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Signature Rosemary Miller
Date March 3, 1978
CHARACTERISTICS OF ADOPTIVE PARENTS OF OLDER CHILDREN

by

ROSEMARY ANNE MILLER

A professional paper submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF EDUCATION

with concentration in

Counseling

Approved:

[Signatures]

Chairperson, Graduate Committee

Head, Major Department

Graduate Dean

MONTANA STATE UNIVERSITY
Bozeman, Montana

March, 1978
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study, which was undertaken in the fall of 1977, was to identify characteristics in adoptive parents of older children which related to the success of the adoption. It was determined that the study would involve all adoptive parents and older adoptive children placed in 1975 by the Montana State Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services, and those studied by adoptive workers presently employed by that agency.

The study was designed to describe characteristics of adoptive parents and children and compare successful adoptions to unsuccessful adoptions. Permanent adoptive case records for children placed in 1975 were reviewed according to predetermined criteria. Additionally, a questionnaire was sent to all adoptive social workers of the Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services with an 85 percent response.

The characteristics of adoptive parents were separated from the characteristics of adoptive children. Data was also collected on adoptive social workers to determine the importance of previous experience.

The findings of the study were presented in written and tabular form, and were expressed in some instances using a mean and percentages.

Among the conclusions derived from the study are:

(1) There appears to be some characteristics related to the success of adoptive parents including their age, level of income, strong religious affiliation, positive childhood experiences, previous experience as parents, and their attitude toward finalizing the adoption.

(2) Younger children are more likely to experience a successful adoption.

(3) Previous experience of the adoptive worker appears to relate to the percentage of successful adoptions.

(4) Out-of-state adoptions are more successful than in-state adoptions.
Chapter 1

Introduction

In recent years there has been a decline in the number of infants available for adoption. This fact has made adoption agencies and prospective adoptive parents contemplate the adoption of older children. To a progressively increasing extent, children who would have spent their growing years in foster care are moving into adoptive homes. Adoption agencies have adapted the philosophy that every child has a right to a permanent home. There was a need to identify characteristics in adoptive parents which predict a successful outcome in the adoption of older children in Montana.

The adoption of older children differs from the adoption of infants because of the nature of the older children's adoption. Every new placement increases a child's insecurity and lack of basic trust. Most research on adoption dealt with the adoption of infants. There was a lack of data indicating characteristics linked to a positive outcome in the adoption of older children. Mahoney and Mahoney emphasized the need for a study concerned with the adoption of older children when they stated "the need for a data-based approach to child placement is unquestionable. The helplessness of the growing child, and the often painful environment of a broken home, invite emotional reactions that may obscure and even militate against the 'best interest of the child'." This paper has provided some data
on which placement decisions can be based. A data-based approach could prevent a placement that might otherwise result in a breakdown and the removal of the child from the adoptive home.

**Issues to be Considered**

This paper attempted to answer several questions relevant to the adoption of the older child. Is there a difference between the success of foster parents adopting versus approved adoptive families? Are there certain characteristics in adoptive parents which may identify people who may succeed or may not succeed in adopting older children? Does the type of child placed affect the outcome of the adoption (physically handicapped, emotionally disturbed, mixed racial placement, severely neglected child)? Does the age of the child placed affect the success of the placement? What are the reasons for adoptive breakdown? Does the previous experience of the adoption worker affect the rate of success of placements?

**General Procedures**

The researcher examined all case records on the adoption of older children placed in 1975 in an effort to gather a description of the characteristics of adoptive parents and children. The characteristics of parents of successful adoptions were compared to characteristics of parents of unsuccessful adoptions (cases where the child was removed). These characteristics are identified in Chapter 4, pages 18 and 19.

Additionally, a questionnaire was sent to all adoption workers
in the State of Montana's Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services. This questionnaire attempted to identify characteristics thought to be important in the adoptive parents of older children by the adoption worker. It also identified the experience of adoption workers and the number of adoptive breakdowns handled by these workers. The workers were asked to detail the reasons for the adoptive breakdowns.

A comparison of the results of the questionnaire and the data collected from the records was compiled to determine factors affecting success in adoption.

Limitations and Delimitations

Certain factors limited this study, including lack of adequate records. During the time of the administration of the questionnaire, there was some staff turnover. This study was limited to one adoption agency which employed 14 adoptive workers. Only children 3 years old and older were included in the study. A review of the case records on these children was done as opposed to a personal interview so that the study would not cause any disruption in the adoptive families. The study only included the adoption of unrelated children. The researcher was unable to collect data from missing case records. Bias of the social workers could not be controlled by the researcher.

Definition of Terms

The older child means any child who has reached his/her third
birthday but has not yet reached his/her eighteenth birthday.

Adoption means a legally finalized adoption of a child by unrelated parents.

Characteristic means a human trait, quality, or property distinguishing one person from another.

Summary

The importance of this study stems from a need for a data-based approach in selecting adoptive parents for older children. The increase in the number of older children being adopted warranted a need for a scientific approach. This type of approach could prevent an adoptive breakdown which results in at least two more new homes for a child.

This study attempted to identify some characteristics leading to successful adoption where older children are involved. The study looked at characteristics of adoptive parents from 1975 through the examination of case records. Additionally, a questionnaire was administered to adoptive social workers in an effort to determine characteristics thought to be important in studying parents for older children and detailing reasons for adoptive breakdowns.
Chapter 2

Introduction

Several research studies have dealt with the topic of adoption but most of the research has dealt with the adoption of infants. Very little research has been directed at the adoption of older children. Some research has dealt with the adoption of handicapped children. This paper draws from all of the aforementioned studies which have researched the characteristics of adoptive parents.

In order to understand the present day philosophical base of adoption, it is necessary to trace the historical development of adoption. Following a historical development, this study details recent research related to the characteristics of adoptive parents.

Review of Literature

The present day adoption laws in the United States had their roots in Roman adoption law. According to Zietz, "adoption first became a matter of national concern during the period from 1920-1930" (Lawder, Lower, Andrews, Sherman, and Hill, 1969). Congressmen became concerned that adopted children should be protected by laws. The Child Welfare League of America, in 1936, began a study of adoption which formed the basis for current minimum standards in adoption. Prior to this time there is little evidence that any consideration was given to the qualities of the adoptive parents.

Adoption agencies did not possess the time or staff to research
their procedures prior to World War II because of the large number of children available for adoption. Due to the large number of children available for adoption and the lack of staff, social agencies ceased to be the main avenue for adoption, and independent adoptions arranged by doctors and lawyers took over most of the available children. This trend started in the 1940's and has extended into the 1970's.

In 1951, the Child Welfare League of America, at their national conference, decided that more emphasis should be put on the adoptive study of parents. They began a review which culminated in establishing standards for adoption at the National Conference in Chicago in 1955. These standards are used as guidelines today by licensed adoption agencies.

Interest in adoption has varied since World War II. In the 1950's, there were more parents interested in adoption than there were white infants. In the early 1960's, there were more white infants than adoptive parents; however, this trend reversed itself in the late 1960's. In the 1970's, there continued to be more adoptive parents than infants available. The number of infants available has gradually decreased since the mid-1960's. Reports from the Child Welfare League demonstrate the trend with statistics from 1973. There were 294 fewer white infants available nationwide from July to December of that year than from January to June (Brown, Brieland, 1975). This trend is supported by figures reported by Haring showing the number of children accepted for placement dropped 45%
from 1971 to 1974. Haring reported an increase in the proportion of older children placed for adoption (Haring, 1975).

Montana has experienced the same trend according to statistics from the Montana State Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services. The following list shows the number of children placed each year:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of Children Placed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>244</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>277</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1972</td>
<td>207</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1973</td>
<td>194</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1974</td>
<td>147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1975</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A breakdown according to the age of the children placed in 1975 shows that 62 of the children were under the age of 2 years; 29 of the children were between 2 and 6 years of age, and 17 of the children were between 7 and 14 years of age (Bay, 1976).

The Great Falls District Office of the Montana Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services placement statistics are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Children Placed</th>
<th>Number of Children Over 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
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<td>1972</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>13</td>
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<tr>
<td>1973</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1974</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1975</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Great Falls District Office stated that 30%-45% of the children are over the age of 2 years. National figures from 1967 show that 15%
of the children placed were over 1 year old. It can be readily ascertained that the number of older children placed since 1967 has doubled and perhaps tripled (Costello, 1977).

The method of studying prospective adoptive parents has remained the same despite the changing type of child placed. The need for a different process was expressed in a study by Patricia Ferman and Bruce Warren: "Those workers who are concentrating on finding families for children with special needs indicate that traditional screening processes and certain types of information requested from the family are not only inadequate for matching the needs and abilities of the family with those of a particular handicapped child, but may actually discourage the applicants from continuing with the agency." (Ferman, Warren, 1974). This study recommends that the social worker become a counselor as opposed to a judge and, in this manner, the adoptive parents would share equally with the worker in the decision as to what child is placed. Ferman and Warren suggested that group interviews could help potential adoptive parents explore their strengths (Ferman, Warren, 1974). Specific strengths were not identified in this study.

Celia Bass details the process used in the Contra Costa County Social Services Department in Pleasant Hill, California: "The early process in selecting adoptive families is one of elimination. Motivation and ability to accept the child as part of his separate past are primary. The full range of characteristics studied include marital adjustment, health, finances, life-style, background, and child rearing
practices. The worker then evaluates those ego strengths considered essential for survival under the stress of adopting the older child or the handicapped child." (Bass, 1975).

Dr. Lorna Forbes, a Psychiatric Consultant to the Los Angeles Department of Adoptions, has suggested eight adoptive parent characteristics thought by her to be important to the success of an adoptive placement. They are the ability to work with an agency, to express tenderness, to arbitrate, to be tolerant, to live non-isolated lives, to be resilient, to have a healthy ego that enables them to defer gratification, and a life-style reciprocal to that of the child to be placed (Bass, 1975).

In deciding what it takes to make a successful placement, Bass and Mazur identified reasons for adoption failure in an unpublished survey. The most frequently stated reason for failures were "behavior problems of the children; disruption of family functioning; inability of the child to meet family expectations; and internal marital or family problems." (Bass, 1975).

Several studies indicated that the reason for the adoptive breakdown was due to problems of the child. Recognizing this, Bellucci conducted several group meetings with older adopted children to identify their feelings. The feelings expressed included fear of rejection, pain, confusion, feelings about a name change, second-rate feelings of not belonging, anger, and the feeling of being auctioned off. The parents of these children met in separate group sessions to discuss the
children's feelings; however, the sessions developed into discussions about their own feelings about themselves, their need for children, and their expectations of their children (Bellucci, 1975). Research has repeatedly emphasized the importance of preparing the child for adoptive placement.

Two research studies deal directly with the characteristics of adoptive parents. Ruth Davis conducted a follow-up study in 1972 of all the adoptive families from the Montana Welfare Department finalizing their adoptions in 1960. This follow-up study was done in order to select a group of successful adoptive placements and from reviewing the adoptive study, establish criteria for the type of family that would be a successful adoptive family. The criteria was then used to identify differences between unsuccessful and successful adoptions. Davis rated each adoptive family on twelve criteria:

1) Divorce in the adoptive family
2) Traumatic childhood background
3) Married 5 years prior to placement
4) Was the family economically stable?
5) Functioning at educational level
6) Did the adoptive parents "have to" marry?
7) Definite religious affiliation
8) Couple's attitude toward relinquishment
9) Maternal warmth shown in some specific way
10) Paternal warmth shown in some specific way
11) Was type of child appropriate for them
12) Would openly discuss past problems and solutions

Sixteen families were chosen as successful adoptive parents based on their responses to a questionnaire. Each family was rated by the twelve criteria. There was a possible of 12 points but a family could accrue 5 additional points if they met the following criteria:

1) Child placed was over 1 year old
2) A child was of a different race than adoptive parents
3) Child had a physical handicap
4) Severe neglect prior to adoptive placement
5) Accepted more than one child at the time of placement

Davis did not separate out adoptive parents of older children but averaged all families together. There were nine unsuccessful adoptive families that were rated according to the criteria. The results showed that successful families averaged 9.5 points and unsuccessful families averaged 5.6 points (Davis, 1972).

One of the only and most noted studies on the adoption of older children was done by Alfred Kadushin. He studied white children placed at ages 5 to 12 years, who were physically and mentally normal. These children were placed between 1952-1962 by one agency. There were 91 families included in the study with 112 adoptive children. Kadushin
reviewed agency records, and conducted personal interviews followed by a questionnaire to determine if the parents were satisfied or dissatisfied with the adoption. Kadushin was working under the assumption voiced by Witmer that parent satisfaction is one of the major criteria of adoption outcome. Kadushin's findings show that the following are related to a successful outcome:

1. Readiness for adoptive placement on the part of the child
2. Age of adoptive parents - tendency for older parents to be more successful
3. The average length of marriage was 14 years
4. Resolution of infertility, particularly in woman
5. Previous experience with children

Kadushin and Seidl studied adoption failures in Wisconsin between 1960-1967 defining failure as the removal of the child between placement and finalization. The overall failure rate was 3%, however, an age breakdown shows that failure is related to age:

- Under 2 years old: 1%
- 2-6 years old: 7%
- 6+ years old: 9%

This study showed the difference in failure rates as it relates to the age of the child (Kadushin, Seidl, 1971).

In a workshop conducted by Helen Costello, Adoption Worker, on February 1, 1977, in Helena, Montana, it was expressed that the qualities
desirable in prospective adoptive parents include a strong marriage, good communication skills, cooperativeness, supportive of each other, and the family should not be under any other stresses (Costello, 1977).

Summary

Adoption has developed since 1920 when it became an issue of national concern. The Child Welfare League of America developed minimum standards in 1936 which were revised in 1955 and form the basis of present day standards. Social adoption agencies were very involved in adoption issues and research until the 1940's at which time lack of staff and increases in available infants caused an increase in independent adoptions.

The number of older children placed for adoption has increased in recent years as the number of infants have decreased. Montana has averaged between 30%-45% of the children placed who are over the age of 2.

Several studies have suggested desirable characteristics for adoptive parents. Among these are the ability to work with an agency, to express tenderness, to arbitrate, to be tolerant, to live a non-isolated life, to be resilient, to have a healthy ego, deferring gratification, life-style reciprocal to the child placed, ability to accept the child as part of his separate past, positive early childhood, stable lasting marriage, economically stable, functioning at educational level, definite religious affiliation, attitude toward relinquishment, maternal
and paternal warmth shown, openly discuss problems and solutions, child appropriate, age of adoptive parents, resolution of infertility, previous experience with children, good communication skills, cooperative, supportive of each other, both parents active in parenting, and the family should not be under any other stresses.

The failure rate for older children averaged 8% and the reasons for failing were behavior problems of the children, disruption of family functioning, inability of the child to meet family expectations, internal marital or family problems, and unprepared child for adoption.

There have been several theories as to the characteristics of a successful adoptive family but most of these theories have not been supported by data but remain theories.
Chapter 3

Introduction

This study attempted to identify characteristics of successful adoptive parents and unsuccessful adoptive parents in Montana. The study has combined previous research in determining the characteristics which are included in this study. This chapter details the methods used to collect the data and how the data was analyzed.

Population

The population was twofold: 1) adoptive parents and 2) adoptive children. The population was identified through 21 adoptive family case records of the 36 children placed in 1975 by the Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services. The population was further identified through a questionnaire returned by 11 adoptive workers presently employed by the Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services. Their responses were based on their experience with the placement of 82 older children with approximately 48 adoptive families.

Investigation

This study was investigative in nature. The researcher investigated case records to identify the characteristics of adoptive parents and children. The instrument used was an outline designed to gather characteristics of adoptive families. This outline was reviewed by workers in the adoption field to establish validity.

In addition, the researcher sent a questionnaire to adoption workers in an effort to determine what characteristics were thought
to be important in adoptive families and to gather a detailed list of reasons for adoptive breakdowns. This questionnaire was reviewed by adoption workers and supervisors and revised before it was administered.

Method of Collecting Data

Data was collected from the permanent adoptive records using an outline to help organize the data. Each adoptive case record had been examined by the Adoption Consultant and each family had been approved prior to the placement of a child. This process assumed that the information in the study was reliable information. The data examined was a combination of characteristics found in previous literature and characteristics requested by adoptive workers in Montana. The characteristics looked at included: adoptive home or a foster home adopting, age of parents, negative background factors, length of marriage, noting any marital separations, previous experience with children and the age of their own children, attitude toward relinquishment and acceptance of adoption, level of income, definite religious affiliation, maternal and paternal warmth, ability to talk about problems and accept help, child placed appropriate to request, age and sex of child, child considered adequately prepared for adoptive placement, stated reason for breakdown. Individual characteristics unique to each family were noted. Each record was examined according to the selected characteristics.
A descriptive list of characteristics of successful adoptive parents was compared to a list of characteristics of unsuccessful adoptive parents as shown in Chapter 4.

A questionnaire was sent to each adoptive worker in the Social and Rehabilitation Services Agency on November 2, 1977 requesting a return by November 15, 1977. A follow-up questionnaire was sent on January 5, 1978 requesting a return by January 31, 1978 to all those who failed to return the original questionnaire. A total of 11 of the 13 questionnaires were returned.

The questionnaire collected data on the number of years of experience of the worker, number of older children placed with families, and the number of adoptive breakdowns in those families. The questionnaire also gathered reasons for adoptive breakdowns and characteristics in adoptive parents thought to be important.

Method of Organizing Data

The data from the permanent records was organized into descriptive factors found in the records. Characteristics not included in the outline were added as they were found in case records.

The characteristics found are listed in Chapter 4. Characteristics found in unsuccessful adoptive parents are also listed.

Reasons for adoptive breakdowns were ranked according to the frequency of the response.

A comparison of the experience of the worker and the number of
adoptive breakdowns was compiled. The average number of years of experience and the average number of adoptive breakdowns, per worker, was calculated and appears in the following chapter.

Questions Answered by Study

Several questions were answered by this study:

1) Is there a difference between the success of foster parents adopting versus approved adoptive families?

2) Are there certain characteristics in adoptive parents which may identify people who may succeed or may not succeed in adopting older children?

3) Does the type of child placed affect the outcome of the adoption?

4) Does the age of the child placed affect the success of the placement?

5) What are the reasons for adoptive breakdowns?

6) Does the previous experience of the adoption worker affect the rate of success of placements?

Analysis of Data

The data has been organized to describe 1) characteristics of adoptive parents, 2) characteristics of adoptive children, and 3) data related to the adoptive workers. A comparison of characteristics of foster parents and adoptive parents details the differences found. Tables compare successful adoptive parents to unsuccessful adoptive parents. A list of reasons for adoptive breakdowns begins with the most frequently expressed reason and continues to the least expressed
reason. A list of characteristics of the children placed is divided into successful and unsuccessful adoptive placements. Since there were only 2 unsuccessful adoptive parents involving 4 children, the data cannot be representative of all adoptive breakdowns.

Summary

All adoptive social workers, excluding the researcher, were asked to complete a questionnaire in an effort to compile a list of characteristics thought to be important in the adoptive parents of older children. This questionnaire also collected data on the number of years of experience of the worker, the number of older children placed, and the number of adoptive breakdowns with the reasons for these breakdowns.

An examination of all the case records of older children placed in 1975 was done in order to extract characteristics of adoptive parents and children. The data was organized into tables and descriptive lists.

The following chapter contains the results of the questionnaire and the examination of case records.
Chapter 4

Introduction

Data was collected from 21 adoptive case records from 1975 involving 36 children, 3 to 15 years of age, placed in 1975. The results are based on 19 successful adoptive families and 2 unsuccessful adoptive families. The validity and reliability of the results is questionable because there were only two unsuccessful adoptive families. Additionally, the results are based on the responses to a questionnaire administered to adoptive workers. Eleven of the thirteen questionnaires were returned.

This chapter presents the findings to each of the questions presented in Chapter 3.

Findings

1) Is there a difference between the success of foster parents adopting versus approved adoptive homes?

There were several differences in the characteristics of foster parents adopting. All of the foster parents' adoptions were successful. Foster parents adopting represented 24% of the population.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Foster Parents</th>
<th>Approved Adoptive Homes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean Age of Mother:</td>
<td>32.6 years old</td>
<td>37.5 years old</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean Age of Father:</td>
<td>35.5 years old</td>
<td>35.8 years old</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Income per Family:</td>
<td>$10,459</td>
<td>$13,909</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The only single parent adopting was a foster parent. Three of five children who had previously suffered an adoptive breakdown were adopted by their foster parents. All of the children adopted by foster parents had special problems including retardation, severely neglected, abused, asthmatic, and a child experiencing problems in forming emotional attachments.

In general, social workers accepted more negative factors in the background of foster parents. The foster parents were slightly younger than approved adoptive parents and had considerably less income.

There is a difference between foster parents adopting versus approved adoptive parents but these differences did not affect the success of the adoption.

2) Are there certain characteristics in adoptive parents which may identify people who may or may not succeed in adopting older children?

Table 2
CHARACTERISTICS OF ADOPTIVE PARENTS

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Successful Parents</th>
<th>Unsuccessful Parents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father 37.5</td>
<td>Father 34.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother 37.5</td>
<td>Mother 32.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Income</strong></td>
<td><strong>Income</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$13,909</td>
<td>$8,650</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2 (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Successful Parents</th>
<th>Unsuccessful Parents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Religion</td>
<td>Religion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definite Religious</td>
<td>Definite Religious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affiliation</td>
<td>Affiliation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Attenders</td>
<td>Non-Attenders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Believers</td>
<td>Non-Believers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length of Marriage</td>
<td>Length of Marriage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.22 years</td>
<td>11 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where Placed</td>
<td>Where Placed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montana</td>
<td>Montana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>58%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Out of State</td>
<td>Out of State</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Children in Family</td>
<td>Other Children in Family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>71%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative Background Factors*</td>
<td>Negative Background Factors*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother:</td>
<td>Mother:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father:</td>
<td>Father:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Working Mother</td>
<td>Non-Working Mother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>79%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11% Part-time</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Negative background factors included such factors as: relationship difficulties, isolate life-style, lacked self-confidence, unresolved grief over the death of a child, bitter divorce of parents affecting their child rearing ability, alcoholism of a parent, adoptive parents married before high school graduation, and abused as a child.
The findings indicate there are certain factors which may indicate success. The older the couple is, the more chance for success as found by Alfred Kadushin in his study. Economic stability contributed to the success of the adoption. Those couples who have a definite religious affiliation and attend church seem to be more successful in adoption. The length of the marriage did not appear to make a difference, however, one unsuccessful couple was married 4 years and the other couple was married 18 years. The small sample affects the mean drastically.

Out of state agencies used different home study methods; specifically, the use of groups and experienced adoptive parents to provide support. This type of study appeared to contribute to the success of an adoption.

Previous experience with children, especially as parents, contributed to the success of the adoption. Negative background factors or traumatic childhood experiences appeared to be significant to women adopting. There was little difference between the success of a working mother versus a non-working mother. The vast majority of mothers did not work outside
the home on a regular basis. It is interesting to note that both unsuccessful families pressured the social worker to finalize the adoption previous to the breakdown. It was not mentioned in any of the case records that the successful parents were pressuring to finalize the adoption. Both unsuccessful families received children different from the age and sex of child they had requested.

3) Does the type of child placed affect the outcome of the adoption?

The type of child placed did not seem to affect the outcome of the adoption except the age of the child. The average age of the child of a successful adoption was 5.9 years old compared to 12.75 years of age for children of unsuccessful adoptive placements. These figures are based on the ages of 29 children in successful adoptions and 4 children in unsuccessful adoptive placements.

Table 3
CHARACTERISTICS OF ADOPTED CHILDREN

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Successful Adoptions</th>
<th>Unsuccessful Adoptions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Severe Neglected</td>
<td>Lying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexually Molested</td>
<td>Requested Boys, Received</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bed Wetter</td>
<td>Girls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heart Condition</td>
<td>Child Behavior Problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavior Problems</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotionally Disturbed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asthma</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retardation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of Trust</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abused</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Previous Adoptive Breakdown</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Three of the adopted children had experienced a breakdown in a previous adoptive home, yet they were successful in their present home.

The case records indicated that the children were not responsible for the adoptive breakdown. Nevertheless, child behavior problems were the most frequent reasons for breakdowns given by the adoptive workers on the questionnaire.

Essentially, there was little evidence indicating the type of child affects the outcome of the adoption except for the age of the child which will be detailed in the following question. There were several characteristics that were common to adopted children, including feelings of insecurity, aggression or extreme shyness, a need to talk about their past and initially, a basic lack of trust.

4) Does the age of the child placed affect the success of the placement?

The age of the child placed does affect the success of the placement. The average age of children involved in adoptive breakdowns was 12.7 years of age and the average age of children in successful adoptions was 5.9 years of age. The younger the child, the greater the chance for a successful adoption.

5) What are the reasons for adoptive breakdowns?
Table 4

REASONS FOR BREAKDOWNS

1) Child's Problems
2) Family's inability to accept child and his separate past
3) Competition between natural children and adopted child
4) Over-reaction of friends and relatives toward adopted child
5) Parents were unsatisfied because child didn't respond with a parent-child relationship
6) Parents were not prepared for behavior problems
7) Marriage was not strong enough to respond positively to stress
8) Expectations of parents were too high, both of themselves and the child
9) Child's way of life differed vastly from adoptive parents way of life
10) Marital Problems
11) Child was unable to develop trust and, therefore, would not allow any human attachment
12) Child played mother role prior to placement and couldn't accept role of adoptive mother
13) Excessive family problems
14) Unresolved problems from parents background (mother was abused as a child)
15) Family had teenage girl killed in an accident less than a year prior to placement of adoptive children. Specifically requested a boy, and 2 girls and a boy were placed.
16) Wanted child to fit into family
Table 4 (continued)

17) "Fill void in their life"
18) Unable to accept child as who he/she is
19) Adoptive parents negative attitude toward child
20) Adoptive mother was jealous of child
21) Expectations of adoptive mother were too high
22) Unresolved infertility (adoptive parents could not have children of their own and could not accept the fact)

6) Does the previous experience of the adoptive worker affect the rate of success of placements?

The previous social work experience of adoption workers did seem to affect the rate of success of placements. Data was compiled based on the 11 workers responding. There was an average of 7.6 years of experience per worker with an average of 7.45 older children placed per worker and a 12% breakdown rate.

Data was based on those workers who had adoptive breakdowns. Workers having 10 or 11 years experience range from a 4% to a 12% breakdown rate. The remaining workers had between 5 and 8 years experience and ranged between a 14% to a 50% breakdown rate. Two workers had not placed older children and the remaining workers had a 100% success rate.
The adoptive workers were asked if the outline provided by the state was useful in the study of parents for older children. Two answered a definite yes, with five workers answering yes if some revisions were made. Two workers had designed their own outline and two other workers did not use an outline, nor did they find the present outline useful.

Summary

The findings of this study are based on data collected from adoptive case records from 1975 and from a questionnaire administered to adoption workers presently employed by the Montana State Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services. There were 19 successful adoptions in 1975 and 2 unsuccessful adoptions. It is hard to draw valid conclusions based on 2 cases.
In general, the type of child does not affect the outcome of the adoption. Foster parents appear to be more successful as adoptive parents and they adopt children with more severe problems than the average adopted child. Foster parents, on the whole, were younger and earned an average of $3,500 less than approved adoptive parents.

There appeared to be certain characteristics which may indicate success in prospective adoptive parents. The successful adoptive couple is older than the average adoptive parent and is economically stable. Religious couples were more successful. The method of studying adoptive parents appears to contribute to the selection of successful adoptive parents. Parents who have had experience with children are more successful on the average. Negative background factors in the adoptive mothers appear to be significant. The vast majority of mothers did not work outside of the home. Two factors common to unsuccessful adoptions were the pressuring of the parents to finalize the adoption and having a child placed with them different from their request.

The younger the child, the better the rate of success. The more experience a social worker has, the better the rate of success in adoptive placements.

There were several stated reasons for breakdowns. The case record indicated the type of parent and motivations for adopting
were much more significant than the type of child placed, provided the child was appropriate to the request of the adoptive parents.

The following chapter suggests recommendations and conclusions based on the findings reported in this chapter.
Summary

This study stems from a need for a data-based approach in the adoption of older children. In recent years there has been an increase in the number of older children placed for adoption.

This study attempted to identify some characteristics of successful adoptive parents of older children as compared to unsuccessful adoptive parents. The researcher examined adoptive case records from 1975 of older children and adoptive parents. A questionnaire was administered in November, 1977, to adoptive social workers in the Montana Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services in an effort to determine characteristics thought to be important in studying parents for older children and detailing adoptive breakdowns.

Limited research has been done on the adoption of older children especially as related to the characteristics of adoptive parents. Previous studies have identified some important characteristics including resolution of infertility, previous experience with children, average length of marriage was 14 years, tendency of older parents to be more successful, and the importance of the readiness of the child for adoption. This study found previous experience with children, resolution of infertility, tendency of older parents to be more successful, economic stability, definite religious
affiliation, appropriateness of child placed, flexibility concerning finalization, and the method used to study adoptive parents as important characteristics. Additionally, the younger the child, the greater the tendency toward success and the more experienced adoptive worker experiences less adoptive breakdowns.

The national breakdown rate is approximately 8% whereas Montana's breakdown rate was 12% from the data received from adoptive workers and 11% from the data from 1975 case records.

Conclusions

1) Out of state adoptions were more successful than in-state adoptions.

2) There was a lack of approved adoptive families in 1975 because of lack of staff time and, therefore, 42% of the children were placed out of state.

3) Foster parents adopted harder to place children and were successful with children who had experienced previous adoptive breakdowns.

4) It is hard to draw any conclusions based on two families experiencing breakdowns. There appears to be some characteristics related to the success of adoptive parents, including their age, level of income, religious beliefs, childhood experiences, previous experience as parents, and attitude toward finalizing the adoption.

5) Previous social work experience of the adoptive worker appears to be related to the success of the adoptive placement.

6) The younger the child, the greater the tendency that the adoption will be successful.

Recommendations

1) Based on the findings of this study, further research needs to be done on this topic. Additionally, adoptive workers need further
training in the area of the adoption of older children, especially in light of the fact that 42% of the older children were placed out of state because of a lack of available homes in Montana.

2) This researcher suggests that the method of home study used by other states might contribute to the success of these states. Montana could benefit by adapting some of these methods to the present adoptive process.

3) There is a need for continual research by the State of Montana in the area of adoption which would contribute to the ongoing process of change in this field.

4) A larger population would provide more reliable conclusions. Replication of this study should include more than one calendar year due to the limited number of placements in Montana.

5) An increase in the number of adoptive workers or a freeing up of staff time appears to be warranted due to the fact that 42% of the children are placed out of state even though there are families waiting to be studied in Montana.
APPENDIX A

ORIGINAL LETTER SENT TO ADOPTION WORKERS
I am working on a research paper as a requirement to complete a Master's Degree and I am trying to identify characteristics of adoptive parents of older children. The results will compare characteristics of parents who complete adoption to those that disrupt.

I need your assistance with this research and would greatly appreciate it if you would complete the enclosed questionnaire and return it to me by NOVEMBER 15, 1977. A stamped, self-addressed envelope is enclosed.

I want to take this means of thanking you in advance for helping me with my research and if you are interested in receiving a copy of the results, please let me know.

Sincerely,

Rosemary Miller
APPENDIX B

QUESTIONNAIRE SENT TO ADOPTION WORKERS

OUTLINE USED FOR CASE RECORDS
ADOPTION OF OLDER CHILDREN

1. Number of years' experience as a social worker? _____ Years

2. Do you find the present outline for adoptive parents useful in studying adoptive parents for older children? ___Yes ___No

3. Number of children over 3 years old placed with families you studied ____. Ages of children _______________________. Number of families ____________________.

4. How many of those disrupted during the post-placement services? __________

5. What are reasons for the disruptions? _______________________

6. When studying a family as a prospective adoptive family of older children, what do you look for?

7. Please make any comments, suggestions, changes, and/or recommendations that you feel might be useful to me in my research:

THANK YOU,

Rosemary Miller, Resource Worker
SRS Helena District Office
ADOPTIVE STUDY 1978

Case Number _____

_____ Foster Home Adopting   _____ Approved Adoptive Home

AGE OF FATHER: _____   AGE OF MOTHER: _____

Negative Background Factors

Father: __________________________________________

__________________________

__________________________

Mother: __________________________________________

__________________________

Length of Marriage _______ Any Marital Separations? _____Yes _____No

Ages of Own Children _______________________________________

Previous experience with children: _____Yes _____No

Attitude toward relinquishment positive: _____Yes _____No

Acceptance of Adoption: _____Yes _____No

Economically Stable: _____Yes _____No   Level of Income: $_________

Definite Religious Affiliation _______________________________________

Maternal Warmth Shown _______________________________________

Paternal Warmth Shown _______________________________________

Able to talk about problems and accept help: _____Yes _____No

Child Placed appropriate to request: _____Yes _____No

Age of Child Placed: ____________   Sex: ____________
Type of Child: (Problems)

Child considered adequately prepared for adoptive placement:  ____ Yes
____ No

Characteristics of Adoptive Parents

Working Mother

______________________________
______________________________
______________________________
______________________________
______________________________
______________________________
REFERENCES


