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The Child-rearing Attitude of Foster and Biological Mothers: A Comparative study

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MITRA, SAHANA; and BABU, NANDITA. *The Child-rearing Attitude of Foster and Biological Mothers: A Comparative Study*. 2005. 60 mothers (30 mothers in pre-adoptive foster care period and 30 biological mothers) having children in two age groups, that is 0-3 and 3-6 years were assessed on 8 child-rearing attitudes namely, acceptance-rejection (AR), dominance-submission (DS), encouragement-discouragement (ED), love-hate (LH), democracy-authoritarianism (DA), trust-distrust (TD), reward-punishment (RP) and tolerance-hostility (TH) taken from the Parent Child Relationship (PCR) test. The two-way analysis of variance showed a significant difference between mothers in pre-adoptive foster care period and biological mothers on the acceptance-rejection (AR) and love-hate (LH) dimension with no significant impact of the two age groups of children whereas no significant difference was obtained for the dimension of dominance-submission (DS); encouragement-discouragement (ED); reward-punishment (RP); trust-distrust (TD) and tolerance-hostility (TH) Furthermore, for the dimension of democratic-authoritarianism (DA), the results showed a significant impact of the two age groups of children on the attitude of both mothers in pre-adoptive foster care period and biological mothers. The theoretical and practical implications of the study are discussed.

Love transcends many,
Barriers and alters ours,
Misguided thinking that,
True maternal bonding,
Happens only through
The umbilical cord - by an adoptive mother.

'Mother' has always been a generic term synonymous with love, devotion, and sacrifice' (Bombeck, 1983). In *The American Heritage College Dictionary* (3rd Ed., 1993), the term *mother* is defined as "a woman who conceives, gives birth to, or raises and nurtures a child". However, being a mother, then, is not only bearing a child - it is being a person who socializes and nurtures. It is being a primary parent or caretaker"(Chodorow, 1978). Similar was construed in PARTheory (Rohner, 2004). Smith, Surrey, and Watkins (1998) indicate that adoptive mothers are able to develop attachment

relationships with the child just as the biological mothers (Terry, Elizabeth, Felicia & Jerison, 2003). Therefore, the term "to parent" refers "to raise and nurture" as specified in *American Heritage College Dictionary* (3rd Ed., 1993). The parent may be a significant other with whom a child has a relatively long lasting emotional tie, who is uniquely important to the individual and who is interchangeable with no one else & most studies indicate it's the mother who is the prime attachment figure. As emphasized by one birthmother, "What we have to realize is that children are not possessions. Children are their

own beings, adopted or not. At best, we can guide them. The birthparents have guided them into the world; the adoptive ones guide them through childhood." Similar view was forwarded by Jones (1993). In a longitudinal study, Stams, Juffer & van Ijzendoorn (2002) found that infants, who were placed before 6 months of age, had high quality of mother-child relationships in terms of attachment and maternal sensitivity. But the child development remains sensitive to environmental changes and stressful life events (Waters, Hamilton & Weinfield, 2000). It is important to note that there are no "scripts" on which foster mother or father work. The discrepancy may arise which is visible in biological parenting too (Schuengel & Bakermans, 1999).

The mother-child bond in early years of life: Attachment, according to Bowlby (1969), is the propensity to form strong emotional bonds with particular individuals; it has a survival value by bringing nurturance, protection and security to the infant. In addition, Tiffany Field's model of psychological attunement (1996), considers attachment as a life span phenomenon. According to the model, one needs to accommodate multiple attachments to a variety of figures at different stages of life. While the sensitivity of the caretaker may play a large role in the development of attachment during 1st year, parenting becomes more complex during 2nd and 3rd years of life. Parenting changed during this 6 month period from one of mostly positive support to attempts to direct and teach the child, just as suggested by Waters et al (1991). A child for any mother holds different meaning; the meaning, which varies from a child who is seen as an extension of the self; having a child is seen as a way for the parents to celebrate their love, and raising children is seen as one of life's major challenges (Chen & Wang, 2000). Even the normal maturation of the child represents, in every phase, is a new adaptive task to the parents, which involves the psychological resources of the parent; the quality of internal representations of relationships and their developmental history (Belsky, 1984). Mothering itself shows to be a 'caring compartment' of devoted holding shared by hearkening, harboring and preserving. Recent studies points to the role of mother's state of mind. Dozier, Stovall & Albus (2001) examined 50 foster mothers-infant dyads where babies had been placed into the care of foster mothers between birth & 20 months of age. A high

correspondence was seen between maternal state of mind and infant attachment quality, similar to the level seen in biologically intact mother infant dyads. 22% were classified with dismissing state of mind, 54% with autonomous state and 24% with preoccupied state. These classifications are stable over periods ranging from 1 to 15 months (Sagi et al., 1994). The findings suggest that it is maternal characteristics, rather than shared temperament or other genetically linked characteristics that determine children's attachment strategies. Similar was observed by Palacios (1990) when the results of Parents' Ideas Questionnaire were taken into account that parents bring to interaction not only a 'definition' or representation of the situation but also the 'definition' or representation of what a child is, how he/she develops and in which way he/she can reach development.

The childrearing attitude of the mothers: The observations of classic models of Schaefer (1959) and Symonds (1939) of child-rearing attitude organized around two bipolar dimensions, autonomy-control and hostility-love assumes child to be passive entity were reported true by Barber & Harmon (2001) in several different cultures. Two different parental strategies have been examined in such child-rearing attitude that is the use of regulative messages and comforting messages (Applegate, 1990) which are both directive in its nature helping in the child's development. Recently, the literature presents the significant role of the parental acceptance-rejection theory (PARTheory) that takes into account the individuals feelings when they were rejected by their attachment figures and the resultant outcome on the children. The theory suggests that the likelihood of parents displaying any given form of behavior (e.g., acceptance-rejection) is shaped in important ways by the maintenance systems of that society including such social institutions as family structure, household organization, economic organization and other institutions that bear directly on the survival of a culturally organized population within its natural environment. In the midst of varied child rearing practices as proposed by Baumrind (1991), the two dimensions often part of these styles are *autonomy-granting*, (Ryan, Deci & Grolnick, 1995) 'the extent to which parents employ non-coercive, democratic discipline and encourage the adolescent to express individuality within the family (Steinberg et al, 1991; Stewart & Bond (2002)

and *psychological control*, the extent to which parents place restrictions or limits on children's behavior, and the extent to which restrictions are enforced (Rohner et al, 2000) through use of parenting practices such as guilt induction, withdrawal of love, or shaming. One key difference between authoritarian and authoritative parenting is in the dimension of psychological control. Both authoritarian and authoritative parents place high demands on their children and expect the parental rules. Thus, although authoritative and authoritarian parents are equally high in behavioral control, authoritative parents tend to be low in psychological control, while authoritarian parents tend to be high (Kochanska & Kuczynski, 1989).

The foster care in the Indian context: In traditional Hindu society there are two available options for a childless couple - one is remarriage and the other is adoption of a male child, preferably from within the family or from a distant relative. Adoption can be a most beautiful solution not only for childless couples and single people but also for homeless children. It is a social and legal process that enables a parent-child relationship to be established between persons not biologically related. It is defined as a process by which people take a child not born to them and raise it as a member of their family. By this one means that a child born to one set of parents becomes, legally and socially, the child of other parents and a member of another family & assumes the same rights & duties as those that are obtained between children and their biological parents. In this light, one can define foster care as a period prior to adoption of the child. This period ranges from 6 months to 2 years. It can be defined as the temporary arrangement where full time care of the child, 24 hours a day, outside the child's own home or the institution. When the parents complete the foster period successfully, the child is finally given for adoption (Children Act, 1960). The prevalence of parents who want to have a child are largely opting for the girl child, (study by Central Voluntary Adoption and Resource Agency, CEVARA, 2004). Even official figures too point to the fact: In 2003 out of 285 babies given for adoption, 161 were females and 124 males. In 2002-2003 of the 550 cases that were scrutinized by CEVARA and given the green signal to, approximately 300 were female babies.

The post adoption experience of 159 parents after 18-24 months of the child's adoption were examined (McDonald, Jennifer, Murphy & Kimberlee, 2001) and most parents reported adoption experience to be 'as one has expected' and rated that child rearing as more smooth than stressful. Adoptive parents saw how the child has contributed positively to their lives. Similar was reported for 42 adoptive as well biological families (Golombok, Murray, Jadvá & Lycett, 2004). It was observed in one of the study (Stams, Juffer & Van Ijendoorn, 2001) that if intervention programs are provided in adopted families it helps to sensitize the caregiver to the infant's signals, which has been the important determinant of a secure child-caregiver attachment relationship (De Wolff & van Ijendoorn, 1997). In India, the foster families have no contact with biological family as the adoption procedures are followed when there is the surety that biological family will not be known to the child, as well as, to the foster parents.

Telling the child about adoption: When a newborn is adopted, "telling" the child becomes an emotional event in the lives of the parents. By starting to give the 3-to-6-year old the information he/she seeks at various times about physical origin, the trauma of a belated revelation is avoided. But of all the material collected on adoption, there is a small, tangential, and tentative remarks made about telling the adoptee about his background received the response, which was both positive and highly emotional. In most of the circumstances, the telling about adoption is not particularly an option the adoptive parents have. However, it has often been said that whenever or whatever is told to the child, it is the parental reaction that tends to determine the meaning of the communication.

In summary, the present study with the aim to recognize the attitudes prevalent in biological & foster mothers having children across two age groups (i.e., 0-3 & 3-6 yrs) hypothesizes that there will be a difference in the child-rearing attitude for both the foster and biological mothers on the dimension of acceptance-rejection (AR); dominance-submission (DS); encouragement-discouragement (ED); love-hate (LH); democratic-authoritarian (DA); reward-punishment (RP); trust-distrust (TD) and

tolerance-hostility (TH). The study is a small effort to voice the anxieties of the adoptive parents; make society more aware and acceptable to the idea of coming forward to adopt a child. Though various theories are present on maternal sensitivity, attachment with the model of Symonds, Schaefer, Field and Rohner, which add considerable knowledge to the parental attitudes, there was scarcity of studies available that exclusively studied the foster and biological mothers' attitudes. The present study is an effort to add to the literature, the issues pertaining to the foster care; the parental anxieties; preference of child during adoption and telling the child about the adoptive status. In order to build a theory on the present study, further longitudinal research needs to be done.

Method

Participants

60 working mothers (30 mothers in pre-adoptive foster care period and 30 biological mothers) between 25- 45 years having children in the age group of 0-3 years and 3-6 years were studied. The sample constituted of all Hindu mothers as according to the Hindu Adoption and Maintenance Act (1956), which provides, the right to Hindu families to adopt the child and be called as the adoptive parents of the child. Only those foster mothers were taken, where the child was placed for more than 1 ½ years. This condition was same for both the age group of children belonging to 0-3 years and 3-6 years of age.

Measures

The Parent Child Relationship (PCR) test developed by Govind Tiwari was used to measure quantitatively the attitude of the parents towards their children on 8 dimensions. The present test can be administered on both fathers and mothers separately and simultaneously. The items are to be responded on the 11 point rating scale, so the maximum and minimum scores are 11 and 1 respectively for each item. The instructions are printed on the response sheet for the convenience of the subject.

Procedures

The data from foster mothers as well as from biological mothers was collected with the help of follow up visits to the agencies and home visits respectively. Prior to the administration of the PCR test, the semi structured interview schedule was followed that comprised of the situational statements¹ prepared on the basis of 8 child-rearing attitudes of the test. This kind of schedule gave a chance to break the ice with the participants as well as to generate free flow of the responses. The situational statements were included to observe whether there will be a discrepancy between the scores obtained through PCR test from the foster and biological mothers' childrearing attitude and the verbal responses provided during the interview. In addition, the semi structured interview schedule was also prepared to observe the foster mothers responses on the themes like the support of their family members provided towards the idea of adoption; their preference for a male or a female child; their willingness to tell the child about his/her adoptive status.

Results

Table 1 show the results of the present study with the help of comparison of the means by the two-way analysis of variance, which was carried out for all the eight dimensions of child-rearing attitudes. The analysis of the dimensions is as follows:

Acceptance-Rejection (AR) dimension shows a significant difference in the child-rearing attitude between the foster and biological mothers with $F= 5.766$, ($df = 1, 56$), $p < .05$. During the interview, it was observed that the foster mothers had more extreme views towards positive side i.e., acceptance. They tended to express greater amount of acceptance of child's decision with a flexible view on controlling the child's decision-making ability. The foster mothers feared that their too much of interference may make their relationship distant from the child. The fear of losing their child with over interference or suggestions, made them accept child's decisions more readily. In contrast to biological mothers, who presented more

¹ Pilot study of the situational statements was done before final administration to the foster and biological mothers.

rational & practical view regarding acceptance of child's decision. Both the views of mothers reflect a significant aspect about how the acceptance-rejection differs in foster and biological mother's state of mind.

Dominance-Submission (DS) dimension shows an insignificant difference between the foster & biological mothers with $F= 0.006$, ($df = 1, 56$), $p > .01$. Both tend to regard the child's interest is supreme but need to reflect at the present context and financial condition before submitting to the child's wish. Both the mothers expect the child to understand the parent's viewpoint if they're willing to fulfill the child's wish. The foster and biological mothers expressed a similar viewpoint of the child's safety before submitting to any of the child's wish.

Encouragement-Discouragement (ED) dimension shows an insignificant difference between the foster and biological mothers with $F= 0.059$, ($df = 1, 56$), $p > .01$. It was observed that both the foster and biological mothers were positively oriented towards encouraging the child for things which interest the child, are according to his/her capability and age and in conflicting situations, reasoning for there disagreement will be conveyed in contrast to scolding.

Love-Hate (LH) dimension shows a significant difference between the foster & biological mothers with $F= 7.162$, ($df = 1, 56$), $p < .01$. When the responses of foster mothers were analyzed, it was observed that the fulfillment of the child's need was the primary concern with the greater orientation towards the acceptance of their child's behaviors, demands and actions. In contrast, the biological mothers also accepted their child's views but were more oriented towards the practical aspect of childrearing involving time & economic factors.

Democratic-Authoritarian (DA) dimension shows an insignificant difference between the foster and biological mothers with $F= 2.653$, ($df= 1, 56$), $p > .01$. It was observed for foster mothers that there responses fluctuated between being flexible for following a rule and at the same time wanting the child to respect the rules of the house. They were more concerned to avoid their child's involvement in any negative elements and hence adopted an authoritative attitude of being open and flexible to the child's

Table 1 shows the obtained F value and AB interaction scores obtained with the Help of two way analysis of variance.

Dimensions	Age groups (Factor A)	Foster vs. biological mothers (Factor B)	A × B
Acceptance-Rejection (AR)	0.144	5.766 □ *	0.402
Dominance-Submission (DS)	0.006	0.006	0.765
Encouragement-Discouragement (ED)	0.236	0.059	0.235
Love-Hate (LH)	0.213	7.162 □ □ **	0.075
Democratic-Authoritarian (DA)	4.386 □	2.653	12.454 □ □ **
Reward-Punishment (RP)	0.531	0.033	0.0009
Trust-Distrust (TD)	1.657	2.255	0.413
Tolerance-Hostility (TH)	1.494	0.640	3.188

**F.99 (1, 56) = 7.12 [$p < .01$]

*F.95 (1, 56) = 4.02 [$p < .05$]

needs and explanations with the vigilance over the child's activities. The same was observed for the biological mothers too. The outcome of both the responses was observed that the mothers tend to be more democratic with the increasing age of the child.

Reward-Punishment (RP) dimension shows an insignificant difference between the foster & biological mothers with $F= 0.033$, ($df = 1, 56$), $p > .01$. The responses obtained for this dimension from both the foster and biological mothers through a semi structured interview indicated that the recognition of child's achievement doesn't mean materialistic reward. Instead, both the mothers focused on praise, hug, patting the child and being present at the time of the child's achievement more essential indicators of acceptance of child's strength. Both the groups of mothers believed that accepting the child with limitations is more important at the time when the child may not be doing well either in

academics or other activities. The reward dimension focused on rewarding the child within the parental financial limits whereas for the punishment dimension focused on scolding the child verbally or explaining the negative consequences of an act.

Trust-Distrust (TD) dimension shows an insignificant difference between the foster and biological mothers with $F= 2.255$, ($df = 1, 56$), $p > .01$. The responses were more oriented towards the trust dimension for both the foster and biological mothers. The mothers view trust in terms of the reciprocal relation i.e., if the parents place trust on the child, the child in turn will trust the parents and discuss his/her problems more freely. This reflects the capacity of the mother to view the relation from all the perspectives pertaining to the child's development.

Tolerance-Hostility (TH) dimension insignificant difference between the foster & biological mothers with $F= 0.640$, ($df = 1, 56$), $p > .01$. The responses of both the foster and biological mothers reflect a greater tolerant attitude of the mothers towards the child's demand. The importance in giving in to the child's demand depends on the factors like utility of the task, the time constraints, the prior permission or promise made for the activity. The mothers are willing to submit to child's demands if it is purposeful for the child in terms of time & economic factors. The responses were similar for both the biological & foster mothers across the two age groups (0-3 & 3-6 yrs) of children.

Discussion

The present study aimed to study two main issues. First, to compare the child-rearing attitudes of foster and biological mothers on the eight dimensions of Parent Child Relationship (PCR) test and second, to compare the foster & biological mothers child-rearing attitude across the two age group of children belonging to 0-3 and 3-6 years of age on the same eight dimensions. The hypothesis, which states that there will be a significant difference between the child-rearing attitude of foster & biological mothers on the eight dimensions, has been partially proved. The results showed a significant difference between the child-rearing attitude of foster and biological mothers on the acceptance-rejection (AR) and love-hate (LH) dimension. Whereas no significant difference between the

child-rearing attitude of foster and biological mothers on dominance-submission (DS), encouragement-discouragement (ED), reward-punishment (RP), trust-distrust (TD) and tolerance-hostility (TH) dimensions with no impact of the two age groups of children belonging to 0-3 and 3-6 years of age. For the dimension of democratic-authoritarianism (DA), the impact of two age groups was evident for both the foster & biological mothers. The results indicated small difference for the two age groups of children.

A mother holds a significant position in the life of a child. A mother provides a holding environment to the child. Though in the process of childrearing, the attitudes of both the groups may differ but the underlying principle for both the mothers is the same, that is, to work towards a sense of belongingness to the child (Waterman & Barbara, 2001). The results indicate a significant difference in the child-rearing attitude of the foster and biological mothers on the acceptance-rejection (AR) and love-hate (LH) dimensions. According to Symonds model (1939), the two dimensions of the present study i.e., AR & LH dimensions represent the same psychological dimension at home. The significant difference observed in the attitude of both the mothers was more oriented towards the acceptance (love) dimension than for rejection (hate) dimension. The acceptance of the child reflects that mothers are devoted to the rearing of the child, they're demonstrative in affection, they look upon him as an individual than a child, let the child participate in the activities or the hobbies of interest and they do not expect too much from the child, for example, one of the foster mother during the semi structured interview reported, "we'll let him participate in all the activities in which he is interested, though, will alert him for his wrong decisions too. We as a parent will put our views forward but our suggestions are not binding on him". This reflects the parental warmth, concern, support & nurturance or simply love for the child (Rohner, 2004). Thus, together parental acceptance and rejection form the warmth dimension of parenting (Kagitcibasi, 1999). The warmth dimension has to do with the quality of affectional bond between the mother and the child, and the physical & verbal behavior, parents use to express these feelings. The view goes in line with the Baumrind's parental responsiveness (1991) element, where parents intentionally foster individuality & are

supportive to child's decisions and the needs. The warmth that mothers convey in their interaction to the child, go a long way to establish the relationship of love and trust in the dyad (Barber & Harmon, 2001). Further, on AR dimension, it was observed that the foster mothers mean ratings were more, that is 2.73 (0-3 years) & 3 (3-6 years) as compared to the mean ratings of biological mothers, that is 2.26 (0-3 years) & 2.2 (3-6 years). The biological mothers in contrast to foster mothers were more willing to accept that the scolding will be given to the child if he doesn't follow the parental decisions, which the mothers regarded as more beneficial for the child. The reports of foster and biological mothers point to the fact that their acceptance of the child's decision whether relating to the friends or academics depends on the situation (Baumrind, 1994).

The insignificant difference found on dominance-submission (DS) dimension, where there was least difference between the means scores obtained for foster & biological mothers, that is, for 0-3 years, the mean obtained was 2.2 for foster mothers & 2.6 for biological mothers. The responses obtained through semi structured interview also point towards the lack of discrepancy between the mothers attitude, for example, the foster mother reported, "If my child is interested in an activity & I know that he can do well, I'll send him to the competition, even if the exams are approaching". Thus, both the foster and biological mothers were found high on submissive attitude. Parental warmth and understanding encourages attachment in the dyad and in turn children tend to be more likely to help other person (Barber & Harmon, 2001). Thus, the foster and biological mothers share a coherent bond in infancy and toddler hood (Block, 1993), which indicates the mother's ability to cope and grow with the developmental issues of the child (Darling & Steinberg, 1993). The coherent relationship contributes to the maternal sensitivity in order to serve as a positive role model to the child (protocols of foster & biological mothers from the interview-- "once we believe in the child, he believes in us and tends to respect our decisions", "the acceptance of the child depends on the trust you have on the child). Hence, positive views were expressed relating to child's participation in the activity.

In these dimensions (i.e., ED, TD, RP), where no significant difference was observed, both the

foster and biological mothers were effective in giving comforting messages (Applegate, 1990), when the child felt low; the parents extended their empathic responding. For example, one of the foster mother in a semi structured interview reported, "no matter if my child comes 3rd, we'll still appreciate his effort to participate in the competition. We'll make him understand that there is always a next time to any situation in order to improve". Thus, the statements like these indicate that a parent is more 'in tune' with the child, and facilitate the environment, which closely match a child's developmental abilities (Bourchard, 1994).

The results further indicated an impact of both the age groups of children on democratic-authoritarian (DA) childrearing attitude of foster & biological mothers. This indicates that the responses, which were more oriented towards the democratic attitude, are determined by the age of the child. Both the foster and biological mothers agreed to maintain certain limits when giving child the freedom to pursue the activities. The mothers thought of making the child realize of his/her mistakes, not with the punishment but with the help of reasoning (example from protocols- "reasoning is important in order for the rules to be effective. A deep enquiry would be made about the whereabouts"). Further, the mothers added that one can punish the child not by scolding but through avoidance or canceling the activities of the child in order to make the child realize his/her mistakes. It was believed that an affectionate hug or a reprimand not only influences what the child is doing at the moment but adds a small change to his/her expectations of what will happen in the future. In all the instances, it was clear that the mother made the child clear whether her intention was to control the child's behavior or modify it completely (example from the interview-- "freedom will be given but within certain limits, otherwise he'll not value freedom"; "effective parenting comes when one is more like the friend to the child. As a mother, I'll try to have regular conversations with my daughter but the vigilance is also important"). They like to monitor and impart clear standards for their children's conduct by being both assertive and supportive in their disciplinary methods. This discussion takes us forward to another related dimension of democratic attitude, that is, the use of regulative message (Applegate, 1990). Such message gives legitimate power to the parents to control or modify children's thinking or behavior. This

view captured in the study was in line with the Nucci & Smetana's (1996) study of maternal belief towards discipline. Mothers undertook the age of the child as an important factor to determine the nature of disciplinary technique used (Dix & Grusec, 1995). Mothers preferred stern delivery than the calm one, when the children acted badly. The issues, that require mothers to set limits were centered on the *safety of the child* (e.g., "she is a girl & I can't send her out for late nights, you know how Indian setting reacts to all this"); *family conventions* (e.g., "the child has to follow some norms of the house too. Today, children & parents are both flexible at following the rules of the house but certain discipline in the life of the child is must"); and *to make decisions about the activities* (e.g., "his all the decisions are welcomed but if he takes any decision, our consent is also necessary. We can guide him better"). Each mother who was the part of the study stated that it was important to them that their child develops as an individual (Nucci & Weber, 1995). These responses are indicative of the authoritative attitude of the mothers to enhance the individuality, responsibility & self-esteem of the child. The responses of the mothers whose children belonged to the age group of 0-3 years were more oriented towards being dominant whereas the mother of children belonging to 3-6 years of age focused more towards teaching the norms of the house and the society, making them realize to understand parental views.

The results obtained on tolerance-hostility (TH) dimension showed an insignificant difference between the foster & biological mothers. This dimension can be understood with the help of Schaefer's (1959) hypothetical circumplex model. The maternal behavior for tolerance-hostility dimension, lie somewhere between the control-love and autonomy-hostility axis. This can be said on the ground that the tolerant attitude found for both the mothers involves both the positive involvement but possessive maternal behavior. With the mothers being high on the dimension of tolerance, they also saw the need to permit children in the areas of personal choice and discretion and are willing to compromise when the conflicts arise between themselves and their children (example from the interview-- "one needs to be tolerant when children are rigid. The possible way to set aside the conflict and their rigidity is to provide them with alternatives"). It can be seen that parenting becomes more complex in 2nd and 3rd year of life

for both the foster and biological mothers (Fagot & Kavanagh, 1993). Often the mothers of children in the age group of 3-6 years of age were observed reporting that with the growing age of the child, one tends to become anxious and overprotective towards their children (e.g., "as the child grows, one has to be vigilant of their activities, it's for their benefit"). Whether any kind of attitude be analyzed ranging from overindulgence, overprotective or perfectionist, each of these variations serves the same goal, that is, to undo the harm.

The present study seeks to explore the various issues related to present and post adoptive experiences of the mothers. For this purpose four main issues were taken up during a semi structured interview with the foster mothers:

The thought of adopting a child and support of husband in the decision: In the Hindu society, there are two options available for the childless couple. One is the remarriage and other is adoption. The study brings forth the other reasons for adopting a child other than infertility. These reasons ranged from the death of the child due to the genetic defect; creating the memories of the dead son alive after he committed suicide; death of both husband and son in an accident to the husband being mentally retarded. The reasons created a sense of loss in the living the life alone. With these reflections, the mothers collected the strength to come forward and adopt the child, who they can call their own (e.g., "my child is my sole purpose for living"). In other cases, where both couples decided for adopting a child, it was reported by the foster mother that their decision was the collective one. This gives the impression that the need to nurture and rear the child is strong in both the foster mother and foster father that majority of them need just the support and understanding of each other to come forward and realize their dream.

The reaction of family members towards the idea of adoption: The responses of the foster mothers lie on a continuum. Majority of foster mothers were satisfied with the understanding behavior of their relatives, some of them even reported, "It was our relatives who counseled us for adoption, they gave us the strength to come forward and accept the child as our own". While there were some cases, that reflect the disgust at the attitude of the family members towards the idea of adoption. Here, the foster mother reported, "some of the family members have cut

off the relations with us, when we adopted a girl but me and my husband are support of each other. We don't care for those relations who don't understand us". The third angle of response was more oriented towards attaining the consent of family members first before going for adoption (e.g., "we convinced our family members for a year, we never wanted to take any decision that hurt them"). This reflects the thinking and the attitude of some foster parents is highly influenced by the way the society wants them to react and follow the norms of adoption and also that their need for social belongingness is strong coupled with the fear of rejection by their family members if the decision is not accepted by them. Thus, in order to avoid such situations, the foster parents tend to give in for adoption and many a times for the preference of the child based on the collective decision the family takes.

Preference for a girl or a boy child: The sample of foster mothers collected, the majority had the girl child. The reasons the mothers gave for the preference for the girl child ranged from that the girl relates more positively to the feelings of the parents, are tenderer and caring to when the girl gets married, she brings the husband into the family. This was in contrast to foster mothers who adopted a male child for support in old age, persuasion of family members. And in other cases, the parents rarely give up the hope of adopting a male child despite a long waiting period that may range from 5 to 7 years altogether.

Telling the child about adoption: Telling the child is an emotional event in the life of the adoptive parents. The present study tries to capture the willingness of the foster parents whether they would like to tell their child about his/her adoptive status. Most of the foster mothers gave a positive but a highly emotional response. Though they were willing to tell the child about the adoptive status, when the child grows up and in the childhood preparing him through stories and the films reflecting a positive relation between the adoptive parents and their child (examples from the semi structured interview-- "I repeatedly give the example of Lord Krishna and read him stories so that it forms the base somewhere in the childhood") but also feared the question of what will be there answer, when the child ask the question about why his real parents left him. In another interview, I found a positive response to this fear

of the parents, when one of the foster mother reflected, "I'll pose the question to my child if he raises this question. I'll ask him whether at any point of life, he felt that we are not his biological parents. The answer to my question will certainly help me child to deal with the anxiety more positively". In contrast, in some instances, telling about the adoption was not particularly the option of the adoptive parents. The foster parents feared of the society's acceptance of their adoptive child, the adoptive child's behavior to them. Whether the parents wanted to disclose the fact or keep it under covers, it is the parental reaction that tends to determine the meaning of the communication (Khokkar & Thakur, 1995).

In summary, reflecting on the attitudes of both the foster and biological mothers and capturing the issues pertaining to adoption, the study brings forth certain kinds of implications. The present study tries to diminish the boundaries between the attitude of foster and biological mothers with an effort to develop strength among the adoptive parents to come forward and share their experiences; to be open about their experiences about their adoptive child rearing, which is still under cover. The core of parenting whether foster or biological, has remained the same over generations, that is, to work towards the welfare of the child and make them the contributing member of the society. Thus, one can say looking at the sensitive responses of the foster mothers that the need for nurturance and rearing the adopted child has always dominated the hollow issues of remarriage or other ways of treatment. The study was an effort to spread awareness about the usefulness of adoption and how a child contributes positively to the world of the parents. Coming of the child in either the biological or the foster families changes the dynamics of the family in a nurturing, supportive and an insightful way.

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