Age of Children	Number of Children
12 - 14	7
15 - 17	10
18 and over	<u>5</u>
Total	22

Age at Commitment

Over one-third of these boys were committed between the time of birth and six months of age. The second highest age group was the one-to-three year level.

TABLE III  
AGE OF CHILD AT TIME OF COMMITMENT

Age	Number
Under 6 months	8
6 months - 11 months	2
1 year - 2 years 11 months	5
3 years - 4 years 11 months	3
5 years - 9 years 11 months	4
Total	22

Type of Commitment

Twenty boys were committed as dependent and the remaining two as neglected.

Age at Time of Last Contact with Either Parent

In seventeen cases the child had had no contact with either parent since the time of his commitment; in two other cases contact with the parents was not made even two years prior to the commitment; in another case there had been no contact five years before and subsequent to the commitment. In the last two cases there was some contact with the mother after a five year and an eighteen year separation, respectively.

Placement History

TABLE IV  
NUMBER OF FOSTER-HOME PLACEMENTS

Number of Foster Homes	Number of Children
1 - 3	14
4 - 7	6
8 - 11	2
Total	22

In eleven cases children experienced only one foster home placement in contrast to one who experienced eleven different foster home placements.

TABLE V  
CHILDREN'S CENTER PLACEMENTS

Number of Placements	Number of Children
1 - 3	9
4 - 6	1
Total	10

In six cases children experienced only one placement at the Children's Center, most of these being placed upon commitment. In those cases where there has been more than one placement the reason was because of further study or because the child was unable to make a satisfactory foster home adjustment. In the case where the child experienced six placements at

the Children's Center, his overt behavior and neurotic symptoms would disrupt his foster home placement so that return was necessary.

TABLE VI  
OTHER PLACEMENTS

Placements	Number of Children
Infant's Asylum	1
School-for-the-Feebleminded	1
State Infirmary	1
Study Home No. 1	1
Study Home No. 2	1
Training School	1
Total	6

Prior to commitment one child was placed at an Infant's Asylum for one year previous to commitment.

The placement at the School-for-the-Feebleminded was for a period of four years after commitment.

The child at the State Infirmary was born there and remained three months after his commitment, until a foster home placement could be found.

The placements at Study Home No. 1 and Study Home No. 2 were experienced by the same child due to his neurotic behavior.

The boy placed at the Training School was sent there following a court-hearing as a result of his overt behavior in the community.

### Intelligence of Children

The I.Q.'s ranged from 60 to 130 with the average at the normal range of intelligence. It did not necessarily follow that those with the lowest I.Q.'s made the poorest adjustments.

TABLE VII  
I.Q.'s OF CHILDREN

I.Q.	Number of Children
Over 120	2
110 - 119	1
90 - 109	8
80 - 89	6
70 - 79	4
Below 70	1
Total	22

### Type of Problems Presented by the Children

The types of problems presented by the twenty-two children covered a wide range. The symptoms shown were delinquent behavior, a mixture of delinquency and neurotic symptoms and in a few cases neurotic symptoms. More specifically, the group showed confusion over identity, feeble-mindedness, enuresis, homosexuality, masturbatory activity, withdrawal, stealing, fire-setting, reading disabilities, poor work history, school problems, pseudo-retardation, extreme dependency, inability to relate and nightmares. In only seven cases were there no overt problems; these cases fell in the favorable group. In the remaining four cases in this group the children showed natural curiosity about their families; this did not seem to

impair their adjustment.

Case Work Help with the Child and the Family

Intensive case work help was offered the child in understanding his identity in only eight cases. In ten more cases the child was offered supportive help in adjusting to his foster home placement, but in these instances the child showed minor concern. In the remaining four cases little case work help was offered.

In the area of case work with the families, in thirteen cases there were constant attempts at reunion but in only one of these cases did the child return for a short period of time. In the remaining nine cases there were few or no attempts to handle the child's separation with the family. There were various reasons for this. Some parents had died, some were in institutions due to mental deficiencies, and many parents had absconded, their whereabouts not being known.

TABLE VIII

CASE WORK HELP WITH THE CHILD IN ACCEPTING HIS SEPARATION

Intensity of Casework	Number of Cases
Intensive case work contact	8
Supportive case work help	10
Little case work contact	<u>4</u>
Total	22

TABLE IX  
CASE WORK CONTACTS WITH THE NATURAL PARENTS

Number of Contacts	Number of Cases
Frequent contacts	13
Few contacts	<u>9</u>
Total	22

## CHAPTER V

## PRESENTATION OF THE CASES

In this chapter the writer will present six case summaries which are representative of three groups of adjustment in which the twenty-two cases have been classified. Two cases will be presented in each group. These groups are titled according to adjustment as follows: favorable, acceptable, and unfavorable. The evidence determining in which of these categories a case should be classified was obtained by an analysis of the case history and by consultation with the present case worker regarding the child's overall adjustment. This included the home, school, community and work (if applicable) adjustment from the time of his commitment to the date of this study, December 31, 1952.

The criteria used in determining the above-named classes are as follows:

Favorable - when the child was able without question to maintain himself positively in his foster home, peer, academic and employment relationships.

Acceptable - when the child showed some difficulty in one or more of these areas but these difficulties were not serious enough to upset a foster home or community plan.

Unfavorable - when the child's difficulties resulted in overt delinquent behavior necessitating court action, or neurotic traits.

ELEVEN CASES WHERE THE CHILDREN HAVE  
MAINTAINED A FAVORABLE ADJUSTMENT

CASE NO. 1

FAVORABLE ADJUSTMENT

Tommy

Tommy, 17 $\frac{1}{2}$ , is a white Catholic boy with an I.Q. of 112. He was an only child and was committed to RICWS in 1936 on a dependency charge. He was one year and three months at the time of commitment.

Tommy's mother, the second of three children, also had been committed to RICWS when she was nine years old. The maternal grandmother had gone to the State Hospital for Mental Diseases and the grandfather was alcoholic and unable to provide a suitable home for his children. The mother remained in one boarding home up to the age of sixteen at which time she was placed in a work-wage home. The mother stayed there for about two years as the family could no longer afford the required wage and she was then placed into another similar home. Seven months following this placement the mother became pregnant and accused one of the neighborhood boys of being the father. He denied this and paternity was never established. Prior to Tommy's birth, the mother was transferred to the State Infirmary where Tommy was born. The mother returned to the community and resumed her mother's helper role returning to her original work-wage home. Tommy remained at the SI for about fifteen months and was then committed as the mother could not offer him an adequate home. The mother expressed a desire to have him placed nearby so that she could visit him on her time off. She was told that she would be expected to furnish as much of the baby's clothing as possible and she seemed eager and anxious to do so, as she said she never wanted to lose track of her baby. With the aid of the case worker, who arranged visiting between Tommy and the mother, this contact continued.

Upon commitment Tommy was placed in a foster boarding home where he has remained ever since for a total of seventeen years and three months. The foster mother was quite accepting of the mother, realizing how difficult it was for her, and the foster mother was very willing to have the mother visit occasionally. The mother continued her contact up to about early in 1941 when she suddenly stopped. Tommy was then a little over five and one-half. The mother then had a steady

boy friend whom she had also brought to visit on one or two occasions. During all of these contacts Tommy never realized this was his own mother and accepted her as a family friend.

In addition to the foster parents, this home included two older boys (State children) of school age and two older daughters of the foster parents, all of whom thought a great deal of Tommy. He was particularly fond of the foster father who spent a lot of his leisure time with him. Tommy's growth and development were perfectly normal and he appeared quite happy and contented in this foster home.

In April of 1943 the social worker was able to re-establish contact with the mother with the aid of a maternal aunt. The mother stated that she was working in the five and ten cent store and living in a rooming house (in a poor section of the city.) She felt she was unable to make any plan for Tommy but suggested that her brother William might be interested.

In May of 1943 the foster mother's younger daughter died of TB. Tommy was very much attached to her and was quite upset by her death. A little over a year later the foster father also died of TB but the foster mother continued to board the three boys.

Although Tommy had adjusted very well at school up to this time and was well-liked by his teachers, in the Spring of 1949 he did not appear too serious about his school work and he failed both English and Civics. However, he attended Summer school and managed to return to his regular grade in the Fall. It was felt he had become too interested in sports and neglected his academic subjects. The first indication of Tommy's interest in his identity came out in April of 1950 when he was fourteen years old. He knew that the foster mother was not his own mother and that his own mother used to visit once in a while when he was three or four years old. At that time he asked the foster mother what his mother's maiden name was. The worker wondered if perhaps Tommy was desirous of having some details about his family background. However, the worker did not pursue this any further at that time. In the Fall of this same year Tommy's greatest difficulty, which was not very severe, occurred in his school attitude. He was just about passing in some subjects and his indifferent and lackadaisical manner did not seem like him. There appeared to be no real hostility in his activities, but he fooled constantly and displayed little real effort in his work. Up to this time the case worker had always been relatively passive in the situation in view of Tommy's excellent overall adjustment and the foster mother's good understanding and ability to handle the children in her care. At this time the worker helped the

foster mother to see the connection between this acting out and the need for some understanding as to his identity. The focus of casework, therefore, was interpreting this need to the foster mother who, in turn, helped the boy to accept his situation. Some effort was also directed toward helping Tommy find a satisfactory job, which he did with the help of the foster family and has adjusted well up to the present time.

### Interpretation

In this case many favorable circumstances contributed toward Tommy's excellent adjustment. He had been placed into this home as an infant where he found complete acceptance. The question of his own identity did come up on occasion. Through case work, help was offered to the foster mother and the boy in meeting some of Tommy's anxiety over his identity. Worker's activity in this area was indirect interpretation of the family background to Tommy through the foster mother. By using the positive foster parent-child relationship the worker helped the foster family to accept Tommy's need for his identity, and this acceptance was transmitted to the child.

In adolescence we see some slight indication of emotional disturbance and again this was handled through the indirect method of interpretation by the case worker to the foster mother. The overall picture seems to indicate that Tommy did not view his separation as "bad" since the foster mother's attitude toward the natural mother was a positive one. In spite of the long-time separation, Tommy did not view this as a rejection and the foster family seemed to replace the role of the parents.

## CASE NO. 2

## FAVORABLE ADJUSTMENT

## Harry

Harry, 16, is a white Catholic boy with an I.Q. of 123. He is the first of two children committed to RICWS in 1937 as a dependent child. He was seven and one-half months at the time of commitment.

At the age of twenty-two the mother was committed to Exeter School for the Feeble-minded because of waywardness. Police stated at that time that the mother was a "community nuisance," - frequented park benches and "picked up men." A few months later the maternal grandmother died and the grandfather eventually remarried. Since commitment to ES the mother had been considered unstable, emotional and erratic; however, she was industrious and willing to work to the extent of her ability at times. The mother was returned to the community on the status of "vacation" which was later changed to "parole." At school she attained the third grade at the age of seventeen. In the Summer of 1936 she and the father, who was thirty-five, had applied for General Public Assistance. The couple were destitute, had been living in rooming houses and the mother was pregnant. They also were married the day they applied for assistance which was about two months prior to Harry's birth. On this same date the mother was returned to ES. Upon investigation it was discovered that the father had previously been a patient at the State Hospital for Mental Diseases for a full year two years previously. From ES the mother was transferred to the State Infirmary for pre-natal medical care where Harry was born. While at the SI the mother had frequent temper tantrums, during which she became noisy and abusive in her language. She was later returned to ES and a year later to the SHMD. (The mother gave birth to a second child, a daughter, in 1944 while at the SHMD.) Both of these children were committed to the State - Harry being seven months old. Whereabouts of the father became unknown.

Upon commitment Harry was placed into a foster home that had been used successfully by the department for a number of years. The foster mother's own family were all grown up and married, and she enjoyed offering the State children a home. Harry was not a healthy baby and was anemic upon placement in this home. Within three months he improved wonderfully. Harry became very fond of the foster father and would get up early in the morning so that he could have breakfast with him. Early

in 1940 it became necessary to transfer Harry temporarily to another foster home as foster mother had to be hospitalized for an operation. Harry immediately made himself at home here. All of the other children in this home were older and as a result Harry got all the attention from them and the foster parents. He would frequently mention that his mother had gone to the hospital because she was sick. A few months later, following foster mother's hospitalization, Harry was prepared and returned to his original foster home. Just about this time his real mother began to contact worker and requested pictures of her son. The foster mother took these pictures for the mother. In September of 1941 Harry visited his mother in the city. She bought him some clothing and a small toy. She seemed very pleased to see him at first; however, although the visit had been planned for one hour, she seemed very happy to rid herself of the responsibility in less time than this. At that time the mother appeared very unstable and her ideas were of a flighty nature.

When Harry was about five years old or so he became somewhat mischievous, but this aggressive behavior never really developed into anything too serious. He liked school and was able to achieve high grades without a great deal of effort; however, evidences of his hyperactivity still continued in a mild degree up to about the age of fourteen. (Many of Harry's activities which were considered behavior problems in this home, oftentimes would have been overlooked in other foster homes.) Early in 1949, when Harry was twelve, the social worker introduced him to his grandfather. This was a first move toward eventual exploration of his family background, but Harry did not seem very enthusiastic about the grandfather. In August of 1950 the foster mother complained to worker over the phone that Harry had been behaving badly and she had packed his bags to frighten him. Upon inquiry, worker learned that Harry felt less loved than his foster brother. This sibling rivalry and resentment toward the foster mother was rather intense at this time. A new worker was then assigned to this case and the area of family background was gone into quite intensely with the boy. Harry, then sixteen, showed some resistance to being introduced to the circumstances and records of his birth, but later stated, "What have I got to lose?" After this, Harry showed no hostility, no resentment and very significantly, no interest in following up any contacts with his relatives. Harry felt that when he became eighteen he would rather remain in his present foster home than go to any of his relatives. His adjustment continues to be good. He has become actively interested in bicycle racing and a short time ago the foster father purchased for him a one hundred and fifty dollar racing bike. Harry has won many trophies and thinks nothing of taking long trips on his bike. Recently Harry and the two other boys asked the foster mother

if she would adopt them. She was in agreement but this plan is now in a clearing process at the agency.

#### Interpretation

In this case we see that Harry's family's heritage was characterized by mental deficiency coupled with defective delinquent behavior on the part of mother and psychotic behavior on the part of father. His very superior intelligence and most important his extremely secure foster home placement have helped the boy to counteract the stigma of separation. His placement in this home at the age of seven months afforded him a continuous relationship with one parent figure, and thus a need to maintain a parent-child relationship and his love tendencies were secured for him.

During adolescence, we see the beginnings of turmoil in the boy which were transient. Intensive casework directly with the boy was utilized as an effective means of warding off some of the tensions and anxieties Harry was experiencing. It was apparent that Harry's disturbed behavior was decreased noticeably when his longing to know about his own family was settled. His wish to belong and his loyalties could again be transferred to his foster parents in whom he found real security.

Summary of Cases with a Favorable Adjustment

Of the nine remaining cases in this category, there was early placement and long continuous contact with one foster family in seven of these cases. Of these seven cases, one was placed at two and one-half years of age, another at three years and four months, and the remaining five at less than one year of age. The emotional needs of their developmental years were met in such a way that nothing more than the usual adolescent upheaval resulted. Casework around their natural family identification was explored in all but one case. In all these seven cases no contact was had with the natural family after the initial separation. In the remaining two cases one child experienced three foster home placements and was committed at four months, and the other experienced two foster home placements, having been committed at two months. Like the other seven cases, no contact with the family was had after the initial separation. All nine boys have made an excellent overall adjustment, and one boy is presently entering his sophomore year in college. All eleven cases in this category were of illegitimate birth, which seemed to be the primary factor in commitment.

SEVEN CASES WHERE THE CHILDREN HAVE  
MADE AN ACCEPTABLE ADJUSTMENT

CASE NO. 3

ACCEPTABLE ADJUSTMENT

Billy

Billy, almost 14, is an only child. He is a white, Catholic boy with an I.Q. of 88 and was committed to RICWS in 1940 as a dependent child. He was one year and seven months.

Billy's mother, the oldest of five children, left school in the sixth grade at the age of fifteen and went to work. She was employed for six years prior to Billy's birth in a textile mill where she became pregnant with Billy's father who was then forty-five and a divorced man. The mother's parents insisted she leave the home and as a result Billy was born at the State Infirmary. After confinement the mother and Billy returned to the home of the grandparents and the mother resumed her employment two months later. About a year following Billy's birth, the grandparents requested to have Billy removed from the home and chose to have nothing more to do with him. The mother could offer no plan for a home, and in 1941 she released Billy for adoption. No contact has been had with her since that time.

The putative father was adjudged in court and ordered to pay confinement expenses and to support the child. He appealed the decision however, and later disappeared.

Following his commitment Billy has experienced three boarding home placements and two placements in the Children's Center within a five year period. In his first foster home Billy was described as a very active child who cried little even when hurt. His speech improved within a few months while in this home and he showed great attachment to the foster mother. Billy remained in this home for three years. He was found to be very impulsive and he became unmanageable in his mischievous behavior. He was not conforming either in the foster home or at school. The foster mother pointed out that many people prompted him and encouraged this behavior. He was placed in another home where he remained three months. Foster mother requested his removal because of his undisciplined behavior and bed-wetting. Billy was then placed in another foster home where he remained two weeks. The foster mother found him

unrestrained, undisciplined, cruel to house pet and destructive of property and requested his removal. Because of his history in these foster homes, he was returned to the CC in June of 1945 where he remained about two years. He was found to have a temper and not to get along too well with other children, crave attention and affection, and it was felt that he might adjust in the proper foster home. Billy had a reading handicap and seemed to be extremely conscious of this. While at the CC the staff psychiatrist reported after seeing Billy that he gave the impression that he was a normal boy who would fit into any foster home where there is a genuine liking for and tolerance of the behavior of a growing boy. It was felt that much of his early misbehavior in the first foster home arose from the inability of the foster mother to rear a young child. Placement was then recommended, if possible in an adoptive home.

A possible adoptive home was located and Billy was placed here in September of 1947. These interested adoptive parents were most accepting of Billy and seemed to offer him the necessary emotional satisfaction he had lacked earlier in life. Materially they also gave him all that he asked for and more. This family was very interested in preparing Billy for college later in life, but Billy was functioning at a dull normal level and was slightly retarded in school; consequently, they enrolled him at a private school where he was able to show steady progress and advanced to his regular grade. About four years after Billy's placement in this home, this family seemed to lose its original interest in adoptive plans for him and Billy, too, somehow was able to sense this. He then began to develop temper tantrums and was suspected of stealing change from the house. In addition, he had been somewhat of a behavior problem in the school. At about this time the foster father became hospitalized and remained in poor health. The foster mother's mother also became seriously ill and the family moved in with the grandmother. After much consideration the family felt that Billy should be removed from the home, as it became necessary for their own welfare and as it would afford Billy an opportunity to "get discipline." This family has been interested in keeping up a contact with Billy and the possibility of his return with them.

Since his return to the CC Billy has been seen regularly by a male psychiatric social worker at the Mental Hygiene Clinic. During these interviews the focus at one point turned toward an exploration of Billy's own family. He told the worker he did not know his family and never really thought about them. He would not want to return to his mother or try to find her, as she did not want him and placed him with the state when he was an infant.

### Interpretation

Symptoms of a neurotic nature such as enuresis, temper tantrums, and reading disability were evident in this situation. Billy was subjected to frequent changes, both institutional and family in his early years. Hyperactivity and an inability to conform are also evident of the anxiety this child was faced with. When the possibility of adoption fell through, Billy's neurotic symptoms were reactivated. His whole pattern of behavior plus new symptoms of stealing were apparent.

No help had come from the natural family as they had rejected him at the age of one and expressed no further interest in him. Billy handled his separation primarily through a defense of denial. When this area was explored with him in his adolescence, he evidenced negative interest and showed passive hostility. The demands of his foster family were too great in that they could not accept his intellectual limitations. This "pushing" on the part of the foster family seemed to increase his feelings of anxiety thus making his community adjustment more difficult.

## CASE NO. 4

## ACCEPTABLE ADJUSTMENT

## Eddy

Eddy, 14, is a white Catholic boy with an I.Q. of 100. He is the second of two children and was committed to RICWS in 1939 as a dependent child. He was three and one-half months old.

The mother was the oldest of four illegitimate children and was adopted by a maternal aunt. She developed normally except that she had a quick temper and was very stubborn. She left high school while in her second year, at the age of 17. Throughout her school life she was troublesome and lost friends as quickly as she made them. After leaving school she worked as a domestic and cared for children, but lost two jobs because of stealing, lying, and attempting to involve innocent people in her misdemeanors. At the age of 18 she gave birth to her first illegitimate child, which was immediately placed in an orphanage.

In 1937 the mother was placed in a detention home because of her inability to work, but was soon transferred to a hospital as she had fainting spells accompanied by fits of hysteria. Two months later she was transferred to the State Hospital for Mental Diseases with a diagnosis of "Not psychotic but with personality disturbances." Until September of 1938 the mother was interested in her first child and was taken to visit her occasionally. Then Eddy was born. The mother refused to give any information as to his paternity and if questioned too strongly about it, became physically violent. Eddy, too, was placed in the orphanage while the mother remained at the SHMD with a very poor prognosis. On the basis of the mother's limitations and the lack of interest shown by the maternal relatives, Eddy was committed to the State. A year after Eddy's birth, mother died in a New York hospital as a result of an overdose of Dilantin she was taking for convulsive seizures.

Upon commitment at the age of three and one-half months, Eddy was placed into a temporary foster home which included two other small children, also State wards. Eddy was to stay here only until another home could be found; however, the foster mother thought a great deal of the baby and he was adjusting very well in this home. No change was considered at that time. About three years later, when Eddy was three

and one-half years of age, the foster mother left home with a married man who had ten children and Eddy was temporarily transferred to another home. Eddy was terribly upset at the transfer and cried with a great deal of feeling when the worker left him. Two months later Eddy went into his third foster home, no reason being stated for the change. Nine months following this he was again transferred, but this was so that he would be together with his older sister, a plan which the worker had been attempting to work through right along. Unfortunately, however, about four months later this foster mother decided to give up boarding children. This foster mother described Eddy as a very nice boy who should be able to fit into any home. Eddy was returned to his third or previous foster home. He had to be moved quickly, therefore, it was felt that it might be easier for him to return to his former foster home. Eddy was just under five years old at this time. He made an excellent adjustment in this home until September of 1946 when he returned to school. He had never been a school problem but he began to lie, disturb the other children and did not apply himself at all. In the home he had also become an enuresis problem. It seems that in June of this same year the foster mother, who had earlier thought of adopting Eddy, told the worker that they would have considered it if Eddy's mother had not been mentally ill. The foster father feared some unpleasant traits from the mother and, therefore, would not take the risk of adopting him. Eddy was not present during this discussion, but it was assumed he sensed this attitude of the foster family. Eddy stopped his bedwetting a few months later after foster mother responded to this problem in a more positive manner. About April of 1947 Eddy was making a good overall adjustment. His I.Q. at this time was 86 and he was just doing fair work in school. The foster mother had told him that his mother had died some time ago and she said that he never questioned his background any more. As time went on Eddy continued to be very much a part of this family. Quite a favorable change was evident in his personality. He did not appear as withdrawn but was more talkative and much more friendly. In the Summer of 1949 Eddy was introduced to his sister, whom he did not remember. He was thrilled that he had someone in his own family interested in him. Although he had made a very adequate adjustment in this foster home and was as much a part of the family as the real children, Eddy still had a little feeling because of the difference in the last names. While Eddy was with his sister he asked her all about their parents. His sister told him how they were born out of wedlock and that the mother was dead and father unknown.

Eddy continues to remain in this foster home and has been adjusting favorably. A short time ago, however, Eddy and another boy in the home got into some difficulty in regard to

destroying property and stealing. This matter was settled with the property owners and seemed to have frightened the boys a great deal. Eddy is now a little over fourteen and showing signs of pre-delinquent behavior, such as school difficulties and petty thievery. The worker has learned indirectly from Eddy's sister that whenever he and his sister are together, although he knows of his mother's death, he seems to wonder and asks her the manner in which the mother died.

### Interpretation

Frequent changes, with little opportunity to establish any real ties with his natural family or substitute parents, mark the emotional deprivation this boy experienced during his formative years. Not being able to establish roots anywhere, Eddy is seen questioning his identity, longing to learn something of his family. It was not until after several years of placement that he was able to gain any semblance of security and adjust in an acceptable manner. His separation had really never been explored thoroughly with him until mid-latency. He would often show feeling about the difference in his name. The strong need for some family identification was apparent in the feelings of elation he showed in meeting his sister. This was a very meaningful relationship to Eddy. This, plus the understanding of the foster family, seemed to offer him some satisfaction. We do not see Eddy acting out in an overt, delinquent manner.

The circumstances surrounding Eddy's birth did not offer him any family strengths. With no knowledge of putative father, and mother's inability to offer him any emotional warmth, and her subsequent death, it was not possible to call upon the family to help him accept his physical and emotional separation.

In adolescence we begin to see a new pattern of behavior evolving in Eddy in that he is showing some pre-delinquent tendencies, and also a need to know about his family.

Summary of Cases with an Acceptable Adjustment

In the remaining five cases in this classification, three children were born out of wedlock with no family contacts since their commitment. Two of these three children has experienced long-term separation with no contact with the family since infancy. The other child born out of wedlock was committed at the age of seven and has not had contact with his family since that time. The remaining two cases in this category experienced similar long-time separation. Separation was caused by a break-up in the marriage in one case and death of both parents in the other, with relatives not being willing to assume any responsibility for these children. School difficulties, fire-setting, homosexual activities, withdrawal and speech impediment seemed to be the outstanding symptoms during adolescence. Casework help in the area of family identity was offered partially in three of these cases and on a more intensive level in the remaining two.

FOUR CASES WHERE THE CHILDREN HAVE  
MADE AN UNFAVORABLE ADJUSTMENT

CASE NO. 5

UNFAVORABLE ADJUSTMENT

Jimmy

Jimmy, 17, the third of three siblings, is a white Protestant boy with an I.Q. of 79. He was committed to RICWS in 1937 as a dependent child. He was one year and two months.

Jimmy was born in 1935 at the State Infirmary. His mother had had two older children by a former marriage but her husband deserted in 1929. Jimmy is an illegitimate child and not much is known about the alleged father. Soon after his birth Jimmy and his mother made their home with some lady the mother had befriended at the SI. The mother earned her living working in this house as a domestic. A short time later, however, the mother also deserted and was believed to have gone to California. Efforts to locate the mother failed. The relatives neither offered any help in this area nor displayed any interest in this child's welfare.

From commitment to the present time Jimmy has been in seven foster homes and has returned to the CC on six occasions. He spent a total of nine and one-half years in foster homes and about two and one-half years at the CC. Up to the age of five Jimmy had lived in three different foster homes, not staying in any one for more than two and one-half years.

At the age of two Jimmy contracted polio and as a result his left leg and foot were deformed. He was operated on in 1951. The condition was helped, but he still limps badly. Up to the time of his fifth birthday he spent seven months in two different hospitals.

Jimmy made a fairly good foster home adjustment until he was about eight years old. At that time he exposed himself to other children and pulled up girls' dresses. In addition, he set fire to a garage which was completely destroyed. He was returned to the CC for study and the psychiatrist recommended he be placed in a group setting. He remained at the CC until December 1945 when he went back to the same foster home but remained for only nine months when he returned to the CC. Jimmy truanted from school, teased and annoyed the

other children in the home, soiled himself on several occasions and engaged in unnatural sex activities with the dog. He was again placed in a foster home for four months but returned to the CC and was later placed in the Bradley Home for further study. Prognosis was poor at that time. Jimmy returned to the CC and was later placed in the original foster home in December 1947. This was on his twelfth birthday. His behavior continued to be poor and he returned to the CC a few months later. At that time he was drawing obscene pictures in school and placing them in the teacher's desk.

In the summer of 1948 Jimmy was placed at the Children's Village in New York, where he remained for three years. His initial adjustment was poor, but he gradually became able to accept discipline and his school work improved. In the fall of 1950 the CV recommended that he be placed in a foster home at the beginning of the next school term. While at the Village, Jimmy had been visiting a family in Rhode Island and it was thought they would take him on a foster boarding basis; however, they refused at the last minute and another home was found for Jimmy quickly where he was placed without any preparation and remained for only nine months before being returned to the CC. He had been soiling, was non-cooperative and suspected of stealing. The foster mother said he was very lax in his appearance and cleanliness. Also, he slept poorly at night, talked in his sleep and threw bed clothing on the floor. Upon his return to the Center his adjustment improved slightly; his soiling ceased and there was no evidence of stealing. He tried hard to compete with the other boys physically and be a member of the group. He identified at that time rather strongly with a boy who was an exceptionally fine athlete.

While at the CC during his adolescent period, Jimmy was seen by two of the staff psychiatrists and tested by the psychologist.

Early in 1952, about a month following his sixteen birthday, Jimmy was placed in another foster home. (Agency policy requires that sixteen year olds return to the community on a self-support basis as soon as possible.) This was the home that had shown earlier rejection and had refused to accept him upon his return from the CV. Jimmy remained here for seven months. His relationship with the foster father was favorable; however, the foster mother and Jimmy did not get along. Jimmy exhibited extreme anti-social behavior; he would not bathe; he soiled; he remained in bed almost all day; and he refused to eat with the family. He has been in his present foster home for less than six months and seems to be experiencing difficulty in relating to the foster family.

### Interpretation

Jimmy's long history of hostility and aggressiveness gives evidence that there are a number of emotional conflicts. His I.Q. of 79 indicates borderline intelligence. The effects of his anxiety could be interfering with his intellectual functioning. He seemed to be insecure and showed resentment toward the foster mothers during many of his placements. He has shown in some placements indications that he would like to have some family attachments. He also seems confused over his identification and has lacked an adequate identification figure to assist him with his adjustment. It might be summarized that Jimmy showed feeling of being alone, unwanted, and uncared for in a rather hostile world. He showed difficulty in adjustment, which was characterized by a regressive and attention-getting behavior.

The reports from the child-study homes reported a poor prognosis for this boy, and the efforts of the case worker in regulating Jimmy's environment did not seem too successful. Jimmy apparently did not receive any casework help in the way of clarification of his natural family situation until approaching adolescence.

## CASE NO. 6

## UNFAVORABLE ADJUSTMENT

## Johnny

Johnny, 17 $\frac{1}{2}$ , and the second of five children, is a white Catholic boy with an I.Q. of 83. He was committed to RICWS in 1941 as a neglected child, having been referred by RISPCC. He was six years and four months at the time of commitment.

The mother had a history of negative behavior. She had her first child by her step-father who had been married before. She later married him and had four other children. Early in their married life father brought men into the home for her to entertain in order to increase their income. There was a long history of abuse on father's part toward her. He was a heavy drinker and treated her roughly a great deal of the time. In 1938 Johnny's father was admitted to a TB sanitarium and the mother became dependent upon ADC. Early in 1941 the mother began to shirk her responsibilities by leaving the home frequently and having many young people in her home of questionable character. A group of girls and sailors were known to be frequenting the house and carrying on boisterous drinking parties. The furniture and the home were wrecked and the children were left to shift for themselves. The mother admitted that she allowed her home to become filthy and paid little or no attention to the children. Her excuse was that she had been tied down to the children and her husband for so much of her life that she enjoyed going out and having a good time. The mother had great difficulty in disciplining her children and they showed the result of lax control. The mother further admitted that she became associated with a very bad crowd who did her no good. When pressure was put on the mother to improve the family situation, she deserted and the children were committed.

Johnny remained at the CC for a few months and was almost seven before he went into his foster home. Within the next six months he moved into three different foster homes. (His three sisters were also living in this last foster home.) Johnny made a very unfavorable home, school and community adjustment here and was returned to the CC in 1943. In the home he stole money, expressed verbal resentment and "could not be trusted." At school he was destructive toward property, threw other children's lunches on the ground and then beat these children up. He repeated the second grade. This type of behavior was carried into the community where Johnny stole

frequently and was destructive toward neighbor's property.

After a return Christmas visit to this same foster home, this family offered to give Johnny another chance and he was again placed with them. Although his adjustment then was not completely acceptable, the foster family put up with Johnny's "bad temper" and occasional outbursts. However, during 1950 this family could no longer accept Johnny's negative behavior and following a series of serious incidents he was brought into Juvenile Court and later sent to the Training School, where he stayed for a year and one-half. Johnny had stolen an automobile, set fire to a wastebasket under his teacher's desk, destroyed a barn at the foster home by fire, and had stolen several items from a neighboring camp. Following his release from the TS Johnny returned to this same foster home but remained only a few months when he left following some words with the foster mother. Johnny's relationship with the foster father was rather favorable and they got along well together. The foster father felt he understood Johnny better. Johnny went to live with the family of one of his school friends and became self-supporting. On one occasion, while in this home, Johnny slashed his wrist in several places in order to escape from a threatening situation. At about this time, the Spring of 1952, the case worker began to offer Johnny help in the area of his separation from his family. In a negative manner Johnny displayed a need to know. He more or less knew his father had died in 1942 of TB but was not certain. Not too much of the detail prior to commitment was brought out. The worker intentionally did not go into too much detail regarding Johnny's mother, feeling that a possible reunion might come about some time in the future and if so, would not be as meaningful to him if the truth were brought out now. The worker and Johnny made an attempt to locate the mother by following up the grandmother's address. The grandmother had moved and could not be located and the mother's whereabouts still remained unknown. The reason offered Johnny for his separation was that the father had died and the mother was not able to maintain the family adequately. In spite of this, Johnny felt that his mother could have remained active with her children in some way. In the Summer of 1952 Johnny enlisted in the United States Army Air Force and no contact has been had with him since his enlistment.

Interpretation

For the first six years of Johnny's life physical and emotional rejection was most prevalent, and throughout his adolescence we see more than the normal amount of aggression and hostility directed toward environmental forces of an authoritative nature. Frequent changes in living arrangements soon after his commitment were further obstacles in his development and he was unable to relate positively to anyone. Symptoms of neurotic and later delinquent behavior were also seen in his adolescent years. His deprivations apparently were always interpreted as punishment and he never could feel loved because of his lack of both natural and substitute family relationships. The several attempts to clarify the family situation to Johnny seemed in vain, and he continued to demonstrate a great amount of hostility toward society.

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Summary of Cases with an Unfavorable Adjustment

In the remaining two cases of this category both boys reacted in a hostile, aggressive manner to the long-time separation and continued rejection they faced. It was evident through their behavior and verbalizations that both boys seemed anxious to know their identity, but it was not until late adolescence that case work help was geared toward assisting them to accept their reality. A stormy adolescent period was apparent in both boys, particularly in the area of work adjustment. Frequent changes in living arrangements, both institutional and foster family, were characteristic of both. In one case eleven different home placements were made because of the boy's inability to relate constructively. In the other case the child experienced interval institutional placements, one lasting for five years, plus four different foster home placements. In both these cases the boys' natural family could not be called upon to help them in their adjustment away from home.

## CHAPTER VI

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The writer studied the adjustment of twenty-two adolescent boys, committed to Rhode Island Child Welfare Services, who had been separated from their natural parents for a period of ten years or more. The main purpose of the study was to examine the current adjustments of adolescent boys separated from their natural parents for ten years or more.

Other general questions considered were: What were the factors or circumstances existing in the family prior to commitment or separation from the parents? What was the part of the child's parents in helping him with his adjustment away from the home? Did the child show any behavior difficulties? When were these first noted? What was the role of the social worker in helping the child with his adjustment? What changes in living arrangements did the child experience from infancy through adolescence?

In most cases the child showed concern over his identity and this was expressed in various ways. He would question the foster mother and the case worker about his parents. In some cases the child did not ask directly but showed some interest in knowing his family background and the reasons why long-term separation was necessary.

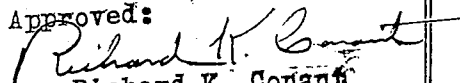
In the majority of cases the children were born out of wedlock with the putative fathers unknown and the mothers unable to offer a home. Feeble-mindedness, mental illness and death were also factors bringing about separation from the mother.

There was very little contact with the parent in all cases. In more than one-half of the cases, the social worker had frequent contact with the mothers, but in only two of these cases did the child see the mother. It would seem, therefore, that the social worker's role was varied. The worker attempted to help the child and the foster parent understand the former's reality situation. The worker made further efforts to help the mother realize the child's need for her.

In more than one-half of the cases the children experienced less than three foster home placements. Other placements, such as at the Children's Center, Infant's Asylum, School-for-the-Feebleminded, Child Study Homes and Training School, were also a part of the placement history in these cases.

Behavior difficulties of either a delinquent or neurotic nature were seen in more than one-half of the cases. It was also noted that these difficulties would become more pronounced as the child approached adolescence. Another observation seemed to indicate that those children with fewer foster home placements and a more constant parent figure made the better adjustments.

Approved:

  
Richard K. Conant  
Dean

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SCHEDULEChild

1. Name
2. Date of birth
3. I. Q.
4. Religion
5. Age at commitment
6. Type of commitment
7. Source of referral
8. Reason for referral
9. Age at time of last contact with family
10. Placement history
11. Placement adjustment
12. School adjustment
13. Social adjustment
14. Work adjustment (wherever applicable)
15. Health (any physical or mental defect or limitation)

Family

1. Siblings  
Number  
Child's position  
Contact
2. Marital status of parents at time of commitment
3. Age of parents at time of commitment
4. Education or intellectual capacity of parents

5. Home environment (prior to commitment)
6. Present whereabouts of parents
7. Child's reaction to reunion with parents after ten years  
(wherever applicable)
8. Relationship between child's behavior and separation from  
parent
9. Case work services offered child in area of his understanding  
reason for separation
10. Agency contact with parents or family