AN OPPORTUNITY to learn firsthand from adoptive parents about the intimate details of their experiences with their adopted children over the course of twenty or more years provided a stimulating experience to the writers of this book. For most investigators in the behavioral sciences, curiosity about human beings is both a motivation and a justification for their intrusion into the privacy of other people’s lives; for us this curiosity was certainly an impelling factor in our decision to begin what was obviously going to be a difficult investigation. Attempting to find adoptive families and to obtain their cooperation in research after a hiatus of twenty to thirty years was admittedly a hazardous task. After considering a variety of alternatives for learning about adoption, however, we decided that there was much to be gained through research interviews with adoptive parents about what is involved in raising an adopted child. No one, we believed, could speak with as much knowledge about such experience as those who had lived through it themselves. We hope that the reader will agree
that our effort was worthwhile inasmuch as it provides considerable food for thought for those interested in the institution of adoption services, particularly for future researchers interested in following up some of the leads we offer here.

This book is the product of our joint effort, which required an intimate sharing of all tasks through stages ranging from conceptualization and development of research procedures, through field interviewing, data analysis, and the interpretation of findings. Since we both have a background of social work education, experience, and commitment, tempered by considerable investment in the behavioral and social sciences, the reader can understand the derivation of our eclectic conceptualization of the research and its execution. Our concern was less with adhering to the favored research procedures of a specific academic discipline than it was with finding new ways of eliciting maximum information from the adoptive parents about the nature of the adoption experience.

It is difficult to acknowledge all who have been of help to us in this endeavor. The following are only a few to whom we are most indebted:

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Benson Jaffee
David Fanshel

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