

WHAT ABOUT THE BLACK CHILD  
AWAITING ADOPTION?

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A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Institute of Contemporary Corrections  
and the Behavioral Sciences  
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In Partial Fulfillment  
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Master of Arts

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by

William Louis Young III

May, 1973

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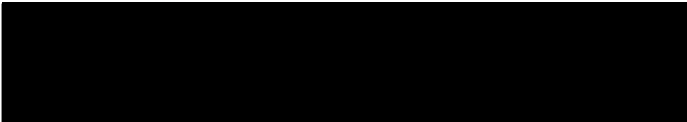
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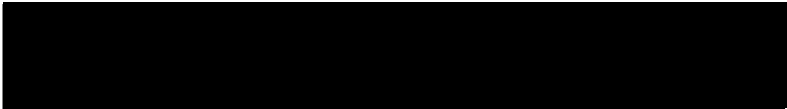
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A THESIS

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## ABSTRACT

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### Purpose

The purpose of this study was to describe and analyze the problem of the black adoptable child, using information from professional articles and other sources, including studies of community efforts to cope with the problem, over a twenty-year period. It is hoped that a summary of this information and proposed solutions will be useful to those interested in the welfare of black children without homes. Many believe that placing minority group children in homes should be approached as a special problem different and separate from the problem of other hard-to-place children. In the case of these hard-to-place children, the older, the handicapped and the sibling group, agencies have discovered that homes can be found for them if sufficient initiative, determination, imagination and courage are extended on their behalf. Even with the extension of such efforts on behalf of the black children most of the time these efforts prove fruitless. A major portion of these children are top adoptables, in that they are free from any physical or severe emotional problems, yet their chances for adoption are so slim that they are virtually unadoptable. Today the concern over the fate of these children has increased. The reasons may be: First, we have deeper understanding of children's needs and the importance and extent of damage to their personalities when they are

deprived of love and care of permanent homes and placed in institutions. Second, there is a definite lack of sufficient foster homes. A result of this concern is that some public and private agencies have become aware of the problem and are pressuring for a nationwide drive to provide for these children. It is felt that a study of this nature will not only be helpful but extremely useful to anyone interested in this area.

### Methods

This study begins with a slight introduction giving a brief history of hard-to-place children, going back to the very beginning of adoptions and ending with the present situation. This introduction is followed by a statistical based plight of the black child and some related literature from research studies and articles in this area. Alternative adoption programs such as subsidized adoption, quasi-adoption or permanent foster homes, interracial adoption and single-parent adoption are discussed with interpretations, conclusions, and recommendations concluding this study.

The primary sources of data for this study consist of research, evaluating and recording information from various books, articles and periodicals, pamphlets, child welfare league reprints, newspaper articles and the U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare.

### Findings

Having analyzed the collected data, the author has arrived at the following conclusions:



1. The problem of insufficient black adoptive homes for the children awaiting placement does not stem from ignorance or apathy in the black community. Adoptions are familiar to the black community and those in a position to adopt do so. Many of these adoptions are arranged between the mother and adoptive families or through the services of a doctor, minister, or interested person.

2. Black applicants are not extremely fearful of the adoption agency or the background of the black children available through these placement agencies.

3. Reluctance of the black applicant to adopt is related to their economic situation. It is the stability of income and employment rather than the size of their income that influences adoption. Presently a majority of blacks have marginal incomes or have newly acquired a middle-class status. Though they are economically secure, psychologically they still contemplate their future as unstable. The addition of a child in this situation would threaten their future, as well as that of the child.

4. Withdrawals of black applicants could possibly be prevented if there were less formality and adherence to rigid procedures, allowing the development of early rapport between caseworker and applicant.

5. Agencies need a self-critical attitude in their policies, requirements, and procedures with reference to black applicants.

6. Development of uniformity among adoption agencies regarding treatment of black applicants would prevent distrust and confusion for prospective applicants.

7. Because of cultural differences between the white and black applicant, there should be differentiation in eligibility requirements. This is not a lowering of standards but a difference in dealing with two separate groups.

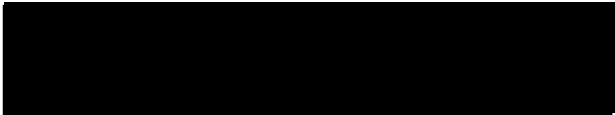
8. Cooperation is needed between states, such as an adoption resource exchange, so that no opportunity would be overlooked in placing the available black children.

9. Recruitment programs should explain the needs of the available black children, but with more emphasis on the satisfactions and rewards these children can give to those who adopt them.

10. No matter what device is used to recruit black adoptive families, a routine-coordinated program is necessary. An educational and interpretational program regarding the purpose and philosophy of adoption as well as the rationale for agency requirements and procedures, should be a part of the agency's recruitment of black adoptive families.

11. Two-parent self-sufficient adoptive homes may not be available for all the black children awaiting adoptive placement. This means that other alternatives need to be utilized for these children.

12. The alternative adoption programs, subsidized adoption, quasi-adoption, single-parent adoption, and interracial adoption are presently used infrequently in the United States. More study and experimentation is necessary before an all-out acceptance of any one of these alternative programs may be apparent. This may mean a change in the philosophy of adoption.

  
Supervising Professor

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### Adoption: Brief History

Adoption is the legal and social process by which the child of one pair of parents becomes the child of other parents. It confers upon the child and adoptive parents substantially the same mutual rights and responsibilities in the natural child relationship. (Gilliam, 1961)

Adoption is so widely recognized as a means for caring for children that it can be characterized as an almost worldwide institution with historical roots traceable into antiquity. It had been sanctioned and used by the Egyptians, Babylonians, Greeks, and Romans. In Greece, adoptions were arranged in order to acquire an heir to perpetuate the family or to manage extensive family property. In Rome, adoptions were used for the same purpose, as well as a way for gaining a political office, since the larger the number of children, the more likelihood of being elected. In India, adoptions were arranged in order to meet the demand of religious ceremonials. Seemingly, then, in these earlier periods adoption served to meet the needs of adults, family, or need for religious ceremonials, and political office -- little consideration being given the one being adopted. Today, however, adoption has been sanctioned primarily because it meets the needs of parentless children.

The adoption movement in the United States began in the mid-nineteenth century when Massachusetts passed the first law regarding adoption. Prior to the passage of general adoption laws and because of the lack of common law example, state legislature followed the practice of passing special acts providing for the adoption of particular children by particular adults. (Kadushin, 1967) In 1851 Massachusetts enacted a statute which was to become the model for many state adoption laws passed during or shortly after the Civil War. It provided that in order to adopt, one needed:

1. written consent of the child's parents
2. joint petition of both adoptive mother and father
3. a decree by the judge if he was satisfied that the adoption was fit and proper
4. legal and complete severance of the relationship between the child and natural parents. (Kadushin, 1967)

While desire to continue a family line or secure rights to inheritance were major motives for the persisting interest in adoption, another motive was emerging. A change in attitude developed following World War I when great numbers of children were left homeless because of orphanage and an increase in illegitimate births. At this time people began to realize the importance of a parent-child relationship. As time progressed there was an emphasis being placed on protecting all those affected by adoptions: the natural parents, adoptive parents, as well as the child and the community. In reviewing the history and development of the American adoption movement, the welfare of the children stands out as the main objective. The adoption movement sought to protect the children by seeing that the couples adopting were able and willing to provide the needed care. In addition, the Standards for Adoption Service



developed by the Child Welfare League of America (1968), nearly fifty years ago, protected the parents -- both natural and adoptive.

Statistics show that in the early history of adoption there were more couples wishing to adopt children than there were children available. Today the trend is reversed in that there are more children available than prospective parents. The 1967 statistics (U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare, 1967) on adoptions in the United States indicate that over 1,315,000 children were placed for adoption during the ten year period of 1957-1967. Furthermore the number of children adopted is increasing yearly, with more than 50 per cent each year being adopted by nonrelatives. A study by Lydia F. Hylton (1965) indicates that adoptions did not decrease but increased 27 per cent for the 1958-1962 period, in spite of the fact that there was a relative decline in the ratio of applicants to the number of children needing adoption. Florence G. Brown, Rita Dukette, and Ann Jamieson (1964) agree and they speculate that the reasons for the change in ratio are the following: First is an increase in illegitimate births. The second reason was a change in the philosophy of an adoptable child. Initially children with minor medical and psychological problems were not considered adoptable, while later such children became eligible for adoption. Third, increased medical knowledge enabled couples to conceive who would have earlier been considered infertile. Finally, because of the lowered birth rate in the 1930's there are fewer adoptive applicants today, who would be in the optimal age bracket, approximately twenty-five to thirty-five years of age.

In 1962 the Child Welfare League of America conducted a nationwide survey of trends in nonrelative agency adoptions. Findings between 1958 and 1962 indicated there had been a relative decline in adoption applicants, fewer homes were approved, and less adoptions were legally completed in comparison to the number of children available. A follow-up survey, made in 1968, indicated that applications nearly doubled, and placements increased 140 per cent. However, marked increase in both these areas failed to keep pace with the number of children available for adoption through the 75 public and 96 voluntary agencies studied. Although voluntary agencies received 3,566 more applicants in 1967 than in 1958 and placed 3,521 more children, the number of available children increased by 5,800. Over the same period public agencies received 4,637 more applications and made 3,141 more placements while there were 5,100 more children available for adoption through these agencies. The ratio of applicants per 100 children declined from 158 in 1958 to 129 in 1962, and to 104 in 1967. By 1967 only one area had a fairly high ratio of applicants to children available, East North Central, with 53 children per 100 adoption applicants, while four United States census regions had less than one applicant per child. (Riday, 1969) This data indicates a widening gulf between the number of children available for adoption and the demand for them, as expressed in applications and placements. As a result of these trends the nationwide movement in adoption is drifting away from rigidly adhered to requirements and toward greater flexibility, without compromising what is considered essential for all children. (Chevlin, 1967)

## "Hard-to-Place" Children

With the apparent increase in the number of healthy white infants in need of homes, the problem of finding homes for the so-called "hard-to-place" children becomes even more acute. Alfred Kadushin (1967) has defined "hard-to-place" as

children legally free for adoption, they can benefit from and contribute to normal family living but there are no parents ready and willing to adopt these children. These children are social orphans. Socially handicapped for adoption by virtue of the fact that they belong to a minority group (Negro, Mexican American and Indian), because they are older, because they are physically, mentally, or emotionally handicapped or because they are a part of a sibling group of three or four brothers or sisters who should be placed together.

Most of these children can be placed with enough time and effort. The glaring exception is the black child. The Childrens Bureau estimate indicates that there are not less than 40,000 and possibly twice that many black children available, in the sense that adoption might be sought if adoptive homes were not limited. (Riday, 1969)

Agencies throughout the country are becoming increasingly aware of black children without adoptive homes. They recognize that these children are subject to frequent changes in foster homes or placement in crowded institutions. As a result of research studies, recruitment programs and articles from a theoretical standpoint, agencies have attempted to analyze the problem and propose solutions.

This paper will attempt to describe and analyze the problem of the black adoptable child, using information from professional articles and other sources, including studies of community efforts to cope with the problem, over a twenty-year period. It is hoped that a summary of

this information and proposed solutions will be useful to those interested in the welfare of black children without homes.



## CHAPTER II

### THE PLIGHT OF THE BLACK CHILD

#### Statistical Base

Many believe that placing minority group children in homes should be approached as a special problem different and separate from the problem of other "hard-to-place" children. In the case of these "hard-to-place" children, the older, the handicapped, and the sibling group, agencies have found that homes can be found for them if sufficient initiative, determination, imagination, and courage are extended on their behalf. (Krause, 1957) Even with the extension of such efforts on behalf of the black children most of the time these efforts prove fruitless. A major portion of these children are "top" adoptables, in that they are free from any physical or severe emotional problems, yet their chances for adoption are so slim that they are virtually unadoptable. Today the concern over the fate of these children has increased. The reasons may be: First, we have deeper understanding of children's needs and the importance and extent of damage to their personalities when they are deprived of love and care of permanent homes and placed in institutions. Second, there is a definite lack of sufficient foster homes. A result of this concern is that some public and private agencies have become aware of the problem and are pressuring for a nationwide drive to provide for these children.

Statistics indicate that the black child's limited chance for adoption is not restricted to one area in the United States. A study by Joseph H. Reid (1956) indicated that 5,000 "hard-to-place" children -- the majority of whom were black -- in foster care in New York could have been placed for adoption if homes had been available. He further stated that between 12 and 18 per cent of all "hard-to-place" children in foster care in Los Angeles might also have been placed. While the overwhelming majority of applicants wanted to adopt infants, the trend from 1946 to 1956 was toward more adoptions of older and handicapped children. This trend did not apply to black children.

In December, 1960, (Hawkins, 1960) an adoption agency in Lake County, Indiana, learned that there were twenty homes available for every healthy white child free for adoption while no black homes were to be found for more than half of the thirty-seven black children available.

In the Detroit News of February 23, 1964, it was reported that the 99 black children legally free for adoption were only a small proportion of those really needing adoptive homes. The court had over 1,500 children in temporary custody who readily could be freed for adoption, but no agencies would go through the necessary court procedure since there was no prospect of finding homes for these children. (Isaac, 1965)

The majority of the time, during 1954, there were eighty healthy black babies in the custody of Cook County Hospital, Chicago. There was no shelter available for many of these children, no adoptive homes, or even foster homes. The result was a long hospital stay where the stimulation necessary for a baby's normal development was lacking. (Isaac, 1965) Elizabeth Herzog and Rose Bernstein (1965) indicated



that about 70 per cent of the white children born out of wedlock are adopted, in comparison with less than 10 per cent of the nonwhite children.

In a regional study (Mondlok, 1969) completed in the spring of 1967 by the Midwest Regional Facilitating Services, Minnesota, it was found that more than 2,000 children had been awaiting placement for 90 days or more, 851 of these being black or mulatto.

In an August, 1969, Evening Times article (Schlegel, 1969), Betsy Cole, Supervisor of Adoption Services for the State of New Jersey Childrens Bureau, was reported to have stated that 39 per cent of the state's legally adoptable children were nonwhite, while nonwhite adoptions only totaled 19 per cent of the yearly adoptions. She went on to state that they had eight couples for each white child and only one couple for every eight black children.

A similar article (Schier, 1969) in the July Houston Post of that same year stated at the time of their interview with Mrs. Betty Althaus, Depelchin Faith Home, there were ninety-one "top" adoptable black children awaiting placement.

In their 1967 adoption study the Child Welfare League indicated that there were more than fifteen million white, but only slightly more than one million nonwhite husband-wife families considered to be possible adoptive parents. They went on to state that they found there were 142,000 white and 176,000 nonwhite illegitimate births during that same year. For each white child there were 108 possible white adoptive families in the previously mentioned pool, while for each nonwhite child born out of wedlock there were only 6 possible adoptive families. (Riday, 1969)

These statistics above indicate that there are more black illegitimate births than white. A common misconception among the white populace is that the reason for more illegitimate births among blacks, as known from statistics, is that they are immoral. Betsy Cole, during the interview in the article previously mentioned, suggests possible reasons for the recorded high black illegitimate birth rate. She indicates that much of this problem stems from cultural deprivation. There are no statistics showing the number of black girls deprived of the option for marriage due to the fact that the black fathers are unable to provide for them. Statistics further fail to indicate that there are not as many black parents able to subsidize young black couples. The families may be on welfare. There is also less money available to fly a black girl to New York for an abortion. Hence, because of such conditions, the future of these black children is questionable.

Herzog and Bernstein (1965) think that a considerable number of these illegitimate children are absorbed into the maternal family or are indefinitely placed in institutions or in foster care. They also emphasize the possibility that these children are frequently moved from one home to another. The authors point to a second and perhaps more detrimental alternative, some children who remain with mothers that are unable or unwilling to care for them adequately. In all probability these mothers may not have access to agencies and services available that could help them become more effective parents. A child remaining with his mother may have inadequate care while the mother works. Since the mother may lose schooling, both she and the child are caught in a

cycle of poverty and dependence, associated with poor education and lack of stimulation and motivation.

The complexity of this problem as well as the number of children available, with no corresponding parents, leads one to wonder whether a solution might be found that could brighten the future for these virtually unadoptable children.

## CHAPTER III

### RELATED LITERATURE

In the last two decades considerable attention has been focused on the failure or inability of adoption agencies to recruit families for the available black children. Having established the existence of this problem, it seems appropriate to mention some reasons for the development of community interest in the welfare of children, as well as the programs initiated by communities throughout the United States. A review of the literature indicates that the problem of insufficient adoptive homes for the available black children has been approached in three customary ways: research studies, recruitment programs, and articles analyzing the problem from a theoretical standpoint. This chapter will cover what the writer feels to be the most outstanding contributions from each of these approaches.

#### Research Studies:

David Fanshel's Study - 1955. David Fanshel's study (1955) was intended as an effort to look at the problem from the point of view of those attempting to promote the adoption of black children. This study was produced under a research program inaugurated by the Family and Childrens Service of Pittsburg in September, 1955, with primary support coming from a grant given by the Howard Heinz Endowment of Pittsburg.



For four years prior to this study, the Family and Childrens Service had attempted to interest potential black adoptive applicants. In doing so they used such activities as the following: first, the establishment of a committee on adoption which included several active black community leaders; second, was the extensive use of the newspaper and radio outlets; third, was the preparation of special materials for distribution to clergymen, lawyers, and physicians. Their attempt had a measure of success, both in evolving interest in the black community and in the actual number of black adoptive placements. A wide discrepancy became apparent, however, between the number of couples interested in adoption who had approached the agency, and those whose applications had been finalized to the point of having a child placed in their homes. Almost 60 per cent of all black couples who had applied to the agency between January, 1951, and September, 1955, withdrew their applications. This was true for only approximately 40 per cent of the white couples who had applied to this agency for adoption during the same period. This fact alarmed the agency's staff, for it was apparent that there was a larger number of black children awaiting adoption than white children. The agency stated that:

The decision to focus research interest upon black adoption stemmed from the agency's desire to increase the number of adoptive placements for black babies, coupled with the absence of factual information upon which judgments could be made about the effectiveness of the agency's work with adoptive applicants.

The publication of David Fanshel's findings in 1957 was a response to widespread demand for basic information on black adoption since there was a paucity of research material on this subject. The following are the major findings of his study. First, the inability of black couples

to move ahead with adoption plans seemed less related to the amount of their income than to the stability of their employment and income. Second, blacks whose contact with the agency was stimulated by newspaper, radio, and T.V. publicity showed a low proportion of completed adoptions. According to Fanshel those couples who responded to such an appeal were ones who were reacting to immediate emotional stirrings rather than to well thought-out reasons for adopting a child. These couples usually came to the agency without being aware of the responsibilities involved in adopting a child. Fanshel concluded that the benefit of publicity efforts was increased awareness of the agency and of black adoption, by various referral services in the community, such as clergymen and lawyers. Third, when a black man or couple together initiated contact with the agency, a significantly higher rate of adoptions was completed than when contact was made by the wife alone. Fanshel felt that a possible reason for this fact might be the black male's marginality of economic circumstances leading him to doubt his ability to meet the financial responsibility of a child.

In this study Fanshel also examined applicants who were rejected by the agency, or those who withdrew their applications on their own behalf in order to see if agency adoption policies and procedures needed to be altered. In the Family and Childrens Service three times as many black applicants withdrew, as were rejected or completed adoption. Since most rejections were for valid reasons, Fanshel felt that a change in agency policy regarding the rejections of black applicants was not necessary. However, in reviewing the couples who withdrew their applications many were considered by workers at Family and Childrens Service



to be promising applicants, thus indicating possible necessity of revisions in agency policies and procedures. According to Fanshel the most crucial factor in cutting down the withdrawal rate of black applicants was in the area of establishing early rapport with the applicant. In order to establish such a rapport with black applicants, a deviation from the rigid adoption procedure would be necessary, such as filling out adoption forms, securing personal references, and establishing infertility. He went on to state that focusing on things of this sort early in contact with a black couple might cause difficulty in communication. A decrease in formality and adherence to rigid procedures would make black couples less apprehensive about agencies and adoption in general. Such a revision would encourage couples to continue contact with the agency, eventually leading to possible adoption. In addition, agencies need to be aware that the professional staff and the black applicants may operate from different frames of reference. A relationship between applicants and agency staff may lead to the introduction of divergencies in values, use of language and attitude about standards of child care, illegitimacy, and color.

In conclusion, Fanshel indicates that a self-critical attitude through research and other means will help agencies to overcome practices that hamper communication with some applicant groups, especially the blacks. In the long run this will benefit black children available for adoption.

Rita Dukette and Thelma G. Thompson - 1957. A study similar to David Fanshel's was conducted in 1957 by Rita Dukette and Thelma G. Thompson. This study was under the auspices of the Welfare Council of

Metropolitan Chicago and financed by the Field Foundation and the Chicago Community Chest.

An intensive study of black applicants revealed that specific cultural and environmental factors influence many of the attitudes black couples have toward adoption of a child through an agency. The authors indicated that an increase of black applications would require concentration on four general conditions which affect many potential adoptive applicants. First, was the general lack of knowledge and understanding about adoption service. The concept of legal adoption as helpful and a necessary service for children had little meaning for many black couples. There needed to be a program to meet the needs of the black community by exploring the purpose and philosophy of adoption as well as the rationale for agency requirements and procedures. Second, were the doubts and suspicions of the black adoptive applicant regarding the black children available for adoption through agencies. The black's experience has been that in time of emergency, illness, death, or birth out of wedlock, relatives or friends had assumed responsibility for the child. This brings up the question as to why these children are available for adoption. Third, was the fear of rejection, present with all applicants, yet seemingly more with the black applicant. As a group, blacks have endured and contended with a lifetime of rejection. Their experience in rejection has run the gamut from employment and housing to education and civil rights. Fourth, was the limited income and inadequate housing. Marginal income and deficient housing are realistic problems which affect, in varying degrees, a large proportion of black families.

Recognizing the significance of the above factors, the authors determined that a continual education program needed to be developed, instead of sporadic attempts to acquaint the community with the need to find black adoptive homes. The program should include three points:

1. regular and consistent consultation to the six participating agencies to help them enhance their adoptive service to black families by re-evaluation of basic concepts, policies, and procedures.
2. broad and comprehensive programs of public education throughout Chicago.
3. a central information and referral service for prospective adoptive applicants who needed reassurance or clarification before contacting a specific agency.

The authors indicated that any hope for a successful educational program depended on the possibility of developing uniformity in agency practice, policies, requirements, and procedures with reference to black applicants. An attempt to stimulate interest in black adoption without first reconciling any significant differences in practice would only reinforce community distrust and result in added confusion for the prospective adoptive applicants.

Such an educational program was begun in Chicago resulting in fifty-six black adoptive homes approved and fifty-one black children placed in 1956; and in 1957 eighty-four black adoptive homes were approved and seventy-seven black children were placed in adoptive homes.

During this study it became apparent to the authors that a shift in focus of recruitment programs, rather than a change in content was needed. Major emphasis should be placed on the advantages, the opportunity and the happiness adoption offers to couples who wish to be parents, with far less emphasis on appealing in behalf of the many black children awaiting adoptive placement. They went on to say that though



little or no change was required in the basic subject matter of a recruitment program, an explanation of adoption requirements, procedures, facilities, and the children available for adoption was essential. An explanation of the need for a special project to stimulate interest in black adoption would also be beneficial.

A last indication in Rita Dukette and Thelma G. Thompson's study was that there was a need to modify intake procedures and the handling of the first interview in the case of the black applicants. Intake of black applicants should not be done over the phone; instead, the applicant should be encouraged to appear personally at the agency. Definite appointments with a specific person should be set up for the interested couple. This procedure would give the couple support and relieve their anxiety, allowing them to learn about adoption. Even if these couples fail to go through with the process themselves, they will be able to pass on information about the agency and adoption to interested friends and relatives. The authors indicated that during the first interview the interviewer should convey the agency's stability and reliability to the couple. Here, also, couples should be informed that the agency is not looking for perfect parents but for families who are loving, familiar with children, and ready and willing to adopt.

Leila Calhoun Deasy and Olive Westbrooks Quinn - 1962. Leila

Calhoun Deasy and Olive Westbrooks Quinn (1962), under the auspices of Family and Childrens Society of Baltimore, attempted to study why blacks seemed to lack interest in adoption. Their study was financed by grants from the Washington Evening Star and the National Institute of Mental Health. The focus of the research was to answer the following questions:

first, establishing if a lack of knowledge of adoption exists in the black community; second, they questioned whether a lack of adoption through agencies was because black applicants feared agencies; third, they wished to determine whether the background of the children available through an agency concerned the black applicants.

This study found that in the Washington-Baltimore area the reason for lack of interest in adoption on the part of the black community was not due to lack of information about adoption, nor were they extremely fearful of the agency or the background of the children available for adoption. Instead it seemed that the lack of interest in adoption was because of the values to which successful urban blacks subscribe. The people interviewed were economically secure, yet psychologically they contemplated their future as unstable. A first generation middle-class black feels insecure economically and might be threatened by the addition of a child. They concluded that black couples must be convinced that adoption would lead to satisfaction, not sacrifice.

Conclusions. The purpose of the research studies mentioned above was to learn about the problem confronting agencies throughout the United States in regard to finding homes for the available black children. Agencies were well aware of the problem, yet little was known as to the cause of the problem. The causes must be known before any positive moves can be made toward slowing the problem. Prior to these studies, little had been done to learn the factors related to the problem, while many attempts were made to lessen the acute shortage of black adoptive homes. These attempts helped somewhat, but agencies were aware that there were definite factors to be taken into consideration before recruiting black

parents. This led them to examine the problem more closely, in order to be able to resolve the problem more effectively. The child welfare field is in need of information that can aid them in planning recruitment programs. The following section will deal with recruitment efforts that took place prior to such studies, and the effects of such studies on the recruitment of families for the black children available for adoption.

#### Recruitment Programs:

Throughout the United States communities, usually under the auspices of a particular agency or agencies, have initiated recruitment programs to find homes for the black children available for adoption in their respective community. The main purpose of these programs was to find more adoptive homes for these children. A second purpose was to learn more about the black applicant. This section will emphasize recruitment programs that have taken place since 1948 in communities throughout the country.

Orange, New Jersey - 1948. In 1948 the Children's Aid and Protective Society of Orange, New Jersey, recognizing that the problem of finding black adoptive homes was becoming nationwide, initiated a recruitment program. (Stuart, 1949)

This recruitment effort was begun by the publication of captioned pictures, in one of the three black newspapers in Newark, of the black children available for adoption. Next followed the organization of a committee in Newark, composed largely of black people interested in making known to their respective clubs, churches, and personal friends, the needs of the black children awaiting adoption. In 1949 pictures of



black children were again published in two black newspapers. At the same time, names of the heads of the newly organized committee were published in these same papers and also received notice in one of the white papers of the community. A result of this publicity move was that the editor of the white newspaper became interested and involved in the cause, availing his paper for recruitment efforts. The last technique used in this recruitment program was announcements of the available black children over a radio station.

The purpose of the above publicity attempts was to attract local applicants. The unexpected result was the arousal of interest and inquiries by many couples on the Eastern seaboard. Twenty-five inquiries, ten from other states, were made to this agency as a result of their recruitment effort. This result revealed the need for cooperation with other states to insure that unplaced black children would have every chance for adoption.

Furthermore, the recruitment effort revealed that adoption was not new to the black section of the community. Most of the adoptions, however, were arranged directly between the mother and the adopting couple or through the services of a doctor, minister, or interested person.

Cincinnati, Ohio - 1952. Cincinnati's Council of Social Agencies organized a subcommittee (Latimer, 1952) whose purpose was to recruit black adoptive families. The committee members were aware that they could use the local press, radio, and T.V. and that certain personalities were most willing to offer their services. The committee, however, felt that there were disadvantages in using the news media and in

exploiting the names and talents of certain personalities in a recruitment program. They felt the following were the disadvantages of a recruitment program via press, radio, and T.V. First, previously rejected applicants would again apply to the agency. Consequently, this would cause difficulty for the agency staff. They would most likely have to reject these applicants again, while at the same time advertising the shortage of black adoptive homes. Second, a large percentage of the news media presents adoption as easy and available to everyone. A publicity campaign of this sort, the agency believed, has the tendency to attract applicants who are not psychologically ready to adopt or who fail to meet a basic qualification, for example a stable marriage. Many of the applicants who fit into such categories are thus rejected. How these couples interpret this rejection to the black community may vary depending upon their feelings. They may feel that the agency was unfair, the adoption procedure was difficult, that they were not ready to adopt, or they decided not to go through the process. The interpretations of these people may influence other couples who might consider applying to an agency for adoption of a black child.

This committee instead of taking only the usual route of recruitment via the mass media called a meeting of a number of black ministers in the community regarding the adoption of black children. The problem was discussed with these people and they were able to reveal their feelings, complaints that red tape delays the adoption process, desire for perfection in homes, etc. The agency agreed to reduce red tape and review their standards in connection with black applicants. Following this discussion, basic standards for adoption were outlined for the

ministers. These ministers then went back into their respective areas, interviewed interested couples, screening out applicants they felt were not ready for adoption or who did not meet the standards set by the agency. Couples were sent to adoption agencies in the community after the minister had become confident that they were prospective applicants. These ministers were responsible for seven of the eighteen placements of black children at the Childrens Homes, Cincinnati, during the 3-1/2 month period following the committee's organization.

This project had been an exploratory one to learn if group activity with lay and professionals involved could aid in finding black adoptive homes. Standards were not lowered in this recruitment campaign though studies were speeded up. This program indicated that a committee of this sort could be helpful in recruiting black adoptive homes.

Lake County, Indiana - 1958. The Department of Public Welfare, Lake County, Indiana, instituted a Citizens Committee on black adoption (Hawkins, 1960) whose goal was to find homes for the increasing number of black children available for adoption. Their secondary goal was to discover why black couples seemed reluctant to respond to previous recruitment efforts.

The techniques used by this committee in their recruitment effort to find more black adoptive families were the following:

1. Newspaper articles.
2. Spot announcements on radio and T.V.
3. Posters placed in businesses.
4. Films were shown at teas and fashion shows.
5. Letters were sent to ministers of black congregations.



6. Letters to pastors of black congregations in other cities having a large black population, with consent from the local public welfare department.

7. Stories and pictures in the daily newspaper of black families who had adopted.

8. Contacting previous adoptive couples regarding adoption of a second child.

The progress made as a result of this committee's recruitment efforts was that there were 17 black children placed for adoption in 1953 and 1954, 21 placements made in 1955 and 1956, 34 placements in 1957, 35 placements in 1958, 31 placements in 1959 (year of the steel strike), and 19 placements from January to June, 1960. Thus, as a result of their recruitment effort a total of 195 black children had been placed in adoptive homes. They attributed their success to the fact that an effort to recruit black adoptive homes was put forth each year, not only when there was an acute shortage of homes.

A side effect evolved from this recruitment program. The committee began questioning some standards that agencies had for couples applying to adopt. They felt that the following points should be taken into consideration in dealing with black applicants. First, the love of the couple for a child was far more important than the couple's having much education or being able to provide the child abundantly with material things. Second, a limit should not be placed as to the number of children a couple can adopt, so long as they are capable of caring for the children. Third, the most important factor regarding income was ability of a family to budget their finances, not the size of this



income. Fourth, an adoptive mother should not be required to give up her employment if adequate child care plans can be arranged. (Hawkins, 1960)

Dayton, Ohio - 1954. In October, 1954, the Family and Childrens Service, Dayton, employed a full-time black worker to concentrate on black adoption. In the same month, with the assistance of the Urban League, an advisory committee composed of community leaders was set up to help the new worker find more black adoptive homes.

Jointly the committee and black worker placed pictures in newspapers, both black and white, distributed a special brochure on black adoption, conducted talks following the showing of the film "Eddie Gets a New Home." They also tried to interest white couples in helping find applicants among their black friends.

To further aid their recruitment effort, the agency differentiated between eligibility requirements for black and white applicants. First, white couples were only accepted if they resided within the county of the agency to which they were applying for adoption, while black couples were accepted across county and state lines. Clearance, however, with local community agencies and the necessary paper work had to be completed prior to such a move. Second, the agency required both perspective white applicants to personally visit the agency during office hours. They preferred to do the same with black applicants, but if a distance or other factors posed a problem, the agency personnel would reach out to the couple. Third, a working mother would be acceptable in the case of a black adoptive couple while the white adoptive mother would be required to leave her employment as soon after placement as feasible. Fourth, if a white couple withdrew their application after

the initial exploration, the agency would not pursue the reasons for withdrawal. In case of the black couple the agency would continue contact with a couple for up to a year in hopes of ironing out the problem that hindered adoption. Fifth, all couples were informed of the adoption fee, while payment was voluntary for the black couple. Lastly, black couples were allowed to apply for specific children, while white couples on the whole were not allowed to apply for a specific child.

Because of the differences in requirements, greater care was needed during the study and placement period. The agency had to ascertain that the essential ingredients, a real will and capacity for adoptive parenthood, were present. This hopefully would assure a child a favorable climate for emotional, physical and spiritual development.

The progress made as a result of this joint recruitment effort was that there were nine black children placed for adoption in 1955, twelve children placed in 1956, nineteen children placed in 1957, and ten children placed in the first half of 1958. (Daugherty, Few & Muller, 1958)

Washington, D. C. - 1957. The Public Welfare Department of Washington, D. C., experimented with informal small groups of former black adoptive parents as a way of recruiting more black adoptive families. The purpose of these meetings was to gather suggestions as to how to reach more perspective applicants. All the parents who had adopted within a given chronological period were invited, babysitters were provided, and the meetings were conducted by two black social workers. Specific suggestions regarding recruitment programs resulting from these meetings were the following: First, the community was not sufficiently

informed about the agency and the adoption problem and they felt the most effective way of informing them was not via the news media; second, frequent notices in church papers, appeals to clubs and organizations were not productive as such because of group influence. Those members not interested in adoption would dampen the interest of those who wanted to adopt. A suggestion was that group meetings should be conducted every three months with adoptive couples bringing their relatives, friends, and neighbors who might be interested in adoption. A further suggestion was that these meetings should be conducted by the adoptive couples with occasional assistance from the professional staff.

The effect of this recruitment technique was not known at the time this article was published. (Perry, 1958) It was felt, however, that tangible results would become apparent over a period of time, and that the meeting of adoptive black parents could be a useful technique in finding adoptive homes for many black children awaiting placement.

Los Angeles, California - 1963. In June, 1963, Los Angeles County initiated "Adoption Week", now a yearly occurrence, as a special effort to promote adoption of children of racially mixed and minority background, particularly black. It was hoped that an activity of this sort would make the community more aware of the wonderful world of adoption. One week prior to "Adoption Week" a press luncheon would be held in which children needing an adoptive home were brought and their story told. During the week there was cooperation of area newspapers, radio and T.V. stations with the participation of entertainment and sports world personalities to spark interest in the cause. In 1965 the idea of having an adoptive father of the year was thought of as an effective



way to further publicize the rewards of adoption. The adoption week would center around the adoptive father and his family with coverage in the newspapers as well as radio and T.V. interviews.

The long-range aim of "Adoption Week" was to inform the public about adoption, its objectives, requirements, rewards, and social acceptability. The aim was to sow the idea that for many families adoption may bring happiness.

It was stated that the accurate measurement of the value of any single effort was difficult, yet one could realize the effects of "Adoption Week" by examining the figures for 1966, two months before June and two months after. During the two months prior to "Adoption Week" 111 black couples inquired about adoption with 93 being considered eligible; while the two months following "Adoption Week" showed 188 inquiries with 164 being considered eligible to adopt the available black children. (Saimiento, 1969)

#### Adoption Resource Exchange of North America - 1967. The Adoption

Resource Exchange has been defined as

an organized means of exchanging information among agencies about children for whom they have difficulty in finding appropriate homes and about adoptive applicants for whom they have no suitable children. (Felten, 1958)

Since 1954 the Child Welfare League has worked to promote the development of state adoption exchanges always with the eventual goal of creating a national exchange. The philosophy of such an exchange is that the children for whom it is difficult to find adoptive homes will vary in different parts of the country. In 1967 the Adoption Resources Exchange of North America (ARENA) was established by the Child Welfare League. The formerly isolated adoption agencies of North America have become a



part of a huge network of adoption resources, bringing together the available children and prospective families of the continent.

A major objective of this exchange is to find homes for the children of minority groups or mixed racial background. The Exchange can surmount some regional prejudices that prevent many homeless children from being adopted, since prejudice is often a local matter. For example, it is difficult to find an adoptive home for an American-Indian child in the West, for a Mexican-American in the Southwest, for a Puerto Rican in New York City. In the case of the Indian child, a program sponsored by the U. S. Bureau of Indian Affairs and ARENA found that the child was not accepted in the West but was in the East. The project has promoted the placement of nearly 400 Indian children with Caucasian families. (Child Welfare League of America, 1968)

The effect of such an exchange of children of other races, black in particular, is unknown. It may well be that in many cases the intensity of prejudice is linked to the local factor, and that the child not wanted locally will be cherished in another environment.

Conclusions. In reviewing the efforts of various communities in the United States to recruit black adoptive families, one notices the use of a variety of techniques. These techniques range from the use of the news media to utilizing the help of previous adoptive couples. A characteristic common to these efforts is that in order for recruitment programs to be successful, they must be coordinated and conducted on a routine basis, instead of sporadic attempts.

It is believed that these recruitment efforts have led to the placement of a greater number of black children. However, these efforts

have not eliminated the problem. Perhaps emphasis should be placed on means other than recruitment efforts in order to resolve the problem. For example, more thought should be given to alternative programs presently available, such as single parent adoption and subsidized adoption. The remainder of this chapter will deal with articles written by professionals on the adoption of black children. The following chapter will focus on alternative programs.

#### Articles:

In addition to research studies and recruitment efforts, literature of the past twenty years includes articles written by professionals in related areas. These articles analyzed the problem, specifically the lack of sufficient black adoptive homes for the available children, and made recommendations in this area. This section will deal with some of the more outstanding articles done in the last two decades.

Lucile Thompkins Lewis - 1952. In her article Lucile Thompkins Lewis (1952) stated that adoption has the tendency to be a white man's luxury, and she suggested the following reasons why black couples fail to adopt children through placement agencies. The first was the economic pressures, that is, blacks were more susceptible to the effects of economic recessions or other community tragedies. This situation understandably makes black couples reluctant to adopt children. Also included here, were the problems of housing and other related social and cultural areas where blacks suffer handicaps. Second, was the matter of legal formality or "red tape" involved in the adoption of a child through a social agency. The painful and prolonged legal procedures which many

blacks have too often experienced, may tend to nullify any interest in formal adoption. Third, was the fact that many black couples view childrens' services as "welfare." The "welfare" connotation may be a stigma depending upon how the agency and its services are communicated to the community. Therefore, if "welfare" is bad and something to be avoided, nothing would be more ridiculous than to apply to adopt a child through "welfare."

A major conclusion of her article was that interpretation and education were essential for the development and growth of any program that wished to place black children for adoption. She emphasized that interpretation and education must be highlighted consistently, not sporadically.

Lois Raymor - 1953. Lois Raymor's article (1953) indicated that in order for the committees set up to recruit black adoptive families to be successful, they must have effective membership and continued activity throughout the year, not just one particular time. To find homes for many black children consistency was needed, otherwise applications would drop off drastically.

In addition, the article mentioned that it was necessary for all publicity and interpretation programs to differentiate between boarding home care and adoption, as well as specifying the agency's eligibility requirements. Informing the community of the eligibility requirements might help to dispel rumors in regard to rigid financial, religious, and housing standards.



Mignon Krause - 1957. Mignon Krause's article (1957) stated that agencies have discovered that if homes are to be found for the available black children, special recruitment efforts should emphasize the needs of these children, and the satisfactions and rewards they could bring to parents. She further stated that finding homes for these black children meant developing a relationship and trust, both with the black community and with the individual clients. This will overcome the fear and prejudice of blacks against social agencies.

Elizabeth Herzog and Rose Bernstein - 1965. The Herzog and Bernstein article (1965) indicated that the main problem in placing black children for adoption does not stem from ignorance or apathy in the black community. Thus publicity efforts alone are not likely to solve the problem. To cope with the scarcity of adoptive homes for black children they mentioned three possible approaches: The first would be to modify some adoption policies and practices, for example, changing the age limit of couples, cutting red tape; the second approach was to extend resources other than adoptive placement for black children with no homes, for example, increase payments for foster care (subsidy) or develop good group arrangements; the final approach was to modify the conditions that cause the problem. The large number of black babies in need of placement seems to reflect certain facts. Evidence indicates that the high incidence of broken homes and births out of wedlock can be associated with extreme low income among both whites and blacks, especially the latter. They concluded that it was unrealistic to expect a major increase in the black adoption ratio until there are changes in the black's socio-economic conditions.



Rael Jean Isaac - 1965. Rael Jean Isaac (1965) stated that while agencies are not responsible for the problem of insufficient homes for the black children available for adoption, they have not always chosen the best means to find the maximum number of possible homes. He went on to say that the usual agency procedure, in the face of an acute shortage of black adoptive homes, was to have periodic recruitment campaigns. This appears to be a good idea yet it works only if agencies are prepared to handle the applicants and place children with these applicants. Campaigns of this sort usually emphasize that it is easy to adopt a child and that any applicants are welcomed. However, if the applicants find that it is difficult to adopt a child, and that the requirements are stringent, they become discouraged and also discourage others from seeking adoption through an agency.

Myron Chevlin - 1967. Myron Chevlin's article (1967) mentioned that the National Committee of the Child Welfare League of America, when studying adoption standards, posed some questions which should be taken into consideration. The first question is, can a two-parent self-sufficient adoptive home be found for every child needing one? If not, what are the acceptable alternatives? Second, should greater subsidy and new uses of long-term foster care be considered? And lastly, is it possible that community attitudes toward the unmarried mothers, regardless of race, will so shift in the years ahead to enable mothers to keep their children?

Conclusions. The authors of the above articles recognized several important factors that should be considered in eliminating the problem of black unadopted children. In order to place more black children

for adoption, a major education and interpretation program needs to be developed on a consistent basis. Here emphasis should be placed on the needs of the children and the satisfaction and rewards they could bring to parents. Agency eligibility requirements must be specified in order to dispel invalid rumors. Since the problem of placing black children for adoption does not stem from ignorance or apathy in the black community, other approaches must be explored. One approach is expanding resources other than two-parent self-sufficient adoptive homes. A final approach is to modify the conditions that cause the problem of parentless children, such as low income, community attitudes toward unmarried mothers, and illegitimacy. One of these approaches, the alternative programs, will be dealt with in the following chapter.

## CHAPTER IV

### ALTERNATIVE ADOPTION PROGRAMS

A great majority of agencies, both private and public, throughout the United States are aware of the evermounting problems of finding homes for the "hard-to-place" child, especially the black ones. Since the problem cannot be totally solved by placing these children in self-sustaining two-parent adoptive homes, other alternatives are being considered. Among these alternative programs are: subsidized adoption, quasi-adoption or permanent foster homes, interracial adoption, and single-parent adoption. This chapter will deal with these alternative programs and the literature presently available about these programs.

#### Subsidized Adoption

Concern for the unadopted child has mounted and has led the child welfare field to identify some of the obstacles preventing certain children from finding security in families of their own. Agencies have increasingly explored new ways in which they can best provide for these children. Subsidized adoption is a program in which the agency arranging the adoption, continues financial involvement beyond the point of legal consummation. This type of adoption has been considered as one possible way of expanding resources for children needing adoptive homes. (Some Comments Related to Adoption Subsidies, 1968) In the 1958 Standards for



Adoption Service, the Child Welfare League (1958) stated:

Consideration should be given to supplementing income of families that have the essential qualifications to meet the needs of the children for whom there are insufficient homes, but whose income is too low to assume the full cost of care of a child. In this way children who might otherwise never be placed for adoption might be given the emotional security of legal adoption at no greater cost to the community than long term boarding home or institutional care. A new group of applicants might be reached who do not apply because of limited income.

In a pamphlet distributed in 1968, the Child Care Association of Illinois (1968) indicated that their agency provided three categories of subsidized adoption: special service subsidy, time-limited subsidy, and long-term subsidy. The first, special service subsidy, was defined as an agency contributing financially to the adoptive family in order to provide a needed service for the child and/or family. The following were considered as special services: legal, medical, psychiatric, and special education classes. It was further stated that the extent of the agency's participation would be agreed upon at the time of the child's placement with the adoptive family. The second type of subsidy, time-limited subsidy, was defined as a monthly program which would be continued by the agency for a limited time beyond the legal consummation of the adoption. The purpose of this category of subsidy was to help the family integrate into their budget the expense of the new child and to enable a family with a temporarily limited income to adopt without delay. Here, too, at the time of placement, the family and agency would decide upon the amount and duration of this monthly payment. The third, long-term subsidy, involved a family whose income was limited and fixed. Such a family would like to adopt but was financially incapable of providing materially for the child. This family would be given financial



aid by the agency on a long-term basis. The agency would enter into a long-term agreement with the family, the amount would be decided upon, and a contract signed at the time of placement. The agency would then agree to make a monthly payment toward the care of the child until he or she reached the age of eighteen, barring any radical changes in the family income. The families of this category are stable, secure, and in no way eligible for welfare, but because of the added expense of another child may need financial help from the agency.

In the period, 1966-1968, the Child Welfare League of America (Some Comments Related to Adoption Subsidies, 1968) explored the subsidy programs as they were practiced throughout the country. Observations of the circumstances under which some agencies provided subsidies presented the following picture:

1. Lump sum or ongoing payments for medical and dental expenses have perhaps been the most common.
2. On occasions, agencies have given a lump sum to permit families to proceed with adoption (sometimes of a second child) rather than to postpone action until the family could accumulate savings to purchase the child's furniture and clothing, move to larger, higher rent quarters, or add a room on their house.
3. One agency has reported that it gave a subsidy for several months while a working (adoptive) mother took leave of absence from her job until the child could be sufficiently secure in the family for the mother to return to work.
4. Other agencies have given a subsidy during an adoptive father's period of technical training and apprenticeship or during the time he was getting established in a new position or new profession.

The Child Welfare League of America (1968) reached the conclusion that the child welfare field in general has been cautious in implementing subsidy programs. This is indicated by the fact that at the time of their exploration, 1968, only three states -- New York, Michigan and

California -- had introduced bills into their legislatures in hopes of permitting public agencies to subsidize adoptions.

A study (Shireman, 1969) in 1969 by four Illinois agencies revealed that subsidized adoption was a useful resource and that such an adoption program would cost considerably less than permanent foster care. Furthermore, older children, handicapped white children, and black children of all ages would benefit most under such a program. The agencies involved in this study felt that a large number of children would be adopted by their foster parents if partial payments were made available for the children's care. According to the study, public agencies in Chicago had 5,000 children in foster care, and if 25 per cent were to be adopted by foster parents, this would mean that 1,250 children would have found permanent homes. The study continues by stating that approximately \$600,000 per year would be saved by minimizing cost of the children's care, in addition to the possible savings in casework services needed by the children in foster care. The study indicates that if these children were to remain in foster homes, the cost of their care until eighteen years of age would exceed the cost of their subsidized adoption. The four agencies involved in the study concluded that further experience and analysis would be necessary in order to determine whether subsidized adoption is more beneficial than long-term foster care.

Many individual agencies throughout the country have implemented at least one of the three categories of subsidy previously mentioned in the Illinois pamphlet, yet at this point subsidized adoption has not become a nationally accepted alternative adoption program. There is a question as to whether this is due to the financial strain put upon

individual agencies implementing a subsidy program. It seems that the present financial structure of many agencies limits any long-term subsidy. If there is any consideration of continuing subsidy programs it may be necessary to change an agency's financial structure and to revise the law in some states in order to make more public funds available.

Some other reasons why the subsidy program has not been implemented are the following: The caution of the child welfare field may reflect society's expectation that the head of a family should be a consistent wage earner; that parents should have the capacity to use income wisely; and that they should be able to assume financial responsibility for their own children. It seems that many agencies may be reluctant to challenge this norm, even though it may mean a permanent home for many of the "hard-to-place" children, especially the black child.

Some countries, such as Canada, Australia, and England, give a family allowance regardless of income, recognizing the fact that each additional child involves additional expenditures. Their rationale, as understood by the Child Welfare League (1968), is not related to inadequacy of income, but rather to assurance that the desirable "extras" will be provided as the family size is increased. Accepting such a philosophy in the United States may be essential for the development of a nationwide subsidy program.

It is believed that subsidy, as an alternative adoption program, could be wisely used in helping agencies find adoptive homes for the "hard-to-place" children. This program would include more prospective adoptive homes from the lower-income bracket, and in the long run



encourage adoption. Before such a program can be implemented, however, the entire adoption movement, both agencies and communities, must re-examine their philosophy of adoption, as well as the definition of what is and is not best for the "hard-to-place" child.

#### Quasi-Adoption or Permanent Foster Homes

Alfred Kadushin (1958), in his article "The Legally Adoptable, Unadopted Child," states:

We are aware of the fact that social and emotional adoption of the child must accompany legal adoption. Can we begin to think in terms of social-emotional adoptions which may not be accompanied by legal adoption? This may be easier for the hard-to-place child to achieve.

He further mentions that some of the "hard-to-place" children, despite their handicap, become full members in the foster home family, except from the legal standpoint. Separation would cause pain, hurt, and loss for the child because of the emotional ties to the family, the reverse also being true for the foster family. Only a legal technicality differentiates many of these "hard-to-place" children who have lived in long-term foster homes, from adopted children. There is evidence that there are foster parents who want these children and who accept them in their minds and hearts. For a variety of reasons, however, they may hesitate accepting the child as their own legal son or daughter. One hesitation might be a dislike of the procedure necessary to adopt a child. Kadushin concludes that quasi-adoption or permanent foster care offers a stable and permanent home and opportunity for healthy growth for these children, without committing the foster parents to legal adoption.



In June, 1964, the Childrens Aid Society of Pennsylvania officially launched a new service designated as quasi-adoption -- a program of subsidized placement of children on a planned permanent basis. They indicated this type of program would attract three types of applicant families:

- a. Families who apply for foster care but, in doing so, state they would like to grow up with them and be free of natural parent ties.
- b. Families who from the beginning express an interest in adoption but feel economically unready to take this step.
- c. Families who are economically ready and able to adopt, but prefer a trial period in order to observe the child's development and appearance before initiating formal adoption procedures. (Andrews, 1967)

In a two year period, 1964-1966, this agency had arranged placement of twice as many black children with quasi-adopters, as placements with those families who had applied to adopt. The majority of the families with whom children were placed had modest incomes, \$4,000 to \$6,000 category, and were in the process of buying a home. They were families who had experience with children, either those born to them, foster children, or children cared for in an informal way for a friend, neighbor, or relative.

As for financial subsidies, the agency's only mandatory agreement was in providing medical care for children at agency expense. Arrangements were worked out with each individual family regarding reimbursing them at the standard rate usually given foster parents, and about providing all, part or none of the child's clothing. The agency's conclusions were that quasi-adoption had the advantage of establishing, at the outset, an understanding of the program, and the availability of resources and casework services, needed to help the family assume full

responsibility for the child placed with them. A result of this 2-1/2 year program, 1964-1967, was that 20 per cent of the families had legally adopted the children placed with them on a quasi-adoption basis, and an additional 20 per cent were in the process of doing so.

Two other states, New York and Minnesota, have also initiated quasi-adoption or permanent foster home programs designed especially for children who were legally free for adoption but handicapped in some way, for example children of black heritage. The stated purpose was to give a permanent home to children, with foster parents being compensated for the living expenses, until adulthood or emancipation of the youngster. The foster parents in turn were to incorporate the child into their family as one of their own. The states also indicated that this type of adoption program often led to the legal adoption of the child by the foster parents. Furthermore, this program might also act as a bridge to the acceptance of subsidy by agencies as an alternative adoption program. (Goldberg & Linde, 1969)

The example of hundreds of children whose length of stay, excellent adjustment, and full acceptance by the foster parents should be an important indication for the casework staff to explore the idea of adoption with foster parents or quasi-adoption. Foster homes are a resource adoption agencies should not overlook, especially in the case of black children. Quasi-adoption may be a way the agency can become involved with the family, giving them active assistance, and helping them to make the final step of legally adopting the child who has already been accepted into their home in every other manner. Even if quasi-adoption does not lead to adoption by foster parents at least these children will have a permanent foster home and will not be subject to frequent moves.

## Interracial Adoption

The revised Standards for Adoption issued by the Child Welfare League (1969), January 15, 1969, stated:

Racial background itself should not determine the selection of the home for a child. In most communities there are families who have the capacity to adopt a child whose racial background is different from their own. Such couples should be encouraged to consider such a child.

The Childrens Service Center of Montreal, Canada, became aware of the growing number of children, black and of mixed racial background, legally available for adoption. They realized that these children were with foster families, who might never adopt them, and began in 1958 to pioneer in interracial adoptions. Since the beginning of these placements in 1958 more than 200 children of black and/or mixed race, have been placed with Caucasian families. The most important effect of this pioneering attempt was the fact that it set an example for the United States to follow in searching for alternative adoption programs.

(Mitchell, 1969)

In 1964, a committee of Minnesota social workers decided to promote with Caucasian families the adoption of black children. The program developed, rather unexpectedly, out of a publicity campaign designed to make the community aware of the grave need for black adoptive homes. In planning this program, no thought was given to interracial adoption, but it was found that Caucasian couples were applying for these children. The agencies decided to take advantage of the new resources. As of July, 1965, twenty interracial placements had taken place in Minnesota with no apparent problems. (Friche, 1965)



In 1965, agencies in Chicago began to place black children with Caucasian families. They did not make a special appeal to recruit couples for interracial adoptions. Instead they discussed the matter with couples who indicated no preference as to race on their application for a child. At this time it became necessary to educate the placement staff regarding the advantage of interracial placement as compared with long-term foster care. After having interviewed numerous couples, the agency established guidelines to follow in choosing couples for interracial adoption. The guidelines for choosing couples for interracial adoptions were: compatible motivation, a deep interest in family activity, a meaningful experience with various racial groups, ability to withstand community pressure, a high level of tolerance for frustration, ability to think and act independently, lack of financial strain, relatives who would accept interracial adoption, ability to allow the child to accept his racial identity, and acceptance that interracial adoption may involve additional problems not common to adoption within the same race. (Sellers, 1969) The result of their experimentation in interracial adoptions was that couples seemed willing to be involved with the agency over a longer period of time than usual. This may indicate the need for continued involvement with the agency since interracial adoption deviates from the norm.

Although there are few interracial adoptions many states are implementing such a program into their adoption scheme. Some states with an official interracial adoption program are Michigan, New York, New Jersey, California, Minnesota and Oregon. (Block, 1969) Furthermore, some of the citizens in New Jersey have established a group to

support interracial adoptions. Their philosophy is that every child belongs in a home and that individuals should promote family life. They feel that when confronted with alternatives, of moving from one foster home to another, or interracial adoption, the latter should be chosen. The group, called Families for Interracial Adoption (FIA), includes interracial married couples, white couples who have adopted an interracial child, and both black and white couples interested in this program but not planning to adopt. The group, composed of 150 members, has the slogan of "consider the alternatives of interracial adoption." The founder, Mrs. Alan Vliet, mentioned in an interview with Sharon Schlegel (1969) that the group was not formed to deal with problems of interracial adoption, but to educate the general public about the availability of children of black and mixed parentage and to make known the routes through which they can be adopted.

It is difficult to draw any conclusions as to the success or failure of an interracial adoption program. Due to the relatively new origin of the interracial adoption program and of the limited number of such placements, many agencies throughout the country, have been hesitant to implement such a program. Hesitancy of these agencies to use or implement an interracial adoption program may be due to the fear of losing community sanction, fear of the effect on the child and question of the couple's reasons for adopting interracially. Since these agencies exist within the community and for the benefit of the community, it would be up to the agency to inform the community of the value of interracial adoption as compared to foster care.

The writer believes that extreme caution needs to be taken in making interracial placements, since social pressures may lead to

repercussions that injure the child and/or adoptive family. This type of program may require an alteration of individual and community attitudes regarding races. In the present situation the writer believes that the couples involved in interracial adoption would benefit by continued involvement with the agency from which they received the child.

### Single Parent Adoption

The Child Welfare League, in a "News Release" of 1969, stated:

In the past the child welfare field did not approve of single parent adoptions. But faced with the great number of children for whom two parents cannot be found, the current view is that one parent is sometimes preferable to long-term foster care. The revised adoption standards state: 'In exceptional circumstances, when the opportunity of adoption for a specific child might otherwise not be available, a single parent should be given consideration. In such cases it is important . . . that the single parent should be a member of a family to which the child can have the security of belonging.'

In 1965, after the modification of its state adoption laws, California pioneered single-parent adoptive placements. The revisions stated: "Single parent applications may be accepted only when a two parent family has not been found because of the child's special needs." Los Angeles defined special needs as "Negro children, Mexican children and children of all races and nationalities with severe medical problems." This enabled Walter A. Health, director of the Los Angeles County Department of Adoption, to make the first single-parent placement. (Jordan & Little, 1966) The guidelines for choosing single-parent adoptive applicants were: the applicant could not be a recluse, merely seeking a child for companionship; the applicant was required to have



close family ties and an extended family; the single parent should be comfortable in her role as a woman or his role as a man; and the individual should have a good child care plan.

In Los Angeles as of February, 1969, there have been fifty-nine single-parent adoptions; forty-one were black, ten were racially mixed, primarily Mexican-American; and seven were white with various medical problems. (Mangel, 1969)

In spite of the evident success in Los Angeles, single-parent adoption has yet to achieve the broad approval it needs to become effective. Only eight states and the District of Columbia have tried similar programs. Altogether an estimated 200 children have been placed. The greatest barrier is the reluctance of adoption officials. As Chevlin (1967) stated, "any innovative idea is slow to start." The realization that it is becoming more difficult to find sufficient two-parent families for all the children needing adoptive homes may spur acceptance of single parent adoption. In time the new emphasis will be on finding a stable and loving home regardless of the number of parents.

As in the case of the other alternative adoption programs, little study has been done on single-parent adoptive placements, though a number of such placements have taken place throughout the country. The writer is hopeful that single parents will provide homes for many of the "hard-to-place" children. There are many individuals who have an extended family to provide the necessary relationships needed by a growing child. Such individuals, single, divorced, or widowed, who are willing and able to give a child a good home, should be given the opportunity to do so.

## CHAPTER V

### INTERPRETATIONS

The alarming fact that there is a dearth of black adoptive homes for the children available has led to considerable concern on the part of individuals, agencies, and communities. The literature over the past twenty years, as reviewed in this paper, is a result of the writer's interest and concern over this problem. This chapter will include what the writer interprets to be the outstanding factors in this literature, regarding the problem of finding adoptive homes for the black children awaiting placement.

When attempting to study and eliminate the problem in insufficient black adoptive homes, the following points brought out in the research studies reviewed should be taken into consideration. First, the inability of black applicants to move ahead with adoption plans is less related to the amount of income than to the stability of employment and income. Many black applicants are first generation middle class and would be threatened by the addition of a child. Such couples are not necessarily apathetic about adoption but are temporarily hesitant because of their financial situation. This may mean that society will have to assure these couples economic security before asking them to apply for adoption. Second, blacks whose contact with the agency is stimulated by publicity via the news media show a low proportion of complete adoptions. They are reacting to immediate emotional stirrings rather than

to well thought-out reasons for applying to adopt. This indicates that publicizing the need for black adoptive homes alone is not sufficient. There is a need for a program of education and interpretation to prepare the applicants for adoption before they approach the agency. This needs to be a continual instead of a sporadic program that will inform the black community of the purpose and philosophy of adoption as well as the rationale for agency requirements and procedures. Third, it is indicated that a decrease in agency formality and adherence to rigid procedures is necessary to develop early rapport with the black applicants. Applicants establishing an initial rapport with the agency will continue their contact with the agency. The final outcome of such a rapport, hopefully, leads to adoption. Initial inquiries of black applicants should be handled as quickly as possible and personal appointments arranged over the telephone. Fourth, a shift in the focus of recruitment programs is needed instead of a change in content, in order to find more black adoptive homes. Major emphasis should be placed on the advantages, opportunities, and happiness adoption offers to the adoptive couples, with far less emphasis on the needs of the children awaiting placement.

The recruitment programs analyzed in this paper had the following factors in common: First, publicity via news media, solely, is not sufficient to recruit black adoptive families. Other things such as the use of ministers, committees, and former adoptive couples should be a part of recruitment efforts; second, recruitment efforts should be coordinated and consistent, not sporadic; third, the need for an educational program to better acquaint the applicants with the agency and adoption is essential, in order to create an awareness of requirements and



standards, as well as understanding of why special recruitment programs are necessary in finding homes for the available black children; fourth, an adoption resource exchange is needed so that a black child would not miss any available opportunities.

The articles, written by those who analyzed the problem from a theoretical standpoint, supported many of the points mentioned in the above research studies and recruitment programs. The following points are ones that the writer interprets to be prominent in these articles. First, blacks are more susceptible to economic recessions and other community tragedies; this makes them hesitant to adopt for financial reasons. Second, legal formality or "red tape" because of previous experience with the delay of such procedures, has a tendency to deter many prospective black applicants. Third, consistent education and interpretation are essential for the development and growth of any program wishing to place black children. Fourth, agency requirements should be specified in the program to dispel misconceptions regarding rigid financial, religious, and housing standards. Although all education and interpretation programs indicate the needs of the children, more emphasis should be placed on the satisfactions and rewards the children could bring to parents. Fifth, it may no longer be possible to recruit two parent self-sufficient adoptive homes for all the black children needing placement. This may indicate the need for alternative programs such as subsidized adoption, quasi-adoption, single-parent adoption, and inter-racial adoption. The available literature on these programs indicate that, as yet, such programs have not been widely used. More experimentation and study is needed to point out which of these programs are feasible and would be readily acceptable by the child welfare field.

It is believed that the above-mentioned factors are the most important interpretations of the literature over the past twenty years, concerning the problem of insufficient black adoptive homes.

## CHAPTER VI

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Conclusions

The purpose of this paper was to discover the reasons for the dearth of black adoptive homes and the attempted efforts by communities over the past twenty years to eliminate the problem. The desire was to make this information available to those interested in the welfare of black children and those attempting to solve the adoption problem.

Having analyzed the collected data, the following conclusions were derived:

1. The problem of insufficient black adoptive homes for the children awaiting placement does not stem from ignorance or apathy in the black community. Adoptions are familiar to the black community and those in a position to adopt do so. Many of these adoptions are arranged between the mother and adoptive families or through the services of a doctor, minister, or interested person.
2. Black applicants are not extremely fearful of the adoption agency or the background of the black children available through these placement agencies.
3. Reluctance of the black applicant to adopt is related to their economic situation. It is the stability of income and employment rather than the size of their income that influences adoption. Presently



a majority of blacks have marginal incomes or have newly acquired a middle class status. Though they are economically secure, psychologically they still contemplate their future as unstable. The addition of a child in this situation would threaten their future, as well as that of the child.

4. Withdrawals of black applicants could possibly be prevented if there was less formality and adherence to rigid procedures, allowing the development of early rapport between caseworker and applicant.

5. Agencies need a self-critical attitude in reviewing their policies, requirements, and procedures with reference to black applicants.

6. Development of uniformity among adoption agencies regarding treatment of black applicants would prevent distrust and confusion for prospective applicants.

7. Because of cultural differences between the white and black applicant, there should be differentiation in eligibility requirements. This is not a lowering of standards but a difference in dealing with two separate groups.

8. Cooperation is needed between states, such as an adoption resource exchange, so that no opportunity would be overlooked in placing the available black children.

9. Recruitment programs should explain the needs of the available black children, but with more emphasis placed on the satisfactions and rewards these children can give to those who adopt them.

10. No matter what device is used to recruit black adoptive families, a routine-coordinated program is necessary. An educational and interpretational program regarding the purpose and philosophy of

adoption as well as the rationale for agency requirements and procedures, should be a part of the agency's recruitment of black adoptive families.

11. Two-parent self-sufficient adoptive homes may not be available for all the black children awaiting adoptive placement. This means that other alternatives need to be utilized for these children.

12. The alternative adoption programs, subsidized adoption, quasi-adoption, single-parent adoption, and interracial adoption are presently used infrequently in the United States. More study and experimentation is necessary before an all-out acceptance of any one of these alternative programs may be apparent. This may mean a change in the philosophy of adoption.

### Recommendations

Having considered the problem of insufficient black adoptive homes, the following recommendations are made:

1. The child welfare field should continue research in the black community concerning the existing problem of adoption.

2. There needs to be cooperation instead of competition between agencies. Agencies who are familiar with the problem of insufficient black adoptive homes and who have attempted to eliminate the problem should aid agencies just realizing the problem.

3. Recruitment programs should be broadened to include other techniques besides publicity efforts, such as committees of interested individuals and former adoptive parents. Once again, the use of these techniques should be consistent.

4. More consideration should be given to alternative adoption programs, in particular subsidized adoption and single-parent adoption. The writer believes that there are many families who are willing and capable of caring for a child yet are unable to do so because of financial reasons. If the children remain in a foster home or in institutional care, this would cost the community more than would subsidizing them in a permanent adoptive home. Single-parent adoption, with an extended family, seems better than no home at all and would provide good care for these children. Regarding the other two alternative programs which have received attention in the literature, the writer believes that agencies should be more hesitant in these areas, especially interracial adoption. Quasi-adoption would be of greater benefit to the black children than frequent movement, but the legal factor may become of importance to the child in later years. As for interracial adoption, society is presently so constructed that social pressures resulting from such a placement may be too much for the child and/or adoptive family. Great consideration, time, and effort must be put into such a placement and the agency must be sure of the attitudes and maturity of the adoptive parents as well as the community in which they live. These couples should adopt out of love for the child and not because of the need to do something unusual.

5. If an alternative program, such as single-parent adoption is going to be accepted, then the child welfare field should consider the possibility of the child remaining with his mother, if she is willing and capable of caring for him. Here also, the possibility of subsidizing the mother and making agency services available to her and her child should be studied.



6. A differentiation in standards for black adoptive applicants as compared with the white applicants should be established among all agencies throughout the United States. In addition, agencies should continually re-evaluate their standards and their effectiveness in placing black children for adoption.

The problem of black adoption will continue for some time and will keep changing as society restructures itself. Therefore, evaluation of the problem and new solutions must continually be sought.

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