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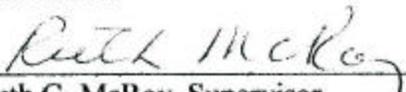
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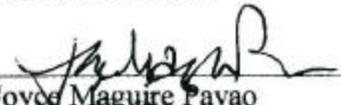
**African American Adoptions:  
An Exploratory Study of Post-Adoption Outcomes Among  
African American Adoptive Families  
Who Have Adopted Children From African American Adoption Agencies**

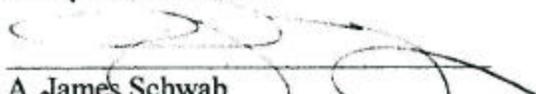
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**AFRICAN AMERICAN ADOPTIONS:  
AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF POST-ADOPTION OUTCOMES AMONG  
AFRICAN AMERICAN ADOPTIVE FAMILIES WHO HAVE ADOPTED  
CHILDREN FROM AFRICAN AMERICAN ADOPTION AGENCIES**

by

**Thelma Chedgzsey Smith-McKeever, B.A., M.S.W.**

**Dissertation**

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of

The University of Texas at Austin

in Partial Fulfillment

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for the Degree of

**Doctor of Philosophy**

The University of Texas at Austin

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## DEDICATION

This is dedicated, first and foremost to my luck charms (“Honey A” and “Honey B”), my husband, Larry McKeever and our daughter, Ysaye McKeever. Larry, I love you dearly and even with the ups and downs, you still got it all over “bicycle man”. Ysaye, you are my sweetheart girl and being your mommy has been the most joyous and rewarding experience in my life; you are the “work” of which I will always be most proud.

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**AFRICAN AMERICAN ADOPTIONS:  
AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF POST-ADOPTION OUTCOMES AMONG  
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WHO HAVE ADOPTED CHILDREN FROM AFRICAN AMERICAN  
ADOPTION AGENCIES**

Publication No. \_\_\_\_\_

Thelma Chedgzsey Smith-McKeever, Ph.D.  
The University of Texas at Austin, 2002

Supervisor: Ruth G. McRoy

The parents of 83 African American special-needs children who adopted through two private African American adoption agencies in California were surveyed regarding their post-adoption adjustment, satisfaction with their adoptions, parenting stress and children's behavior. Parenting stress levels were measured using the Parenting Stress Inventory (Abidin, 1986) and child's behavior was measured using the Child Behavior Checklist (Achenbach & Edelbrock, 1983). Comparisons were made of outcomes between single and two-parent adoptive families and infant and older child adoptive families. The sample was comprised of 24 single-parent and 58 two-parent

adoptive families. No significant differences were found in outcomes for younger child adopters (36 months or less at the time of adoption) versus those who adopted older children (37 months or more at the time of adoption) child adopters. Though children who were adopted before the age of three had lower CBCL total problem, internalizing and externalizing scores when compared to children who were adopted after the age of three, the parents of children who were adopted before the age of three expressed less overall satisfaction with their adoptions than did the parents of children adopted after the age of three.

Children of single adoptive parents had significantly higher ( $p = .020$ ) CBCL externalizing scores than did children in two-parent families. However, they were not more likely to have externalizing scores in the clinical range. No other significant differences in outcomes among single and two-parent adoptive families were found. Results also indicated that, though the differences were not statistically significant, single adoptive parents had lower Parenting Stress Inventory total scores than did married adoptive parents.

This sample of African American adoptive families was unique in that they very much mirrored the demographic profile of White private agency adopters. As with White private agency adopters, the African American adoptive parents in the sample were highly educated, with 95% of mothers and 86.6% of fathers having graduated from college. They tended to work in full-time professional occupations, earned high yearly gross incomes (mean = \$67,124) and were most likely (42.7%) to cite infertility as their primary motivation to adopt. While the sample had similar

demographic backgrounds to White private agency adopters, they differed in that the African American adoptive families in this sample were most likely to adopt children who were older (mean age at adoption = 22.16 months for sample vs. 1 month for Whites) and in child welfare custody (62.2%).

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

Adoption can be either a legal or social process through which the parenting responsibilities for a child born to one set of parents are assumed by another parent or set of parents. The transfer of parenting responsibility can be either a voluntary or an involuntary process on the part of birth parents. However, in either case, once the adoption is finalized the adopted child becomes entitled to the same rights as any child who is born to the parent who holds the parenting responsibility (Costin, 1972). Historically, adoption has been a widely accepted practice that, as far back as biblical times, has been viewed as an altruistic act on the part of adoptive parents whose mission is to rescue an orphaned child. While adoption has been practiced among many cultural and ethnic groups, for Americans of African descent, adoption has always been a common and necessary practice. During slavery African American children were frequently orphaned due to the sale or death of their parents. Such incidents were common given the brutality of American slavery (Gutman, 1976 p. 144). In such situations, children were naturally absorbed into existing slave families. African American slave family units could be comprised of members related by blood and marriage, as well as those without blood or marital ties (Hill, 1972). There are many historical accounts which describe and verify the practice of adoption among African Americans during slavery. There is also a growing body of research and

practice literature on various aspects of adoption. Still, the bulk of research and practice literature addressing adoption has focused on adoption practices among White-Americans (Sorosky et al., 1984; Barth & Berry, 1998; Grotevant & McRoy, 1998; Kadushin, 1970; Kirk, 1964, 1981; Rosenberg, 1992; Rosenthal & Groze, 1990; Simon & Altstein, 1987).

A brief review of popular media publications verifies that adoption is more and more often being discussed in the public arena (Pavao, 1998). While there is a growing public interest in adoption, and a concurrently developing body of research and popular literature on families formed by adoption, there has been considerably less public media and research attention paid to African American adoptive families. However, the number of African American children in need of permanent (adoptive) homes continues to grow. In 1985, 38% of the children in foster care placement were African American. In a little more than 10 years, that number grew significantly. At the end of the 1997 fiscal year there were 382,001 children in foster care in the United States. Reports from states participating in reporting their foster care data indicated that 172,520 (46%) of the children in child welfare custody were African American (Children's Bureau, 1998). In March 1998, Children's Bureau records indicated that there were 110,000 children, 61,599 (56%) of whom were African American, awaiting adoption. Though African American children are still the largest group of children awaiting adoption, during 1999 the number of African American children awaiting adoption decreased slightly. In January 2000, Children's Bureau records indicated that there were 117,000 children awaiting adoption in public child

welfare agencies. Fifty-one percent of these children (59,746) were African American (Children's Bureau, 2000). Although the historical need for African American adoptive families is evident, past barriers to prospective African American adoptive families continue to exclude them from the adoption process (Rodriguez & Meyer, 1990). For example, an early study of African American families wanting to adopt was conducted by the National Urban League and found that out of 800 African American families who had applied to adopt, only two families were approved ("Transracial Adoption Controversy," 1984, cited in Simon & Altstein, 1987). In spite of the historical barriers, African American families continued to rigorously pursue adoption. Gershenson (1984) conducted one of the last studies conducted before statistics on race and adoption ceased to be routinely collected by the Department of Health and Human Services. Gershenson's (1984) analysis of adoption rates indicated that African American families adopt children from public child welfare agencies at a rate that is 3 1/2 times greater than the rate at which White families adopt. As more information has become available on African Americans' interest in adoption, legislation has been passed to increase efforts to recruit ethnic minority families to adopt.

On August 20, 1996, President William Jefferson Clinton signed into law the Small Business Job Protection Act of 1996. This Bill carried an amendment to the Multiethnic Placement Act of 1994 (P.L. 103-382). The amendment requires that child welfare services programs provide for the diligent recruitment of potential foster and adoptive families that reflect the ethnic and racial diversity of children in the

State for whom foster and adoptive homes are needed. In 1997, the Adoption and Safe Families Act (P.L. 105-89) was passed. This legislation requires that public child welfare agencies expedite the adoption of children living in foster care. As it was enacted, the Act decreased the time a child can be in foster care before termination of parental rights is considered from 18 months to 12 months. The results of this legislation will mean that more children will be referred for adoption services within a shorter period of time. Children already residing in foster care for more than 12 months will also be referred for adoption services. Because African American children comprise the largest ethnic group within the child welfare system (Williams, 1995), this recent legislation will result in increasing the number of African American children in need of adoption and require adoption agencies to do more to identify African American adoptive families. One can reasonably expect that the experiences of African American adoptive families will continue to be important to adoption agencies and practitioners as well. Researchers must begin to make a concerted effort to create a better understanding of African American adoptive families. This exploratory study of African American adoptive family life is an initial step in an effort to provide information on African American adoptive families to adoption practitioners, administrators and policy makers.

This chapter offers an outline or foundation for the study of African American adoptive families. General definitions of adoption terminology to be used in the proposal are provided. In addition, a historical overview of African American adoption practices is given. The chapter also includes a description of past and current

efforts made by African American communities and adoption professionals to meet the needs of the growing number of African American children in need of adoptive homes.

### The Terminology of Adoption

As with any profession or field of social work practice, adoption has its own terminology. In this study the terms public agency adoption, private agency adoption, single-parent adoption, infant adoption, older child adoption, relative adoption, special needs adoption, fully disclosed adoption, mediated adoption, closed adoption, transracial adoption, in-racial adoption and informal adoption are used. In some cases a child or family may fall into more than one descriptive category as some terms describe the child being adopted, some describe the type of family a child is being adopted into and others describe the agency through which a child was adopted. The following provides definitions of each of these terms as they will be used in this proposal.

Public agency adoption refers to the adoption of children who were in the custody of public child welfare agencies prior to their adoption (Pavao, 1998 p. 126). These children have usually been removed from the custody of their parents for reasons of abuse and/or neglect including pre-natal drug exposure and the termination of parental rights has occurred through legal contest. However, children may also be voluntarily relinquished for adoption by their birth parents to public child welfare agencies.

Private agency adoption (Pavao, 1998 p. 126) refers to the adoption of children, usually infants, through private adoption agencies. In these cases the adoptive applicants are approved for adoption by the agency and parental rights are voluntarily relinquished by the birth parents. In some cases private adoption agencies have contracts with public child welfare agencies to find homes for children in their custody. In these cases, the adoption will still be considered a public adoption, though the adoption may have been processed by a private agency.

Single parent adoption refers to cases in which an unmarried person adopts a child (Shireman & Johnson, 1986). It is important to note that this in no way implies that the child is being raised in the absence of additional familial support. There are cases in which a child may be adopted by an unmarried person who has a stable and long-term relationship with what might be termed a 'spouse equivalent' and yet the two parties are not married. In other cases, extended family members may provide support for the child.

Infant adoption refers to the adoption of children who are less than 24 months old (Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Act, P.L. 96-272). The age limit being used for the purposes of this study was decided upon based on the designation of children adopted who are more than 24 months old as "special needs". However, it is important to note that a child can be less than 24 months and still be considered to have special needs. A more complete definition of a child with special needs is included later in this section of the paper. For the purposes of this study, an infant adoption will refer to a child less than 24 months who does not have any physical,

mental or emotional disabilities. In most cases, independent adoption attorneys or private adoption agencies facilitate infant adoptions (Pavao, 1998; p. 130).

Older child adoption refers to the adoption of children over 24 months. In most cases, these children are children who are dependents of the child welfare system who have been removed from their parents' custody due to the substantiation of allegations of abuse or neglect.

Kinship adoption refers to cases in which the adoptive parents are related to the adopted child by kinship or blood ties (Pavao, 1998, p.131). Hill (1972) notes that African American families are more likely than White families to take in additional children and states that when African American children are formally adopted, they are more likely than Caucasian children to be adopted by relatives (p. 6-8). For the purposes of this study, a kinship adoption will also include children who have close familial ties to their adoptive parents but are not necessarily related by blood.

Special needs adoption, according to federal guidelines (Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Act, P.L. 96-272), is the adoption of a child who is considered more difficult to place in an adoptive home. This group includes older children (over 24 months), children with physical, mental or emotional disabilities, ethnic minority or biracial children and children who are members of sibling groups (Rosenthal & Groze, 1990). The vast majority of children who are adopted through public child welfare agencies are considered to have special needs.

Fully disclosed adoption (Grotevant et al., 1994), which is also often referred to as open adoption, refers to adoptions in which both the adoptive parents and birth

parents have exchanged identifying information with one another. In some cases open adoptions involve a face-to face meeting between the birth and adoptive parents and continued contact via telephone and/or the mail. In other cases the birth and adoptive parents and child continue to meet face-to-face as well as maintain telephone and/or mail contact.

Mediated adoption (Grotevant et al., 1994) is also sometimes referred to as a semi-open adoption. In these cases, after the adoptive placement has taken place, contact between the birth and adoptive parents is maintained through a third party. In most cases that third party is the adoption agency.

Closed adoption (Sorosky, Baran & Pannor, 1984) is best described as the traditional form of adoption. In fact, in the United States adoption records remain legally closed in 47 of the 50 states (Pavao, 1998). Until recently, most agency adoptions were processed with complete anonymity between parties. In these cases there is no on-going contact between the adoptive and birth parents and all identifying information is kept confidential.

Transracial adoption (McRoy & Zurcher, 1983) refers to cases in which the adoptive parents and the adopted child are members of different racial or ethnic groups. In most cases the adoptive parents are White and the adopted child is biracial or of African, Asian, Hispanic or Native American descent.

Inracial adoption (McRoy & Zurcher, 1983) refers to adoption in which the adoptive parents and the adopted child are from the same or similar racial or ethnic groups. The participants in this study will all be African American adoptive families.

The convention in adoption research is to consider a biracial, African American-Caucasian, child adopted by a Caucasian family as an instance of transracial adoption (Rosenthal & Groze, 1992; Simon & Altstein, 1992). However, when an African American family adopts a biracial child, the adoption is considered in-racial. This determination of what racial group a person belongs to was established as a part of slavery. The practice has come to be known as the “one drop rule.” The one-drop rule concludes that a person having one drop of non-White blood, is not White, but rather a member of their non-White racial group. Because it is the convention used by most child welfare agencies to classify a child’s race, it will be used to determine a child’s race for the purposes of this study. When a biracial, African American-Caucasian, child has been adopted by African American parents, the adoption will be considered an in-racial adoption.

Informal adoption (Hill, 1972) refers to adoptions in which there are no outside parties, such as public child welfare agencies or attorneys, involved in the transfer of parenting responsibilities from the birth-parents to the adoptive parents. In these cases no legal action is taken to terminate the parental rights of the birth parents and the child is essentially given to the adoptive parents to raise as their own.

#### African American Adoptions in the United States: An Historical Perspective

Sorosky, Baran & Pannor (1984, p. 47) describe the purpose of adoption as being both parent focused and child focused. When the purpose of the adoption is to provide a child to a family who wants one, the focus of the adoption centers on meeting the needs of the parent, and thus the purpose is parent-focused. When the

purpose of the adoption is to provide for children who are in need of families, the adoption centers on meeting the needs of the child and would then be considered child focused. Institutionalized (formal) adoption services were firmly established in the United States by the 1930s, however these services were focused on serving White clients. African American clients were excluded from receiving such services during this era (Williams, 1995).

It is a widely accepted belief that, since its early beginnings in the 1930s, adoption practice has developed from being centered on meeting the needs of the adoptive parents, to being centered on meeting the needs of the adopted child (Sorosky, Baran & Pannier, 1978). However one could argue that, depending on the agency or person arranging it, an adoption can be either child focused, parent focused or both. For example, public child welfare agencies that focus on finding homes for children with special needs are clearly child focused. The agency's focus is on finding families for children who need permanent homes. In private agencies, the adoptive parents are more likely to be infertile couples who wish to parent but are unable to have children. In these agencies there is rarely a shortage of adoptive parents who are willing to pay very high fees to get the infant they desire. Thus, the goal in these agencies may be more centered on fulfilling the desires of the prospective adoptive parents to parent. African American families may wish to adopt for both child-centered and parent-centered reasons. In its beginnings, child-centered adoption was the norm among African American families.

The inception of adoption practices among African Americans has its roots in both African tribal culture and in slavery as well. For example, in the Ghanaian tradition, a child has a naming ceremony. During the ceremony the question is asked, “who claims this child?” If the child’s mother does not claim the child, then another member of the tribe will claim the child and the child is then adopted into and raised as a full and equal member of the family that claimed it (Agbottah, 1998). Adoption among American slaves was developed as a means to care for children orphaned by slave practices. Thus, adoption practice among African Americans was begun as a child centered practice and it has, for the most part, continued to be so.

As the institution of slavery grew in the United States, so did the necessity of adoption. It was at this time that the African American tradition of viewing some non-blood relationships as kin relationships developed. African American children were taught to view all adult slaves, whether or not they were blood relatives, as aunts and uncles (Sudakasa, 1981). This practice, according to Gutman (1972, p. 222), ‘converted plantation non-kin relationships into quasi-kin relationships binding together slave adults (fictive aunts and uncles) in networks of mutual obligation that extended beyond formal kin obligations dictated by blood and marriage. Slavery required, for the sake of the child’s survival, that African American adults take-in or adopt children who may or may not have blood ties to them. Thus, when children were separated from their parents as a result of being sold by their owner, members of the fictive kin networks ensured that the children would continue to be cared for.

While the tradition of developing fictive kin relationships among people of African descent began in slavery, it is a practice that continues to this day (Hill, 1993).

The most recent US Census Bureau data available indicates that in 1998 there were approximately 172,000 African American children currently living in homes with non-blood related parents or 'fictive kin' (US Bureau of the Census, 1998). The common practice of informal adoptions among African Americans is important to keep in mind when discussing American adoption practices.

There is little mention of African American adoption practices in the existing literature that chronicles the history of adoption practices in the United States in the last 50 years (Pratter & King, 1988). This omission is noteworthy in that it reflects two important issues in African American adoptions. First, traditional (White) agencies were not concerned with or making efforts toward addressing the child welfare needs of African American children (Billingsley & Giovannoni, 1972). Second, to this day, the vast majority of American researchers and scholars have yet to show an interest in what we can learn from African American families of any kind and what an increased understanding of African American families can tell us about the society in which we live (Billingsley, 1968, p. 207). Given the rapidly changing racial demographics in the United States, efforts to learn more about African American family life is all the more warranted.

Though perhaps ignored by the larger society, the needs of orphaned children did not go unnoticed by members of the African American community. Having developed a rich spiritual and religious belief system, the black church was, and

remains, a place for African American families and children to find aid in addressing family problems (Blassingame, 1979). The history of self-help in the African American community is rooted in services for children (Jackson-White et al, 1997). Through the African American church, many organizations developed to provide services to emancipated blacks. Organizations such as the black lodge of Masons, the Odd Fellows and the Colored Ladies Relief Organization took it upon themselves to provide for orphans (Logan et al. 1990, p. 115-132). The Federal Government established the Freedman's Bureau to provide services for freed slaves in 1865. Though the agency was under-funded and short lived, it did assist in searches to reunite former slaves with the children from whom they had been separated during slavery. From the time of emancipation until the 1960s the plight of African American children languishing in orphanages and foster care went largely disregarded by both private and public White child welfare agencies and organizations (Billingsley & Giovannoni, 1972, p. 10). In general, African American children who were in the child welfare system tended to remain in foster care until they reached the age of emancipation. Little effort was made to seek and find adoptive homes for them. In the 1960s African American social workers began to draw attention to the needs of orphaned African American children and made efforts to address the problem as a part of institutionalized or formal adoption agency practice.

### Social Work Practice and African American Adoptions

Due to the lack of recognition of the needs for adoption services among African Americans at the time, formal agency adoption services were developed to serve infertile White two-parent families (Billingsley & Giovannoni, 1972, p. 10). These agencies were primarily staffed and run by social work professionals and the predominance of White social workers in the field of adoption continues to this day. The needs of African American families and children were not addressed by the early adoption institution's practices and there is evidence that they were excluded from utilizing adoption services altogether (Billingsley & Giovannoni, 1972; Day, 1979). Adoption practices have come to be more child centered over time and the main focus of this approach, regardless of the type of adoption, is whether the needs of the adopted child can be met by the adoptive family under consideration. The following sections of the chapter provides a description of the evolution of adoption practices and how African American families were viewed in terms of their ability to meet the needs of African American children in need of adoption.

### Adoption Practices Before and During the 1950's

As Howe (1997) points out, since its early beginnings in 19<sup>th</sup> century America, adoption practice has developed from primarily being a legal process to becoming a child welfare service. She notes this evolution in thinking about adoption by pointing out that by 1929, every state had adoption legislation in place. As was discussed earlier, as adoption services were being developed and offered to White

Americans in the 19th century, it was not until the 1950s, the middle of the twentieth century, that American child welfare services served anything other than White children (Billingsley & Giovannoni, 1972). During the period of 1900 to 1950, White child welfare service providers continued to offer services based on not just racial, but also religious, group membership (Billingsley & Giovannoni, 1972).

In the 1950s, a growing number of African American children began to enter child welfare custody as a result of poverty. Billingsley & Giovannoni (1972) describe the link between economic status and rates of institutionalism. Blacks living in the south in an agricultural environment began migrating north for the promise of greater economic opportunity. While attempting to establish employment and housing for their families, African American parents new to the North would frequently request temporary foster care services for their children (Howe, 1997). Because access to economic opportunities was, and continues to be, more difficult for African American families (Wilson, 1995), children were often left in foster care for extended periods of time (Howe, 1997). The effects of poverty continues, even today, to have a strong influence on the number of African American children in child welfare custody.

Poverty is at the root of child neglect. As was the case for African American children in the 1950's, today more children suffer from neglect than any other form of maltreatment. According to U.S. Children's Bureau statistics, 52 percent of the victims of child maltreatment in 1995 suffered neglect. While 25 percent were victims of physical abuse, 13 percent were victims of sexual abuse; another 5 percent

suffered from emotional maltreatment. Three percent of the children in child welfare custody were there due to medical neglect, and 14 percent were in child welfare custody due to other forms of maltreatment. Of course, some children suffer from more than one type of maltreatment. According to researchers, neglect accounts for as much as 55% of all child maltreatment reports (Rose and Meezan, 1997). In California, the largest group of children in foster care are removed from their birth parents' custody due to the effects of child neglect (Berrick, 1997).

In 1955, the Child Welfare League of America released the results of its National Adoption Survey. The results of the survey indicated that African American children were less likely to be adopted than other children and that they were staying in care approximately twice as long as other children (CWLA, 1955). These statistics continue to reflect what is happening today. Barth, (1997) conducted a study of almost 4,000 children to assess the effects of age and race on the likelihood of adoption. Results of the study found that African American children were far less likely than White children to be returned to live with their families and were “more than twice as likely to remain in care as to be adopted” when compared to White children. The similarity in the findings of these 1955 and later (1997) studies supports the conclusion that the over-representation of African American children in child welfare is a long standing and pervasive problem which merits rigorous intervention.

In the 1950s pilot projects and programs were developed to adapt traditional adoption practice so as to better meet the needs of African Americans (Billingsley & Giovannoni, 1972). During this time the public system of child protective services

also developed eventually lead to increased concern on the part of social work practitioners with the adverse effects that living in long-term foster care had on children (Williams, 1995). This concern led to an increased emphasis on finding permanent homes for children living under child welfare custody. Thus, adoption was then identified as the most viable means of providing such children permanency.

When adoption services were extended to African American families many such families were routinely screened out of the process and were not successful in meeting their goal of becoming adoptive parents (Day, 1979). As social work practitioners and professionals became aware of the biased treatment of African Americans who applied to adopt and also because African American children were over-represented among the children in foster-care, agencies became more focused on creating culturally sensitive adoption practices. Examples of programs which focus on African American adoptions include One Church One Child, and agencies such as Homes for Black Children and the Institute for Black Parenting. These programs combined the resources and efforts of public adoption agencies and African American organizations. African American community and religious leaders across the country have made efforts to aid in the recruitment of African American adoptive families (Hill, 1993). The main focus of these combined efforts was to increase the number of adoptive placements for African American children languishing in the foster care system.

Efforts by organizations such as the North American Council on Adoptable Children, and early research on the outcomes of transracial adoptions (Andujo, 1988;

McRoy et al, 1983), special needs adoptions (Rosenthal et al. 1990) and adoption disruptions (Barth & Berry, 1988) have had some impact on current adoption practice. The following section of the chapter describes the evolution of adoption practices in the United States from the 1960s to the present. A general description of adoption practice among African Americans is also offered. Particular focus is paid to events that were significant in their influence on African American adoptive families and children from the period of 1960 and afterward as it was not until that time that formal adoption services were offered to African Americans in any significant way. One important and still controversial development in the adoption of African American children was the practice of transracial adoption. While the practice of transracial adoption began in the late 1950s, the practice increased sharply during the 1960s and 1970s (Kadushin & Martin;1988) and is still in practice today. The following section of the paper discusses the social factors present in the 1960s which created an environment in which the practice of transracial adoption could flourish.

#### African American Adoption Practices: The 1960s

The decade of the 1960s was a time of great social turmoil in the United States and a time in which technological advances were made which had a dramatic impact on American society. It was during this time that the African American community began to protest in earnest the discrimination they faced. The riots protesting discrimination and racism eventually lead to historic changes in laws and also changes in the value system of many White Americans. Many felt it was their duty to do something to address the plight of African American children. It was also

during this time that American women were given access to legalized abortion and highly effective contraception ('the pill'). This resulted in fewer and fewer White infants being available for adoption (Bachrach, Stolley & London, 1992; McRoy, 1989).

The rapidly decreasing availability of adoptable White infants and the simultaneous implementation of desegregation legislation that relaxed the barriers between African American and White communities resulted in an increasing number of White couples adopting African American children (Hollingsworth, 1997b). Transracial adoption rates expanded dramatically during the latter part of the 1960s, tripling between 1968 (700) and 1971 (2,574) (Opportunity, 1977 as cited in Simon & Altstein, 1992, p. 7). While one might conclude that more liberal attitudes toward race might explain the increase in transracial adoption rates, such a conclusion is not supported by the findings of Ladner's (1978) study of 136 transracially adoptive couples. Results of the study indicated that a limited number of couples were motivated to adopt by a specific desire to help African American children. Many of the parents stated that they would have preferred to adopt a White child, rather than an African American child, had one been available (p. 49).

The increase in the number of White families willing to adopt an African American child in the 1960s has led to the false conclusion that there was then, and there now continues to be, an abundance of White families willing to adopt African American children. This conclusion is erroneous; it has never been easy to find White adoptive parents for African American children. Madison and Schapiro (1973) found

that in California there were 36,226 adoptive placements in the period between 1964 and 1968. Transracial adoptions accounted for only .005 percent of the adoptions which occurred in that time period.

Prior to the time when White infants were not as readily available for adoption, most United States adoption agencies focused their attention and resources on finding White children for White families. Very few African Americans who desired to place their infants for adoption were given the option by adoption agencies (Day, 1979, p. 10). Having always understood the need for such services, African American social workers had long before begun to develop methods for recruiting African American adoptive families and finding homes for orphaned children (Perry, 1958).

As the 1960s progressed, African American social workers and activists placed more and more emphasis on meeting the permanency needs of African American children. During this time dramatic changes in adoption agency policies and practices helped facilitate an increase in the number of adoptions in general. Agencies shortened the adoption process, and made age, fee, employment, marriage, fertility and religious requirements more flexible (Madison & Schapiro, 1973). In addition, the definition of what made a child “adoptable” was broadened to focus on placing children who would otherwise not have a home in families (Madison & Schapiro, 1973).

As a result of the more flexible standards for adoptive families and the expanded definition of what made a child adoptable, the number of African American

adoption agencies and programs grew significantly in the late 1960s and early 1970s. One such program, Homes for Black Children in Detroit, opened its doors in 1969 and began to focus on finding African American adoptive parents for the many African American children awaiting adoption. During the first twelve months of its operation, Homes for Black Children placed 135 African American Children in adoptive families (Fischer, 1971).

While successful efforts were being made by African American agencies and social workers to recruit African American adoptive families for the thousands of children awaiting adoption, those who worked with traditional adoption agencies continued reporting that African Americans were not interested in adoption (Day, 1979, p. 17).

The untrue, but widely publicized conclusion that African American families were not interested in formal adoption reinforced traditional adoption agencies' practice of making little or no effort to work with or recruit African American adoptive families. As the 1970s approached, such agencies began to place an increasing number of African American children with White families in transracial adoptive placements. This practice was justified by the myth that African Americans were not interested in adoption (Day, 1979). Continued opposition to the practice of transracial adoption began to mount in the 1960s and reached a crescendo in the 1970s. The arguments made by opponents of transracial adoption lead to a decline in the number of such placements by 1972. This shift in the practice of transracial adoption will be examined in the following section of the paper.

### African American Adoption Practices: The 1970s

The lack of White infants available for adoption left traditional adoption agencies with a quite serious dilemma. These agencies had always focused on meeting the needs of White families (Day, 1979; Billingsley & Giovannoni, 1972). Though abortion was widely available, African American women were (and continue to be) reluctant to have abortions when compared to White women (Hill et al., 1993, p. 108.). As society had become more liberal regarding inter-racial relationships, there were also an increasing number of biracial children being placed for adoption. Consequently, while there was a dramatic decrease in the number of White infants available for adoption in the 1960s and 1970s, there was a simultaneous rise in the number of African American infants available for adoption (Bachrach, Stolley & London, 1992). This left traditional adoption agencies that were used to working exclusively with White adoptive families and children in a quandary. Prior to the 1960s, there had always been a strong emphasis on making sure that children physically matched their adoptive parents. This matching practice was rooted in the social stigma associated with both infertility and illegitimacy (Baran & Sorosky, 1978).

Because of the shame associated with adoption, it has traditionally been the practice to keep adoption a secret (Baran & Sorosky, 1978). Making sure that the adopted child physically matched the adoptive parents minimized any obvious differences in the appearance of adoptive parents and children and increased the likelihood of keeping the adoption a secret. When fewer White infants were available

for adoption, adoption practitioners abandoned the practice of physically matching adoptive parents and children. A continued emphasis on physical matching would have quickly forced traditional adoption agencies out of business. In order to stay in business, traditional adoption agencies with a backlog of White families waiting to adopt and very few White infants available changed their agency practices dramatically. These traditional adoption agencies began to place African American infants with their waiting White families (McRoy, 1989).

In the period from 1968 to 1971, the number of transracial adoptions tripled. In 1968 there were 700 transracial adoptions (Kadushin & Martin, 1988). In 1971, the number of transracial adoptions reached its highest level with 2,574 such placements occurring in that year (Silverman & Feigelman, 1990). In response to the ever-increasing practice of transracial adoption, the National Association of Black Social Workers (NABSW) issued a statement describing their beliefs about transracial adoption.

Members of NABSW had played a key role in the development of African American adoption agencies and programs, and decided in 1972 to issue a policy statement opposing the practice of African American children being adopted by White families (NABSW, 1972, p. 2-3). The NABSW position was as follows:

Only a Black family can transmit the emotional and sensitive to the subtleties of perceptions and reaction essential for a black child's survival in a racist society. Human beings are a product of their environment and develop their sense of value and self-concept within their own family structures.

After the NABSW issued its strong statement in opposition to the practice of transracial adoption, other child welfare and adoption organizations began to evaluate their positions on transracial adoption. For example, the Child Welfare League of America (CWLA) had previously supported the practice of transracial adoption. However, in 1973 the organization issued a new policy which stated that same race placements were preferable, as children with similar racial backgrounds to their adoptive parents could more easily blend with their adoptive families and communities (CWLA, 1973, p. 2). In 1975 the number of transracial adoptions decreased by a third; just over 800 transracial adoptions occurred in that year (Simon & Altstein, 1987). While progressively fewer transracial adoptions have taken place overtime, the efficacy of its practice as a means of diminishing the number of African American children on the child welfare roles, continues to be debated. African American adoption professionals' opposition to transracial adoption and efforts to find African American adoptive families has been equally persistent.

Evaluations of African American adoption rates have consistently demonstrated that African Americans are at least as likely to adopt as Whites (Herzog & Bernstein, 1965; Bonham, 1977) Others suggest that formal adoption rates among African Americans are higher than those of Whites (Hill, 1977; Gurak, Smith & Goldson, 1982; Gershenson, 1984).

While there is sufficient data to refute the myth that African Americans are not interested in formal adoption, accurate data on adoption rates are not currently available. In 1975 the Federal Government ceased to gather national adoption

statistics. Consequently, information on adoption rates has not been systematically gathered or reported since that time (Courtney & Collins, 1994; Stolley, 1993). In 1994 a computerized database was developed to which states could voluntarily report data on the status of children in child welfare custody (Courtney & Collins, 1994).

In the absence of full and accurate reporting data on the children in child welfare by all the states, estimates on the numbers and status of children in child welfare custody are merely estimates. Still, as it became obvious that African American and other ethnic minority children were over-represented on the child welfare roles, national legislation addressing issues of race and adoption began to be passed during the late 1970s.

In 1978, Congress passed the Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978 (Public Law 95-608). Section 105 (a) of the bill stated: In any adoptive placement of an Indian child under State Law, a preference shall be given, in the absence of good cause to the contrary, to a placement with (1) a member of the child's extended family; (2) other members of the Indian child's tribe; or (3) other Indian families.

This clear acknowledgment of the importance of maintaining Indian children within the Indian community and culture seemed to be consistent with the NABSW position statement of 1972. However, the Indian Child Welfare Act has not been met with the same fervor of resistance, as has the 1972 NABSW transracial adoption policy statement.

The Child Abuse Prevention, Treatment and Adoption Reform Act (P.L. 95-266) was also signed into law in 1978. This bill attempted to reform the lack of effort

child welfare agencies made to return foster children to their parents or make permanent placement plans for them (Rodriguez & Meyer, 1990). Shortly after it issued its statement on transracial adoption, supporters of the NABSW position intensified their efforts to oppose the transracial adoption of African American children. African American child welfare and adoption professionals' investment in maintaining and supporting the ideas and values expressed by the position statement intensified. African American social workers in child welfare agencies began to develop and report on the effectiveness of programs developed within their agencies to reach the African American community (Neilson, 1976). The debate over the impact of transracial adoption remained alive and well in the 1980s. It was during this time that transracial adoption research was published more extensively. Agencies then began to evaluate their philosophies on transracial adoption. Further legislation was enacted in the 1980s to increase the adoption of African American children.

#### African American Adoptions: The 1980s

In the 1980s efforts were made by both supporters and those in opposition to the NABSW policy statement to document, via the research, the pros and cons of transracial adoption. For example, in 1980 the Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Act (P.L. 96-272) was passed as concerns for the number of children awaiting adoption intensified. The Adoption Assistance Act was passed "For the purpose of enabling each State to provide, in appropriate cases, foster care and adoption assistance..." Adoption Assistance benefits were limited to children with special needs and priority for consideration as adoptive parents was given to foster

parents (Proch, 1981). This policy presented additional barriers to African American adoptive families. As with their applications to become adoptive parents, African Americans have also routinely been screened out when applying to be licensed as foster parents (Jackson-White et al. 1997). There are more White foster parents than any other ethnic group. There are many more African American children in foster care than any other group. Foster parents are given priority for adopting the African American children in their care (Downs, 1986). Some authors have stated that, White adoptive and foster parents have always enjoyed preferential treatment within the child welfare system (Downs, 1986; Brown and Bailey-Etta, 1997). These authors suggest that such preferential treatment has resulted in Whites having greater access to children within the system, namely, African American children. If it is true, as it has been suggested, then the combination of White families having an easier time negotiating large bureaucratic systems, and the tendency of agency workers to view White families more favorably than African American families (Day, 1979), Whites would be more successful in their efforts to become foster and adoptive parents (Ladner, 1971, p. 248).

As has been stated, national statistics on adoption were no longer gathered after 1975. The limitations of current data collection on adoption, such as the Voluntary-Cooperative Information Systems (VCIS) and the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS), have been well documented (Barth, 1994; Courtney & Collins, 1994; Finch et al., 1991; Stolley, 1993). It is difficult to assess whether the number of transracial adoptions continued at its 1975 plateau of

800 per year, or whether that number has increased or decreased. The changes in adoption laws that occurred during the 1990s were in large part influenced by the research published on transracial adoption in the 1980s.

Much of the focus in transracial adoption research, which began to emerge in the literature during the 1980s, seems to center on either supporting or refuting the NABSW position. The NABSW position was that African American children could not be prepared for the realities of racism by White parents (Andujo, 1980; Chestang, 1972; Chimizie, 1975; Gill & Jackson, 1983; McRoy et al., 1982; Shireman & Johnson, 1986; Simon & Altstein, 1981). Consequently, for more than 25 years the primary focus of research on African American adoptive families and children has focused on how they fare in comparison to families formed through transracial adoption (Gill & Jackson, 1983; McRoy et al., 1982; Shireman & Johnson, 1986). Outside the context of transracial adoption, there has been little research done which focuses on African American adoptive families (Prater & King, 1988, Hariston & Williams, 1989; Hollingsworth; 1995; Hoopes et al., 1997).

The results of transracial adoption research has largely been unsuccessful in resolving the debate on its appropriateness (Gill & Jackson, 1983; McRoy et al., 1982; Shireman & Johnson, 1986; Simon & Altstein, 1981). The pros and cons of transracial adoption continue to be hotly debated (Barth, 1997; DeBerry et al., 1996; McRoy et al., 1997; Simon & Altstein, 1994). While adoption researchers were evaluating the effects of transracial adoption, during the 1980s many African American adoption professionals were working to develop effective adoption

agencies and practice in order to find homes for the many African American children in child welfare custody.

In general, child welfare agencies during this era found that the majority of children being served by public child welfare agencies were African American (McKelvy, 1981). Articles in social work journals began to appear addressing methods of recruiting African American families to adopt and provide foster care to African American children in custody (Dunn, 1981; McKelvy, 1981; Washington, 1987). Agencies such as the Institute for Black Parenting and programs such as One Church One Child were developed in order to reach prospective African American adoptive families (McRoy & Ogelsby, 1997). While considerable effort has been invested in creating programs and policies to address the problem of African American children awaiting adoption, little research has been done to inform such policy and practice. There is a virtual absence of research knowledge of the experiences and motivations of African American adoptive families. Little is known about what African American adoptive families have to offer children in need of adoptive placement. Further, it is important to note that the controversy surrounding transracial adoption centers, in both the public and research arenas, on the adoption of healthy ethnic minority infants by White infertile couples. The dissension among those concerned with transracial adoption focuses on the adoption of infants placed for adoption shortly after birth. There continues to be a large number of African American children who are in the custody of public child welfare agencies who await adoptive placement (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 1998).

Madison & Shapiro (1973) concluded that White adoptive parents are not applying to adopt the African American children who are most in need of adoption. There is no shortage of African American parents who are wanting and willing to adopt the new born African American infants that are the focus of White couples' lobbying to adopt transracially (Howe, 1997). Though transracial adoption has been suggested as a possible solution to the problem of so many African American children awaiting adoption, the practice of transracial adoption has had little, if any impact on reducing the numbers of African American children in need of adoption.

However, the ever-increasing shortage of White infants available for adoption has resulted in African American families interested in adopting healthy newborns being forced to compete with White families to adopt African American infants. The issue of competition with White families is important. Day (1979) found that agencies have different responses to inquiries by African American prospective adoptive parents.

Both Day (1979) and Wachtel (1972) found a strong and positive correlation between the number of African American social workers employed at an agency and the number of adoptions of African American children. It has been well documented that when agencies offer services that are adapted to meet the needs of African American families, the number of families who successfully complete the adoption process is substantially increased (Kadushin & Martin, 1988). The number of African American formal adoptions has slowly increased over time (Gershenson, 1984). Yet, the growth of such placements has been hindered in the 1990s by increased efforts to

remove legislative safeguards which support the adoption of African American children by African American families (Hollingsworth, 1997a).

### African American Adoptions: The 1990s

The controversy over how best to meet the needs of African American children in need of adoption began as early as the 1940s (Billingsley & Giovannoni, 1972, p. 141). Research continues to show that African American children in the child welfare system are much less likely than their White counterparts to be adopted (Olson, 1982; Barth, 1997). In an effort to eliminate barriers that prevent African American children from being adopted, legislation has been passed in the 1990s which at the same time encourages the recruitment of African American adoptive families and restricts the consideration of race in placing children within adoptive families.

In October of 1994, then President William Clinton, signed into law the 1994 Multiethnic Placement Act (MEPA)(Public Law 103-382). This legislation was passed as an amendment to the Improving America's Schools Act of 1994, and was introduced as legislation to prevent barriers to transracial adoption. As it was passed, the 1994 Multiethnic Placement Act stated that no agency receiving Federal Assistance can "categorically deny to any person the opportunity to become an adoptive parent *solely* on the basis of race, color, or national origin." MEPA also states that an agency, "may consider the cultural, ethnic, or racial background of the child and the capacity of the prospective foster or adoptive parents to meet the needs

of a child of this background as one of a number of factors used to determine the best interest of the child” (P.L. 103-382).

Many agencies interpreted the MEPA to mean that they could no longer focus on the placement of African American children with African American adoptive families. In some states, such as Texas, adoption workers were forbidden, under threat of losing their jobs, to even discuss race as a part of their assessment of children in need of adoptive families. None the less, at the time MEPA was passed, the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 622(b)) was amended to:

provide for the diligent recruitment of potential foster and adoptive families that reflect the ethnic and racial diversity of children in the State for whom foster and adoptive homes are needed.

An important caveat to MEPA legislation was that the law prohibited agencies from delaying the placement of a child for racial considerations. In 1996, Congress attempted to go further in addressing the issue of race in child welfare adoptions. Though defeated by the Senate, the House of Representatives passed a bill that would have significantly limited African Americans’ access to adoption services. The bill (HR 3286) would have prevented federally funded adoption agencies from considering the race of the child or prospective adoptive parents under any circumstances unless there were two equally qualified families available at the same time. In 1997 Congress once again deliberated adoption and race and new legislation was enacted.

The 1997 Adoption and Safe Families Act (P.L. 105-80) demonstrated a new found, though perhaps temporary, focus on promoting the adoption of ethnic minority children. Two aims of the Adoption 2002 initiative introduced by President Clinton is, 1) to enforce strict penalties for non-compliance with the Multiethnic Placement Act (P.L. 103-382), as amended by the Interethnic Adoption Provisions (IEP) of the Small Business Job Protection Act of 1996. The second aim of the Adoption and Safe Families Act (P.L. 105-80) is to move children more rapidly from foster care to permanent homes.

While both the Multiethnic Placement Act (P.L. 103-382) and the 1997 Adoption and Safe Families Act (P.L. 105-80) have provided for increased efforts in recruiting African American adoptive families, it is important to note two domains that these laws did not address. The first domain that recent adoption legislation has not addressed is the need for additional adoption staff.

While additional federal monies have been allocated to increase funding for the recruitment of African American adoptive families, additional funds have not been provided to fund staff positions so that the social workers can be hired to conduct the home studies that are required for a family to adopt. As a result, while additional African American families may be recruited, without additional staffing, it will be difficult for more families to actually be approved to adopt. In which case, African American families may withdraw from the adoption process and African American children may fail to be adopted because of delays in a worker being assigned to complete the home study (Ogelsby, 1998).

Furthermore, while both the Multiethnic Placement Act (P.L. 103-382) and The 1997 Adoption and Safe Families Act (P.L. 105-80) do require agencies to increase efforts to recruit African American families, this legislation does not impact adoption agencies that are not federally funded. Thus, private adoption agencies, unless they are contracting with state child welfare agencies, have no incentive to abandon their practice of screening out prospective African American adoptive families in order to place African American infants with White infertile couples.

During the 1990s a flurry of legislation aimed at addressing adoption issues was passed. Now, in 2001, the second year of a new millennium, the need remains for research and legislation that focuses on African American adoptive families. A positive result of recent adoption legislation which requires public child welfare agencies to increase recruitment efforts to families that mirror the racial background of the children in their custody is that adoption professionals may pay greater attention to successful methods of getting prospective African American adoptive families through the recruitment process and to the point of being approved to adopt (Jackson-White et al., 1997; McRoy & Ogelsby, 1996). In addition, adoption legislation in the 1990s created a focus on the shortcomings of transracial adoption outcome research. Researchers are now beginning to call for greater rigor in evaluating the quality of transracial adoption research (Alexander & Curtis, 1996; Howe 1997).

While there has been a call for better quality transracial adoption research since the transracial adoption controversy began to be addressed by researchers, there

have been few studies that evaluate the motivations of African American adoptive parents and the outcomes of their adoptions. Most studies of adoption outcomes among African Americans have had such small sample sizes and other methodological flaws that solid conclusions cannot be based on these study's findings. One goal of the proposed study is to provide some solid empirical evidence of the experiences, adjustment and motivations of African American adoptive families. It is hoped that such information might increase legislators', adoption professionals' and triad members' understanding and knowledge of the needs of African American adoptive families and their children. The following sections of the paper explicate the purpose and significance of the study and conclude with the chapter summary.

#### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the factors that influence adaptation, family adjustment and relationship formation among African American adoptive families. A comparison of single-parent and two-parent families were made as well as comparisons of those families adopting infants and those adopting "older children." The factors that motivated the families to adopt and their experiences with the adoption process, parenting stress and the satisfaction of the adoptive parents with their adoptions were explored. Limited data on the child abuse and placement histories were also gathered on the adopted children. All information was based on reports of the adoptive parents. Because there is an increasing trend toward adoptive

families participating in open adoptions, African American adoptive families' experiences with and attitudes toward open adoption were examined as well

### Significance of the Study

The large number of children in foster care who are in need of adoption has been an on-going problem for child welfare professionals. The overrepresentation of African Americans among these children has been of concern to those involved in child welfare as well (Close, 1981; Hogan & Siu, 1988; Jackson-White et al., 1997; Pinderhughes, 1991). Much of the available data on African American adoptive families is over 25 years old and thus may no longer accurately portray their backgrounds and experience with adoption. More recent studies (Hoopes et al., 1997 & Hollingsworth, 1995) have provided a good initial step, but lacked sufficient sample size (100 or fewer respondents) to be generalizable.

Recent legislation (The 1997 Adoption and Safe Families Act; P.L. 105-80) has decreased the time period that a child can be in foster care before an adoption plan is implemented. Previously, children could be held in foster care for as long as 18 months before a permanent plan was made for them. The 1997 Adoption and Safe Families Act (P.L. 105-80) also places a greater emphasis on providing the child with permanency by limiting the time a child can be held in care to 12 months. The legislation also encourages that adoption be the first choice in developing plans for permanency. Thus more children are having adoption designated as their permanent plan. This will result in a substantial increase in the need for adoptive families for

these African American children. There has never been a large demand by White adoptive families to adopt African American children who are in foster care. Further, African American families have always adopted such children at a much greater rate than any other group (Gershenson, 1984). Consequently, there will be an even greater need for African American adoptive families. This study attempts to provide useful information to adoption professionals in their efforts to recruit African American adoptive families. By better understanding the realities of African American adoptive family life, perhaps adoption and child welfare professionals can be more effective in recruiting African American adoptive families and thereby reduce the number of African American children awaiting adoption.

### Chapter Summary

This first chapter has summarized the history of African American adoptions, outlined the purpose of the study and listed its research questions. The importance of research to the social work profession, child welfare professionals, adoption practitioners, adoption triad members and legislators and its contribution to adoption research in general was also discussed.

There is an increasing need for African American adoptive families. Although a number of studies have been conducted examining transracial adoptions, there is a relative absence of studies examining the outcomes of African American in-racial adoptions. Chapter Two, Review of the Literature, examines the few published studies on African American adoptive families and the transracial adoption literature

which includes African American in-racial adoptive families. The literature on single parent adoption, special needs adoption and open adoption is also reviewed. Chapter Three, Theoretical/Conceptual Framework outlines the theoretical and conceptual framework which provided the foundation for the study. Chapter Four, Study Methodology, describes the study's research design, hypothesis, sample, and operational definitions of variables and methods of data collection. Chapter Five, Description of the Sample, describes the characteristics of the 83 African American families that comprise the study's sample. Chapter Six, Analysis & Results, describes the data analysis processes and the results of the correlation and mean comparison analyses; it also examines parent/child attachment from a data analysis perspective. Chapter Seven, Implications & Conclusions, provides a discussion of the study outcomes as they relate to the implications for adoption practice, policy and future research.

## CHAPTER TWO

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Due to the varied research topics found in the adoption literature and the relatively small amount of literature focusing on African Americans, the literature review has been organized into the broad topical areas of adoption research. These topical areas include the general research literature on post-adoption outcomes, single-parent adoptions and open adoption. The literature on characteristics of African American adoptive families is reviewed and is followed by a review of the transracial adoption literature which compares outcomes for transracially adopted African American children to in-racially adopted African American children. The research focusing solely on African American adoptive families, including the research on African Americans and special needs adoption and adoption disruption concludes the review of the literature. The literature review was organized in this way so as to examine what is known about adoptive family life in general and African American adoptive family life specifically. One goal of the present research is to assess how well adoption paradigms established in the general adoption research fit when applied to African American adoptive families. Because there has not been much research which focuses on African American adoptive families, the primary source of information on patterns of post-adoption adjustment among African American adoptive families has been gathered through the research on transracial adoption which was conducted

during the 1980s (Gill & Jackson, 1983; McRoy & Zurcher, 1983; Shireman & Johnson, 1986).

### Research on African American Adoptions: An Overview

Informal adoption has been widespread among African Americans since slavery (Hill, 1972), though formal adoption services were not extended to the African American community until the early 1950s (Billingsley & Giovannoni, 1972, p. 141). The number of informal adoptions continues to exceed the number of formal adoptions among African Americans. African Americans have been involved with formal adoption services for nearly fifty years. Yet, when compared to the hundreds of years that informal adoption has been practiced among African Americans (Billingsley, 1992) formal adoption among African Americans may be considered a relatively new phenomena. In spite of the fact that African Americans have been engaged in formal adoption practices for nearly fifty years, published research on African American adoption is very limited (Prater & King, 1988). In the three decades between the late 1950s through the late 1970's, a small amount of research (approximately two studies per decade) on African American adoption appear in the literature (Day, 1979; Deasey & Quinn, 1967; Fanshel, 1957; Hawkins, 1960; Hariston & Williams, 1989; Perry, 1958; Sharrar, 1971).

The majority of these studies focus on comparing demographic data between White and African Americans and explaining African American attitudes toward

adoption. Few studies which address the post adoption outcomes among African American adoptive families have been published since the time when African Americans began to participate in formal adoptions (Hariston & Williams, 1989; Hollingsworth, 1995; McRoy & Zurcher, 1983; Pratter & King, 1988; Shireman & Johnson, 1986). The majority of early studies on African American adoptive families focused on reporting family demographic data and experiences with the agency and process of adoption (Day, 1979; Deasey & Quinn, 1967; Fanshel, 1957; Hariston & Williams, 1989; Hawkins, 1960; Perry, 1958; Sharrar, 1971). Very few of the studies have looked at the African American adoptive family's post-adoption adjustment (Gill & Jackson, 1983; McRoy & Zurcher, 1983; Pratter & King, 1988; Shireman & Johnson, 1986).

While there has been a virtual absence of published studies that focus solely on African American adoptive families' post-adoption experiences (Pratter & King, 1988), there are a growing number of published studies on the post-adoption adjustment of primarily adoptive families. This literature is reviewed in the following section of the chapter.

#### Research on Post-Adoption Outcomes in General

Studies on outcomes among White adopters date back as early as the 1920s and focus on a variety of post adoption outcomes among White adoptive families (Berry, 1998; Brodzinsky et al., 1984; Davis & Douke, 1955; Jaffee & Fanshel, 1970;

Kornitzer, 1968; Lindholm & Touliatos, 1980; McRoy et al., 1988; Ripple, 1968; Theis, 1924).

Theis (1924) conducted interviews with 235 adoptive parents and children, 12 to 18 years after the adoption to determine whether the children grew to be capable adults. The results of the study indicated that the overwhelming majority of the adult adoptees (88.1%) grew to be capable adults. Davis & Douke (1955) examined the agency records of 396 adoptive families one year after the child's placement to determine the number of disruptions that occurred in that time period. The authors found that at the time of the study, the large majority of children (93.7%) had not been removed from the adoptive parents and continued to remain in their adoptive placements. Kornitzer (1968) examined 233 adopted children and adults at various times after their adoptions to assess whether the adoptions were successful or problematic. Based on interviews with the adoptive mothers (and some fathers), the author concluded that 41.2% of the adoptions were successful, 36.5% were average, 19.3% had problems and 3.0% were "bad." Ripple (1968) also evaluated whether or not the adoptions of the 160 children she studied resulted in successful or problematic outcomes. Participants in this study were interviewed nine to ten years after the adoptive placement to assess whether adoptive families differed in the degree of problems they experienced as a family. Results of the study indicated that 47% of the families had a "normal range" of problems.

Jaffee & Fanshel (1970) conducted a study of 100 adopted adults twenty to thirty years after their adoptions. The authors interviewed adoptive parents together and had the mother and father independently complete a questionnaire to determine the factors which were associated with the number of problems the family experienced. Interestingly, there seemed to be an even distribution of families with a “low” number of problems (33%), a “middle range” number of problems (34%) and a “high” number of problems (33%). The authors found slightly better outcomes among the lower socioeconomic status adoptive parents.

Some authors have found children in foster care to be at high risk for a variety of poor outcomes including a greater prevalence of psychological disorders (Madsen, 1992). For example, McDonald et al., (2001) surveyed 159 parents who had adopted children in state custody 18 to 24 months after their adoptions to examine factors associated with family adjustment to adoption. The sample was 63.9 % Caucasian, 17.7% African America, 1.9% Hispanic, 15.8% Biracial and .6% Native American. The children’s average age at placement was 7.7 years with a range of 1.7 to 12.8 years. In identifying factors which increase the likelihood of a family needing more comprehensive pre and post adoption placement services, McDonald et al., (2001) found two child characteristics to be significantly correlated to placement adjustment. The first characteristic was the child having more special needs, the other was older age at the time of adoption. These two factors accounted for 39.6% of the variance in post adoption adjustment scores. In terms of parental factors, results indicated that

only one factor was significantly correlated to post-adoption adjustment, marital status. That is, married adoptive parents reported more positive adjustment than did single adoptive parents. In addition, the authors found that when controlling for all other parent characteristics, race was found to be a significant predictor of adjustment. Results indicated that African American families reported more positive placement adjustment than did Caucasians.

Parent characteristics accounted for 15.5% of the variance in placement adjustment. With regard to characteristics of the family which explained placement adjustment, McDonald et al., (2001) found that that the ages of the oldest and youngest children in the home and the size of the community a family lives in are predictive of placement adjustment. Families with younger children reported more positive adjustment. More than the ages of the children however, size of the community had the strongest correlation with adjustment. Families who lived in more rural communities reported more negative adjustment. Together , the youngest child's age, the oldest child's age and the size of the community accounted for 14.5% of the variance in adjustment among the surveyed families. The authors (McDonald et al., 2001) point out that the total number of children living in the home and whether other children adopted children lived in the home were not predictive of adjustment.

Garland et al. (1996) examined the relationship between the nature of a child's maltreatment and the use of mental health services. The study gathered data on

service utilization, demographics, and type of maltreatment and behavioral information for 662 children in foster care, ages two to seventeen. The results of her study indicated that fifty-six percent of the children in the study had received mental health services in the past. Children who had histories of physical or sexual abuse were more likely to receive services than those who were taken into custody due to neglect or abandonment by their parents were. Regardless of the nature of the abuse, clinically significant behavior problems were associated with a greater likelihood of receiving services with the exception of children who had histories of sexual abuse. In summation, regardless of the degree of their behavior problems, children who had histories of sexual abuse were more likely to have received mental health services.

Similar to studies of children's mental health in foster care, numerous studies have found increased emotional problems in both clinical and non-clinical samples of adopted children (Brodzinsky et al., 1984; Garland et al. 1996; Lindholm & Touliatos, 1980; McDonald et al., 2001; McRoy et al., 1988; Simmel et al., 2000). For example, Lindholm & Touliatos (1980) conducted a study in which they compared the psychological adjustment of adopted and non-adopted children. The authors used teacher ratings on the Behavior Problem Checklist with a non-clinical sample of 3,032 children. Though the study only included 41 children that were adopted (2,991 were not adopted), Lindholm & Touliatos' (1980) findings are consistent with those of studies with larger samples of adopted children. Results indicated that adopted children surpassed non-adopted children in the frequency of

mental health disorders. This was true particularly with regard to conduct, personality and delinquency problems. In general, both adopted and non-adopted children were found to have differences between boys and girls on incidence of maladjustment. The boys tended to have more problems with conduct, personality and delinquency than did girls. However, among the adopted children, these differences were greater. Meta-Analytic studies of mental health outcomes among adopted children have also produced results which indicate adopted children are more vulnerable to psychological problems.

McRoy et al. (1988) summarized data from fifteen adoption outcome studies. Based on their analysis of these studies' findings, the authors conclude that adopted children may be 2 to 5 times more likely than non-adopted children to require psychological treatment. Other studies of post-adoption outcomes produced results, which support McRoy et al.'s findings.

Simmel et al., (2000) utilized data from the California Long-Range Adoption Study, a population survey, to examine the disproportionate rates of behavior disorders among adoptees. The study specifically examined the degree of symptomology related to attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and oppositional defiant disorder (ODD) among a statewide sample of California adoptees youth. Results based on parental reports indicated that 21% of the sample of 1,396 adopted children met DSM IVR cutoffs for ADHD (with and without ODD) and 20%

of the sample met diagnostic criteria for ODD (with or without ADHD). Thus 29% of the sample manifested significant symptom levels of externalizing behavior problems. The clearest associated risk factors which separated those youth with internalizing versus externalizing behaviors were histories of pre-adoption abuse or neglect, later age at adoption, prenatal drug exposure and placement in multiple foster homes prior to adoption. In addition, though not surprising, the study also found that inadequate pre-natal care contributed to both ADHD and ODD.

In another study of adopted children's mental health, Brodzinsky et al., (1984) used parent ratings from the Child Behavior Checklist and the teacher ratings from the Hahnemann Elementary School Behavior Rating Scale to evaluate the psychological and academic adjustment of 260 adopted and non-adopted children ages six to eleven. Results indicated that adopted children received higher ratings for psychological and school-related behavior problems, lower ratings for social competence and school achievement, than did non-adopted children in the study. While adopted children did appear to be more vulnerable to emotional, behavioral and educational problems, the authors conclude that the findings are not sufficient to challenge the view that adoption is a successful form of substitute care when biological parents are unable or unwilling to provide for their children. While it may be true that adoption will always fulfill important societal needs, the more important implication of Brodzinsky et al.'s (1984) study is that adoption has inherent challenges that adoptive parents may need help to overcome.

The number and intensity of adoptive families' problems has frequently been used as a measure of the success of an adoption. However, not all authors agree that adoptive family problems are necessarily indicative of poor adjustment or unsuccessful adoptions. This point is supported by the literature on single parent adoptive families.

### Research on Single Adoptive Parents

Single adoptive parents have not been considered by some to be the best choice for a child in need of a family. Russell & Rosenberg (1968) in an early discussion of single parent adoptions question whether the needs of a child can be met in a single-parent home, but acknowledge that single parent adoption might offer a solution to the growing need for adoptive families.

Feigelman & Silverman (1977) were the first to examine single-parent adopters' experiences with the adoption process. In a survey of 58 single adoptive parents the authors found that single parent adopters were more highly educated, more frequently from ethnic minority groups and worked primarily in the fields of social work and education. Though differences that were observed with regard to their experiences dealing with adoption agencies and that they are more likely to have their applications rejected, in all other areas single-parent adoptive families had similar experiences to those of two-parent adoptive families. In general, Feigelman & Silverman (1977) found that " the large majority of single parent adoptive placements

were considered successful (1977, p. 418). Another interesting finding of the study was that single-adoptive parents tended to adopt children older than those adopted by two parent families. The two-parent families who had adopted older children reported more emotional problems than those adopting younger children did. However, these emotional problems were not noted among older children placed in single-parent adoptive families.

Although adoption professionals began to recognize the potential of single-parent adoptions (Rosenthal & Groze, 1991), there was little research published on the topic in the 1980s (Shireman & Johnson, 1985). Shireman & Johnson (1985) conducted a longitudinal study of 22 single adoptive parents. The results of the study indicated that phenomena which were previously thought of as risks inherent to single parent adoption, such as the stress of managing the household, financial concerns and management of adoption issues were not in fact problems for single adoptive parents. The results of the study indicated that single adoptive parents and children share very intense relationships. Shireman & Johnson conclude that while these intense relationships may make it more difficult to manage the adoption, single-parent homes may be of marked value to some children awaiting adoption.

The 1990's have produced several studies of single-parent adoptions including those of Groze, (1991), Groze & Rosenthal, (1991), Hansen (1995); Shireman & Johnson (1984) and Shireman, (1996). Groze (1991) conducted a review of the

literature on single adoptive parents. and found that most single adoptive parents are more likely to adopt older children, less likely to adopt sibling sets or be foster parents who adopt and tend to be female and have lower incomes than couples that adopt. According to his review, Groze (1991) found that marital status had very little effect on adoption outcomes. He concludes that single-parent adoptive families are as viable as two-parent adoptive families and that single parents may be able to meet the nurturing and involvement requirements of children who have had extremely damaging pre-adoptive experiences.

In their own study of single parent adoptions, Groze & Rosenthal (1991) found that children in single parent homes had fewer emotional and behavioral problems than those in two-parent homes, though both groups had difficulties in this area. Data were gathered from 799 families who had adopted children with special needs using a fifteen-page survey that addressed emotional, behavioral, and educational functioning. Based on their analysis, Groze & Rosenthal (1991) conclude that children who have histories of group home or psychiatric pre-adoption placements fare particularly well in single-parent homes.

Shireman & Johnson (1984) conducted a longitudinal study of African American children who were adopted into single parent, transracial and traditional (two-parent/in-racial) adoptive families before the age of three years. Participants were drawn from families who had adopted children through the Chicago Child Care

Society and Children's Home and Aid Society of Illinois. The sample in the 8<sup>th</sup> year of the study included 31 single parent families, 42 transracial families and 45 adoptive couples. Findings indicated that in all three groups, 78% of the children were considered to be making a good to excellent adjustment to the adoption. As has been the case with other adoption studies, a much smaller percentage (22%) of the children were considered to be having difficulties with adjustment. Of those children having difficulties in adjustment, boys had more problematic adjustments.

The Clark Doll Test was given to the children in both the fourth and the eighth year to assess their racial identity development. At age 8, both the in-racially and transracially adopted children seemed to have a positive concept of being African American. The authors did find however, that those children in transracially adoptive families did not seem to have intensifying or greater levels of African American identity, as did the in-racially adopted children. Scores of children in single-parent families were similar to the scores of those in two-parent/in-racial families. Another important finding of the study was with regard to disclosure of the adoption. At age 4 more than half of the children in single and two-parent families did not understand that they were adopted. At age 8, 25% still did not know they were adopted. Knowledge of the adoption was being withheld from children in 3 two-parent and 2 single-parent families. Adoption was freely discussed in only 42 percent of the African American families.

In the most recent follow-up of Shireman's (1984) study of African American single-parent adoptive families, Sherman et al. (1995) found that all families were adjusting well. In the original study, 28 of the 31 single-parent adoptive families were African American. At the time of most recent follow up, only 15 of the original 31 single adoptive parents could be found. All of the families who responded to the questionnaire were African American. The adopted children were in adolescence at the time of the study. While over 30 percent of the original single parent adoptive families had adopted children with developmental difficulties, at the time of the follow-up study, two-thirds of the adopted children were absent of problems in school performance, self-esteem, or relationships with family and friends.

Though in Shireman's earlier studies (1984; 1988) concern was expressed with regard to possible relationship problems when the children reached adolescence, based on Shireman et al.'s 1995 findings, the authors conclude that single-parent homes have unique strengths and may be a preferred placement for some children.

Shireman (1996) reviewed the research on single-parent adoptions and reports the findings of the 14th-year of her longitudinal study of children adopted by single parents. As did Groze (1991), Shireman (1996) found that most single adoptive parents are women who adopt girls. Single adoptive parents tend to be in their mid to late 30s and have stable jobs in the helping professions, but with lower incomes than couples who adopt. No significant differences on school attendance or grades were

found. However, results of the longitudinal study indicated that difficulties in the gender identity development were a problem for children adopted by single parents. While there is some indication that adoptive families have difficulties, whether they are single or two-parent families, this does not necessarily point negatively toward the practice of adoption. The examination of the many factors which may influence outcomes among single-parent adoptive families, demonstrates the complexity of adoptive family relationships and outcomes.

#### Research on Open Adoption

Pavao (1998) views all adoptive families as complex family systems. Given the complexity of adoptive family systems, ‘crises’ are normal and to be expected. Pavao refers to these problems as “normative crises” (1998, p. xiii- xiv). As a result of her extensive clinical work with adoptive families, Pavao (1998) has come to the conclusion that these normal developmental crises in adoptive families often occur at times of change or transition. Pavao notes that there are several classic problems that adoptive families face in each stage of the child’s development (1998, p. 89). For example, adopted children and adults often have problems related to attachment, identity development, intimacy, loss and anger.

Pavao (1998) stresses that it is important for adoption professionals and triad members to understand that these crises are normal given the complexity of the adoptive family system. In her view many of these crises would be avoided by

eliminating the secrecy in adoption through having more openness in adoption.

Pavao's (1998) clinical interventions center on involving all members of the adopted child's family system. Interventions may include birth parents, adoptive family members, extended family members, former foster parents, social workers and anyone else who is accessible and has been significant to the child.

Adoption related research has experienced tremendous growth in the last 10 years and studies focusing on the topic of openness in adoption have contributed significantly to the expansion of adoption related research. Literature which focus on open adoptions include the work of Belbas, (1987), Baran & Pannor (1990), Kallen et al. (1990); Berry et al. (1991), Etter (1992), Demick (1993), Gross (1993), Rompf (1993), Grotevant et al. (1994), Waddoups (1994), Berry et al. (1998) and Grotevant & McRoy, (1998).

One of the earliest studies of open adoption was the small pilot study conducted by Belbas (1987). The sample was comprised of 12 adoptive parents (aged 32-45 yrs.) who were involved in open adoptions. Subjects had varying levels of contact between the adoptive family and birth parents. Seven of the subjects had minimum contact with the birth family, 2 families had moderate contact and 3 families had maximum contact with the birth parent(s). All 12 adoptive families completed a demographic questionnaire and participated in a semi-structured interview which addressed empathy and the children's feelings about being adopted. Results of the study found that no matter what kinds of contact were involved, or how

unprepared adoptive parents were for such contact, they expressed empathy toward the practice of open adoption. The adoptive families also seemed to also express an understanding of how it might feel to be adopted (none of the adoptive parents were themselves adopted). Based on these findings, the author concludes that open adoption is an emotionally complicating factor. Other studies acknowledge that open adoption can be both emotionally challenging and a positive and helpful experience for all members of the adoption triad.

Berry (1991) surveyed the adoptive parents of 1,396 children regarding their feelings about and practice of openness in adoption. Participants in the study had varying degrees of openness, which ranged from completely closed to face-to face meetings between the birth and adoptive families. Most adoptions were open to some degree. For example, two-thirds of adoptive parents had met either one or both of the birth parents. 37% of the adoptive parents expected some direct on-going contact between the child and birth relatives. With regard to having a sense of control of the contact, fifty-eight percent of the adoptive parents felt they had complete control over these contacts. Twelve percent of the adoptive parents felt they only had some control over the contact with birth relatives and 3 percent felt they had very little control. Results indicated that eighty percent of the families with independent adoptions had open adoptions as compared to 40 percent of the families who had adopted through agencies. Results found that families who had adopted through agencies were significantly more likely to be uncomfortable with open adoption (37%) than were families with independent adopters (29%).

McRoy et al. (1994) conducted a longitudinal study of openness in adoption to examine the issue from all triad member's perspective. The study was conducted using mailed questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. Participants included 190 adoptive parents, 169 birthparents and 171 adopted children. Sixty-two of the families had confidential adoptions; 69 had mediated adoptions and 59 families had fully disclosed adoptions. Results of the study indicated that most adoptive and birth parents were satisfied with the level of openness that they had. Those who were dissatisfied were adoptive parents who desired more contact with the birthparent.

With regard to the adopted children, McRoy et al. (1994) found that regardless of the type of adoption they were involved in, the children expressed a desire to know more about their birthparents. Children with less knowledge regarding birthparents wondered about what they looked like and their health. Children who had more information wondered when they would see their birthparent again and about birth siblings.

In a later book which fully reports the findings of their longitudinal study on open adoption, Grotevant & McRoy (1998) conclude, as have others, (Etter, 1993; Berry, 1998) that one type of openness is not necessarily better than another. Rather, each set of parents, birth and adoptive, must find the level of openness that works best for them as members of their child's adoptive triad.

Berry et al. (1998) reported findings from a four-year study of more than 700 adoptions by non-foster parents with varying levels of openness in their adoptions. Data was gathered from questionnaires mailed to the adoptive parents one year after

the adoption and in the fourth year after the adoption. All of the participants in the study were from California and had finalized their adoptions in 1988 and 1989. The results of the study indicated that levels of openness had either decreased or ceased all together among a large proportion of the sample. This finding was true primarily among families who had chose to have open adoptions at the recommendation or insistence of the adoption agency or agent. All families in the fourth year of their adoptions were found to have very positive levels of satisfaction with the adoption and adjustment to the adoption. Results indicated that openness in the adoption had no significant relationship with adjustment or satisfaction outcomes.

One study on open adoption, which did include African Americans, was that of Kallen et al. (1990). This study focused on the attitudes which adolescent mothers and their mothers have toward openness in adoption. The study surveyed 105 pairs of Caucasian and African American adolescents and their mothers who had either chosen to place or parent their infants. Sixty-five birthfathers also participated in the study. Results of the study indicated clear support for open adoption among all groups, though Caucasian adolescents and their mothers showed more support for openness than African American adolescents and their mothers.

Research on open adoption has had its share of contradictory findings. Berry et al.'s (1998) longitudinal study on open adoption found that open adoption had little relationship to satisfaction and adjustment outcomes. In contrast to this, Grotevant & McRoy, (1998) found that those parents with fully-disclosed adoption were less fearful that birthparents would reclaim the child than those parents with mediated or

closed adoptions. Still, both sets of researchers (Berry et al., 1998; Grotevant & McRoy, 1998) conclude that there is no preferred level of openness for all adoptive families. Adoptive and birth parents together must decide the correct level of openness for themselves.

With regard to the openness research, it is important to view findings in light of the fact that independent adoptions are arranged through private attorneys and are not subject to the same legal restrictions as are agency adoptions. In independent adoptions the birth parents (usually the mother) has greater control in articulating under which conditions she will relinquish her infant to the adoptive family. Independent adoptions and agencies that have the freedom to facilitate open adoption work hard to educate adoptive parents about open adoptions. This may in some way explain the differences in attitudes toward open adoption among families, which adopted independently and those who adopted through agencies (Pavao, 1998).

While the current research does not find that confidential adoptions produce any worse outcomes than open adoptions, there is some evidence that regardless of the circumstances of the adoption, adopted children tend to have problems with psychological adjustment. The current position among adoption professionals' advocates for open adoption as the best option for adopted children. This very strong and widely accepted position has been clearly articulated by Baran & Pannor (1984; 1990). In summary Baran & Pannor (1984; 1990) opine that "the secrecy, anonymity, and mystique surrounding the traditional adoptions of the past have left behind numerous psychological problems for adoptees, birth parents, and adoptive parents".

Baran & Pannor (1984; 1990) suggest that the practice of confidential adoption should be replaced by open adoption that emphasizes openness and honesty, and “thereby permits a healthier and psychologically sounder adoption practice.”

Pavao (1998) states that the type and level of openness in the adoption are best when decided and agreed upon by the birth and adoptive parents. In addition, she advocates for the elimination of secrecy. As Pavao explains (1998, p. 50-53) anger, the need for control, difficulty making transitions, frequent day dreaming, etc. are normal for all children. However, these problems are magnified for adopted children. Parents and others who interact with adopted children “must understand the issues and be both compassionate and firm when separation and loss are the underlying themes” of the problem behavior.

Given the complexity of the adoptive family system, the various types of adoption and families who adopt, mitigating factors that may influence adoption outcomes are numerous. One such mitigating factor, which has routinely been ignored, is the role of race in adoptive family outcomes. Findings of adoption outcome research are providing information on how to most effectively work with adoptive parents, birth parents and adopted children, however there is little information to inform our work with African American and other ethnic minority adoptive families. The following sections of the proposal review the available research literature on African American adoptive family characteristics and post-adoption outcomes among African American adoptive families.

### Research on African American Adoptive Parents' Characteristics

Early studies of African American adoptive parents focused on gathering demographic descriptions of prospective adoptive families and the criteria used to either approve or deny their applications for adoption. Fanshel (1957) examined social and personal data of 224 African American adoptive applicant couples and 183 Caucasian adoptive applicant couples who applied to the Pittsburgh Family and Children's Services agency to adoption from January 1951 to September 1955. The author found that a mere 18.8 percent of African American applicants completed the adoption process. Of the African American couples who remained, 59.8 percent withdrew their applications (verses 41.5% of Whites). Applications were rejected for 21.4 percent of the African American families that applied. Along with demographic data on the age, income and education of the African Americans in the study, Fanshel (1957) also reported on factors associated with African Americans completing the adoption process. Fanshel's results indicated that when the African American husband or the couple together made the initial contact with the agency, as opposed to when the initial contact was made by the wife, a significantly higher rate of completion was observed.

Bradley (1961) reported the findings of a study of factors that social workers used to assess and select adoptive parents. The study was conducted in 1963 and the subjects were 87 social workers and 398 applicant couples from eight agencies in a large eastern metropolitan area. Bradley (1961) analyzed the role caseworker's perceptions of applicants played in final outcomes (approvals, rejections &

withdrawals). The outcomes for African American couples (n = 41) were similar to those in Fanshel's (1957) study. Bradley (1961) found that 49% of the African American couples were approved to adopt. Of those African American couples judged by caseworkers to be good prospects for adoption, 24% dropped out. Overall 22% of the African Americans in the sample were rejected. Though conducted almost a decade later, the study's findings confirmed what Fanshel (1957) found. Good, prospective African American adoptive families continued to be lost.

Day (1979) reported findings of a 1970 study of 24 adoption agencies in Washington DC and Baltimore. Data on agency policy and workers interpretations of agency policies were collected through interviews with 32 agency supervisors and self-administered surveys of 272 agency social workers. The results of the study indicated that the factor most strongly associated with African Americans completing an adoption was the percentage of African American social workers employed by the agency. Day (1979) found that while the agencies' had policies, which stated that income, marital status, age and employment status were not considerations for approval. Both African American and Caucasian social workers were more likely to approve African American applicants who were "well-off, married, in their thirties and where the wife did not plan to work." Still, the overall acceptance rates of African American clients by African American social workers was higher (42%) when compared to that of White social workers (36%).

Shireman (1971) also examined the reasons applicants withdrew from the adoption process. The author conducted telephone interviews with 80 applicants to the Chicago Child Care Society in 1967 and 1968 to assess their reasons for withdrawing from the adoption process. Sixty-four of the study's participants were African Americans. The results of the study were as follows: Ten (15.6%) of the African American applicants withdrew from the process because they expected a child from another source (i.e. pregnancy or another adoption agency). Fifteen (23.4%) of the African American applicants withdrew due to environmental crisis

such as financial problems or illness. Twenty-two (34.4%) of the African American applicants withdrew indicating that they were not ready to adopt. Seventeen (26.7%) of the African American applicants withdrew due to difficulties with the agency such as problems with the requirements for adoption or lack of encouragement. These findings indicate, as did the studies by Fanshel (1957), Bradley (1961) and Day (1979), that qualified African American adoptive families continued to be lost due to problematic agency practices.

Withdrawal from the adoption process is to be expected as prospective families may experience changes in their circumstances or later realize that they are not ready to pursue the adoption process. Festinger (1972) compared the reasons for withdrawal from the adoption process among African Americans and White-American adoptive applicants. Results indicated that African American families were more likely to withdraw their applications to adopt due to agency rules and procedures or miscommunication with the agency. The African American families who indicated miscommunication with the agency as their reason for withdrawal from the adoption process stated that they were expecting more reassurance from the agency than they received. Whether due to withdrawal from the adoption process or needless rejection by an adoption agency, there are many African American families who are interested in adopting that are being lost unnecessarily. This point is most strongly demonstrated by the results of a study by the National Urban League (1982). The study found that out of 800 African American families that applied to adopt, only

two families were approved. The fact that such a meager percentage of African American adoptive families were actually approved to adopt, supports the contention that adoption practices and policies have continued to contribute to the shortage in the supply of African American adoptive families.

The Black Pulse Survey (1980), another study conducted by the National Urban League, asked 3,000 African American heads of household to express their interest in adoption. The results indicated that over 3 million African American heads of household would in fact be interested in adopting a child. This finding challenges the idea that African Americans are not interested in adoption. The impression that African Americans are not interested in adoption has been widely accepted by adoption practitioners, and yet the research has consistently demonstrated that this is not the case. For example, Herzog & Bernstein (1965) found that when socioeconomic status was controlled for, the proportion of African American families that adopted was equal to that of Whites. The authors found that there were no differences in African Americans' attitudes toward adoption when compared to their White counterparts. The authors found that among those in a position to adopt, African Americans were equally informed about adoption in terms of its requirements. The authors concluded that "it is probably unrealistic to expect a major increase in Negro adoption rates until major changes in socioeconomic conditions are underway as well" (1965, p. 18).

Other studies have also found a relationship between socioeconomic factors and African American adoptions. For example Deasy & Quinn (1962) interviewed African American couples living in Baltimore and Washington DC to assess their attitudes toward adoption. The results of their study indicated that respondents were informed about adoption agencies and expressed no fear of working with an agency to pursue adoption. Though participants expressed an awareness of and openness to adoption, the authors found that there seemed to be a lack of motivation to adopt among middle class African Americans. This finding was attributed to the values of successful urban African Americans. The authors suggested that middle-class African Americans were very concerned about maintaining their socioeconomic status. They concluded that until there was complete family economic security, middle class African American would not pursue adoption.

Ripple (1968) found that higher education and economic status were modestly associated with better adoption outcomes among African American adoptive families. The opposite trend was found among White adoptive families (Ripple, 1968). Rosenthal et al. (1988) found that minority families had moderately reduced risk for disruption. In their study comparing White transracial, minority in-racial and White in-racial adoptive families, Rosenthal and Groze (1993), found that adoptive outcomes were most positive in the in-racial minority adoptive families. Seventy-five percent of the minority families in the study were African American. Rosenthal et al.'s (1990) findings also suggest a modest trend toward better outcomes among

minority families. While studies of White adoptive families (Barth & Berry; 1988; Festinger, 1986; and Rosenthal et al. (1988) all found that higher education and professional status were associated with higher risk for adoption disruption.

In the early 1980s the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services initiated a campaign to increase the adoption of minority children (Rodriguez & Meyer, 1990). Through this effort, public agencies implemented programs to recruit African American adoptive families and many private adoption agencies focusing on finding African American adoptive families were also developed. In the late 1980s, evaluations of such agency efforts began to emerge in the literature.

In 1987 the Department of Health and Human Services' Office of the Inspector General conducted a study to assess adoption agency's practices aimed at increasing minority family adoptions (Rodriguez and Meyer, 1990). The researchers conducted structured interviews with 81 families who had either adopted, were approved to adopt and were waiting for their first adopted child, or had dropped out or been rejected by an adoption agency. The families came from one of five public and three private adoption agencies in Detroit, Los Angeles, Miami, Washington, DC and New York City. Interviews were also conducted with 43 agency workers, 22 agency administrators, 13 state, 14 Federal and 11 community representatives. The majority of the 184 interviews conducted were face-to-face interviews. The authors do not report the ethnic break down of the sample but do indicate that 39 of the families participating in the study were ethnic minorities. The authors found that

while ninety percent (n=35) of the families reported being satisfied or very satisfied with their agencies, this satisfaction was primarily related to the fact that they had adopted the type of child they desired. Still 75% of the families indicated that they had complaints about their workers or the agency. Of those that had complaints, 20 percent said they were made to feel uncomfortable because of their race and 44% percent agreed that some workers attitudes were “too White middle class.” Many of the minority families (41%) reported approaching at least two agencies before selecting one and twenty percent of the families reported that they were so unhappy that they gave up on an agency or felt like giving up on the idea of adoption.

In contrast to the findings of Rodriguez and Meyer’s (1990) study of traditional agencies’ programs to increase minority adoptions, Hariston & Williams (1989) reported the responses of 58 African American adoptive families who had adopted through African American adoption agencies in 1984. The majority of respondents were married (71%) and most (78%) held college degrees. Though the study did not survey applicants who withdrew from the process, the findings suggest that middle-class African Americans are in fact interested and motivated to adopt. These findings do contradict those of Deasey & Quinn (1962). However, the Hariston & Williams (1989) study took place more than two decades after the Deasey & Quinn (1962) study, a time in which members of the African American middle class were more economically secure. Though most respondents in the Hariston & Williams (1989) study gave more than one reason for wanting to adopt,

the majority (70%) indicated that their motivation to adopt was a desire to give a child a permanent home. Interestingly, only half of the respondents indicated that they were motivated to adopt by an inability to have birth children. The respondents were also asked to indicate which agency services they felt lead to the adoption. The most frequently cited services respondents identified as leading to the adoption were orientation meetings (84%), recruitment activities (80%) and pre-placement home visits by the agency (79%). The studies by Hariston & Williams (1989) and Rodriguez & Meyer's (1990) address the outcomes of African American and other minority adoptions in terms of adoptive families' satisfaction with adoption agency practices. Other studies have focused on outcomes for the adoptive families and children themselves.

#### Outcome Studies of African American Adoptive Families

The vast majority of studies which assess the status of in-racially adopted African American children and families have been done in the context of comparison studies with outcomes for transracial adoptions of African American children. There are very few studies which have focused on African American adoptive families alone. The findings reported in this section of the chapter relate to the findings in the African American in-racial and transracial comparison studies. Specifically findings for African American adoptive families and their adopted children are reported.

### Research on African American Families in the Transracial Adoption Literature

In 1983, Gill and Jackson reported the results of their study of 45 British adoptive families. Interviews were conducted with each of the 45 families, eight of the families in the study were Black in-racially adoptive families. The authors found that the parents described having positive relationships with their children. The Black parents reported that their children had positive peer relationships and that they were generally happy with their child's academic progress. The authors used the Coopersmith Inventory to measure the adopted children's self-esteem and found that the children had a mean score of 76, which indicated that the children were having no problems with regard to self-esteem. The majority of the children said that they could discuss being adopted with their parents if they so desired. Both the parents and the children indicated in their interviews that the subject of the adoption rarely arose. Though the sample size of the in-racially adopted families in this study was very small, the findings were very similar to those of the 36 transracially-adopted families who participated in the study.

Shireman & Johnson (1986) conducted a longitudinal study of transracially adopted African American children which included 27 two-parent African American adoptive families and 21 single parent African American adoptive families. This study was conducted eight years after the adoptive placement. The majority (67%) of the African American families in the study had annual incomes which exceeded \$30,000 and, in most cases, both parents worked full-time. Fifty percent of the in-

racially adopted African American children attended private schools and the majority had no problems in terms of their academic performance. In general, eighty percent of the families reported having good to excellent overall adjustment to the adoption. The authors found that the children in the African American single parent and traditional adoptive families had an intensifying sense of their African American identity that was absent among the transracially adopted children. Another interesting finding was that less than 50% of the children understood that they were adopted and less than half (42%) of the African American families reported having open discussions about adoption.

McRoy & Zurcher (1983) examined the experiences of African American adolescents who had been either transracially or in-racially adopted. In this study, the authors conducted interviews with 30 African American adopted adolescents and their African American parents. Demographic data indicated that most of the African American adoptive parents (77%) were married at the time of the study and most (80%) had an annual income which exceeded \$20,000. Fifty-five percent of the African American mothers and twenty-five percent of the African American fathers held college degrees. More than half of the African American families (53%) had more than one African American adopted child. The outcomes reported here will be those for which in-racially adopted children and parents differed from the transracial adoptive families. In general both transracially and in-racially adopted children and their parents shared positive and close parent-child relationships. However, in terms

of socialization, African American parents tended to place a greater emphasis on the uniquely positive aspects of being African American. Inracial and transracial adoptive families also differed in that African American adoptive parents did not experience as much opposition to the adoption from extended family members. The in-racially adoptive families tended to live in closer proximity to their extended families than did the transracially adoptive families. Inracial adoptees were more likely to attend predominantly African American schools and were also more likely to have African American friends and date other African Americans. The authors used the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale and the Twenty Statements Test to evaluate the self-concept and self-esteem of the adopted children in the study. Results indicated that there were no differences on scores for self-concept and self-esteem among the African American adopted adolescents and other normative groups.

#### Research Focusing Solely on African American Adoptive Families

The studies that focus solely on African American adoptive families include those of Ripple (1968), Prater & King (1988), Hollingsworth (1995) and Hoopes et al (1997). Though her study is dated, because it is one of the few studies which looks at African American families' adoption outcomes, Ripple's (1968) investigation of African American adoptive families remains noteworthy. The author conducted face-to-face interviews to assess the post adoption experiences of 160 families who adopted infants from the Illinois Children's Home and Aid Society during the years 1955-1958. Forty African American families were included in the study and though

not all analysis were done by race, some information on those families is reported. All the families in the study adopted infants, among the African American families 19 of the adopted infants were boys and 21 were girls. The adopted children ranged from one month to 32 years of age. All families in the study were married couples, forty-two percent of the African American families in the study reported having been previously married and many were over forty years old at the time of the adoption. With regard to socioeconomic status, the authors report that about half of the African American adoptive parents' had completed high school and 'were in better than moderate economic circumstances. The authors found that most economic and social factors had no association with the adopted child's adjustment. However, the results indicated that higher education and economic status was less favorable among Whites in the sample and more favorable among African Americans. In addition, the study found that having a previous marriage of either adoptive parent was an unfavorable factor in the African American adopted child's adjustment.

Ripple (1968) also examined the participants' motivation to adopt and disclosure of the adoption to the adopted child. Results indicated that the majority of African Americans (70%) indicated that enjoyment of children and parental feelings were the most frequently given reasons for the couple pursuing adoption. Most of the African American families (72.5%,  $n = 29$ ) indicated that they intended to tell their children of the adoption. Only one of the African American families indicated that they did not plan to tell the child of the adoption and another 10 expressed a great

deal of uncertainty as to whether or not they would disclose the adoption to the adopted child. Interestingly the author noted that nine of these 11 families were showing problems at the time of the follow-up interview.

Prater & King (1988) surveyed 12 African American adoptive families to explore their experiences as adoptive parents. The survey examined the adoptive parents' motivation to adopt, the disclosure of the adoption to the adopted child, and other feelings about adoptive parenthood and in addition gathered demographic descriptions of the families. The majority of respondents were college graduates (n = 7) and had annual incomes which exceed \$25,000. In all the married families, both parents were employed. While the generalizability of the study's findings has obvious limits, some of the findings were interesting. For example, the majority of respondents (n = 10) had chosen only to tell relatives and close friends that their child was adopted. However, the same number also believed that they would have no problem if their children decided to search for their birth parents and that they would aid in the search when their child reached adulthood. Another interesting finding was that the majority of the respondents (n = 11) felt that the African American community was more accepting of adopting relatives than non-relatives.

Hollingsworth (1995) conducted a more recent and comprehensive study of African American adoptive families for her dissertation research at Purdue University. Hollingsworth (1995) surveyed 48 adoptive families and gathered data on the characteristics of the families and the experiences with adoption agencies and the

ethnic identity of the respondents. With regard to educational attainment she found that 57% of the respondents had bachelor's degrees and an additional 19% held graduate degrees. Consistent with the high levels of education, Hollingsworth (1995) found that one-third of the respondents had annual incomes which were equal to or exceeded \$35,000. Though the majority of the respondents were married, a considerable percentage of the adoptive families (30%) had never been married or were divorced. One interesting finding was with regard to religious practices of the respondents. Hollingsworth (1995) found that only 6% of the respondents reported no religious affiliation and that 44% of the respondents reported participating in religious activities two or more times per week. The remaining 56% stated that they participated in religious activities once a week or less. Hollingsworth (1995) also examined respondents' family composition and motivation to adopt. Results indicated that 38% of the adoptive families had biological children at the time of the adoption and that 17% had adopted more than one child. Hollingsworth (1995) categorized respondents' motivation to adopt as either child-centered or parent-centered. The majority (56%) of respondents' motivation to adopt was categorized as parent-centered. Forty percent of the respondents indicated an inability to have biological children as their primary motivation for pursuing adoption. Hollingsworth's sample (1995) also included 44 families who had applied to adopt but decided not to pursue the adoption. The author asked these respondents to describe why they chose not to adopt and categorized their answers as either agency centered or personal-centered reasons. Analysis of these respondents found that 84% of the families who decided

not to adopt, did so for personal reasons. While Hollingsworth (1995) attempted to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of African American adoptive family life, the validity of her findings may be questionable due to the study's very poor response rate (10.4%). Hollingsworth (1995) explains the low response rate in the study as being due to the fact that many of the families she surveyed had moved before the time of the mailing and no forwarding addresses were available for them.

Hoopes et al. (1997) conducted interviews with 24 African American adoptive families who had adopted developmentally vulnerable African American children. The authors used a "cumulative risk model" of development that provides a composite score based on the presence of a combination of risk factors. These risk factors include the birth-mothers history of health problems, the child's birth-weight, apgar scores, number of pre-adoptive placements, history of abuse and other factors that would make a child developmentally vulnerable.

At the time of the study, the children were all infants and toddlers. The authors used the Coopersmith Self Esteem Inventory (Coopersmith, 1989), the Revised Child Behavior Check List (Achenbach & Edelbook, 1983) and the FACES III (Olson, McCubbin & Associates, 1983) to evaluate the degree to which the developmental risk factors predicted child functioning and self-esteem in a child's later life. The authors also attempted to determine the family characteristics that might mitigate negative developmental outcomes. The authors found that there was no significant relationship between developmental risk factors and scores on the

CBCL. Scores on the Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory were not found to be significantly different from normed scores. However, the authors did find that those children with higher developmental risks did have lower self-esteem scores. In examining the child's age at time of placement as a single risk factor, the authors found that boys who were adopted at an older age (12 mos. to 5 years, 9 mos.) did have more problems than did the other children in the study, though the differences were not significant.

Hoopes et al.'s (1997) evaluation of scores on the FACES III, found that "both mothers and fathers scored at the norm for feelings of cohesion and bondedness." Interestingly, the authors found that scores on the FACES III cohesion and adaptability scales for families with the boys that were adopted at older ages did not differ much from the scores of the other families in the study. This conclusion challenges other studies findings which suggest that a child's age at the time of the adoption and membership in a minority group (Brodzinsky, 1987; Barth & Berry, 1988) increases the vulnerability of older children in adoption.

In the Hoopes et al. (1997) study, the following factors were considered to contribute to a child's developmental vulnerability. If a child was over two years at the time of the adoption, had a history of abuse or neglect, experienced multiple pre-adoptive placements or suffered pre-natal drug exposure, he or she was considered to be 'developmentally vulnerable'. These factors also fit the description of special needs.

However, the category 'special needs' also includes all African American children regardless of their age, placement or child abuse and neglect history. The majority of African American children who are awaiting adoption are in child welfare custody; they are children with "special needs". These children have been removed from their birth parents' custody due to the substantiation of allegations of child abuse or neglect and remain in custody due to failed reunification efforts (National Black Child Development Institute, 1995). A growing number of children taken into custody are there due to pre-natal drug exposure (Barth & Berry, 1988), however the majority (51%) of African American children who are awaiting adoption have been removed from their birth parents as a result of neglect. Their placement in child welfare custody as a result of abuse or neglect allegations is another reason the majority of African American children awaiting adoption are designated as being children with special needs.

#### Research on African American Children and Special Needs Adoption

There is a growing body of research on special needs adoption, which include African American adoptive families (Barth & Needell, 1996; Gill, 1978; Rosenthal & Groze, 1993) in their sample. However, none of these special needs adoption studies has reported findings on the African American in-racially adoptive families which were included in their samples. In some cases, such as the study by Rosenthal and Groze (1993) there are a significant number of African American families participating in their study (75% of minority families in the study were African

American). However, the small number of members of other minority groups made it difficult to conduct analysis by race. Because African Americans tend to adopt children who are considered to have 'special needs,' the general literature on special needs adoption may provide some framework for understanding African American families who have adopted children with special needs.

Kadushin's (1970) study of adopted children who had histories of abuse and neglect is considered the landmark study of children who are now referred to as children with special needs. Kadushin's (1970) study of 91 children who were made available for adoption when their birth parents' parental rights were terminated because of abuse and/or neglect. All of the children were adopted when they were five years or older and the study took place when the children were adolescents (mean age + 13 years). Semi-structured interviews of both adoptive parents were conducted to assess the degree of the adoptive parents' satisfaction with the adoption, the problems they experienced and the adaptations they made to deal with those problems. The author found that, regardless of the child's older age at the time of adoption, 87% of the families were either "extremely satisfied" or "more satisfied than dissatisfied" with their adoptions.

Though Kadushin's conclusion that a child's history of maltreatment had no impact on parental satisfaction with the adoption may not be completely well founded. In reality, as the number of special needs adoptions increased, so did the number of adoption disruptions. Festinger (1970) found that in the three-year period

between 1970 and 1973, the adoption disruption rate more than doubled. In 1970, 2.7 percent of finalized California adoptions disrupted, that number increased to 7.6% in 1973. The increasing numbers of adoption disruptions, which coincided with increasing numbers of special needs adoptions, caused researchers to begin to examine the relationship between a child's pre-adoption history and the success of the child's adoption. In its early stages, much of the focus of special needs adoption research has been on the identification of demographic, social, and family factors associated with adoption disruption (Kadushin & Seidl, 1971; Groze, 1986; Partridge et al., 1986; Reid et al., 1987; Barth & Berry, 1988; Rosenthal et al., 1988).

#### Demographic Factors Associated with Disruption in Special Needs Adoption:

Adoption disruption studies, which have examined ethnicity, family structure and socioeconomic status, tend to conclude that these factors do not significantly increase the risk of disruption. However the research in this area remains inconclusive. Rosenthal et al. (1988) found that the risk of disruption was slightly reduced among minority families. While some studies have shown no relationship between ethnicity and risk for disruption (Festinger, 1986; Barth & Berry, 1988), others have found higher risks for both minority families (Partridge et al., 1986) and families who have transracial adoptions (Groze, 1986).

Studies which assessed the relationship between a child's age at the time of the adoption and risk for disruption have consistently found that children adopted at

older ages are at higher risk for adoption disruption (Kadushin & Seidl, 1971; Groze, 1986; Barth & Berry, 1988; Rosenthal et al., 1988). Barth and Berry (1988) studied more than 900 children adopted in 13 California counties and found that the older a child is at the time of their adoption the greater the risk for disruption increases. Children ages 3 to 5 at the time of adoption had a 5 percent disruption rate; children age 6 to 8 had a 10 percent disruption rate. Children age 9 to 11 had a 17 percent disruption rate; children age 12 to 14 had a 22 percent disruption rate and children adopted between the ages of 15 and 18 had a 26 percent disruption rate (1988, p.157).

Gender has also been found to be a factor that leads to increased risk for disruption, though not consistently so. Rosenthal et al. (1988), and Barth and Berry (1988) both found that the adoptions of boys were more likely to disrupt. Others have found no statistically significant relationship between gender and the risk for disruption (Kadushin & Seidl, 1971; Festinger, 1986) Rosenthal et al. (1988) found that age and gender together could increase the risk for disruption. Rosenthal et al. (1988) conducted a study of adoptive placements made by the Oklahoma Department of Human Services from 1982 to 1985. The authors found that among children 8 years old and younger, the adoptions of boys were more likely to disrupt, while among children age 9 and older, the disruption rate was slightly higher for girls. There is no data available which specifically addresses the role of gender and disruption among African American adoptive families.

Emotional and behavior problems have consistently been found to significantly increase the risk for disruption (Partridge et al., 1986; Reid et al. 1987; Barth & Berry, 1988; Rosenthal et al., 1988). While a child's demonstrating withdrawn or internalizing behavior has been linked to increased disruption risks (Barth & Berry, 1988; Rosenthal et al., 1988), aggressive or externalizing behavior is more likely to be associated with an adoption disrupting (Partridge et al., 1986; Barth & Berry, 1988). Partridge et al. (1986) identified six emotional or behavioral problems that predicted disruption. These behaviors included sexual acting out (promiscuity), causing physical harm to others, stealing, damaging other's property (vandalizing), suicide threats or attempts and enuresis or encopresis.

Many studies have shown that higher socioeconomic status (income & education) may be associated with higher risks for disruption (Festinger, 1986; Groze, 1986; Barth & Berry, 1988; Rosenthal et al., 1988). Barth and Berry (1988) and Festinger (1986) found that higher education of the adoptive mother was predictive of disruption. Groze (1986), Barth and Berry (1988) and Rosenthal et al. (1988) found a moderate association between higher income levels and increased risk for disruption, while Partridge et al. (1986) found no association between education and increased risk for disruption.

Many of the special needs adoption studies which have evaluated family functioning as a factor related to risk of disruption have found that adoptive parents' unrealistic expectations of their child can increase the risk of disruption (Kadushin &

Seidl, 1971; Festinger, 1986; Barth & Berry, 1988; Rosenthal et al. 1988). Barth & Berry (1988) suggest that disruptions occur in families with less flexible family rules and roles and that adoptions are more successful in families which accept, if not expect, that their child may have behavioral and emotional problems as a result of their experiences prior to the adoption.

## Chapter Summary

The few empirical studies of African American adoptive families have included families who have adopted infants as well as children with special needs. These studies' findings suggest that African American families are capable and a valuable resource in efforts to diminish the number of African American children awaiting adoption. African American adoptive families tend to be well educated, have sufficient income, community and religious involvement and a willingness to provide homes for waiting children. The findings of these studies also suggest that African Americans who are single, have children by birth or those who have previously adopted should continue to be considered and should in no way should be thought less viable than more traditional (White, two-parent) adoptive families.

Although no studies of special needs adoption have focused specifically on outcomes among African American families, the majority of studies which do address ethnicity (Groze, 1986; Partridge et al., 1986; Rosenthal et al., 1988) suggest that African American families may not experience the same degree of disruption risk as other families.

Generalizability of the conclusions and findings of studies of African American adoptive family outcomes is limited due to the methodological shortcomings of very small sample sizes, low survey response rates, and the lack of use of standardized and normed measures. While special needs adoption research has used longitudinal research designs, normed and standardized measures and large

enough sample sizes to provide sufficient power to answer questions about sub-groups, analysis and findings of data on African American adoptive families has not been reported in the literature.

There are many types of adoption including formal and informal adoption, infant and older child adoptions, in-racial, transracial and international adoptions, stepparent, relative and special needs adoptions, confidential, mediated and open adoptions, single-parent and two parent family adoptions. A child could be placed for adoption as a result of a voluntary relinquishment by birth parents. A child could also be removed from the custody of birth parents and placed for adoption by the Court due to the child's being abused, abandoned or neglected.

The findings reported in this review of the adoption literature raise many issues regarding differences between African American and Caucasian adoptive families. For example, some studies of adoption outcomes such as those of McRoy et al. (1988), Brodzinsky (1984) and Garland et al. (1996) indicate that adopted children are at higher risk for emotional problems. However, other studies indicate that adoptive families are positively adjusted and satisfied with the adoption regardless of the child's behavior problems (Nelson, 1985; Tizard, 1979; Ripple, 1968). Among minority families, it appears that child behavior has even less relationship to post-adoption adjustment and parental satisfaction than it does among White families (Rosenthal & Groze, 1992).

What do these findings suggest in terms of practice? Do they indicate that post-adoption services should be more readily available to adoptive families? What does it mean that there are no significant outcome differences among families that have confidential, mediated and fully disclosed adoptions? What are the practice implications for the finding that African American adolescent birth mothers and their own mothers expressed less support for open adoptions than their White counterparts? Does it mean that more education with regard to openness needs to be done with African Americans?

It is apparent that adoption research is no different from other areas of research in that research findings often seem inconsistent. However, research documenting African Americans' negatively biased treatment and a difficulty matriculating the adoption process has consistently been found (Day, 1979; Fanshel, 1967, Ripple, 1968, National Urban League, 1980; Rosenthal & Groze, 1992). The success of African American adoption programs and agencies in placing African American children has also been consistently documented (Bradley, 1961; Nelson, 1972; Washington, 1987; Hariston & Williams, 1989).

Research in some areas of adoption is still in the early stages of development. There is no question that adoption outcome research would benefit from additional focus on special needs, open and single-parent adoptions. However, the depth of the need for research on African American adoptive families is growing and begs to be addressed.

It has been suggested in the literature on White adoptive families that adoptive families benefit from access to birth family members, open communication about adoption, post-adoption services and ease of access to the adoption system. If this is the case, then information on African Americans' experiences in regard to these issues will benefit from further study. The following chapter will discuss the theoretical models that will provide the conceptual framework for this proposal to examine post-adoption outcomes among African American adoptive families.

## CHAPTER THREE

### CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORKS

Researchers in adoption have utilized a wide variety of theoretical models to guide their explorations and investigations of adoptive family life. The use of multiple theoretical models is not unique to adoption research. This approach is both necessary and appropriate. As with any area of family relationships research, no single theory exists which can explain the complexities and variations of family life. And so it is with research on adoptive families.

Theory, as defined by Kerlinger (1986), is comprised of three elements. First, it is a set of ideas, which are comprised of defined and inter-related constructs or variables. Second, a theory presents a systematic view of the phenomena which the variables or constructs describe. And third, a theory specifies which variables are related, and how those variables are related in a way that enables a researcher to predict from one particular variable to other particular variable or variables. In summary, the purpose of theory is to explain observed phenomena. There is no single or generally applied and/ or accepted theory of adoptive family relationships.

Adoption research has used numerous existing theories of family relationships to explain their observations of adoptive family life. It has been from this work that theories of adoptive family life have emerged. The present study uses several theories, which have been used in previous adoption studies, and theories of African

American family relationships to examine how well they explain African American adoptive family relationships. These theories include attachment theory, attribution theory, and Kirk's (1964) acknowledgement of difference theory of adoptive family relationships and Brodzinsky's (1983) expansion of Kirk's theory that includes insistence of difference. Family systems theory will also be used, along with Stack's (1974) and Billingsley's (1968; 1992) theories on African American kinship and family relationships.

### Attachment Theory

Attachment has often been used as a construct in adoption research to explain and predict adoptive family relationships and outcomes (Fahlberg, 1979; Groze, 1993; Groze & Rosenthal, 1993; Gusukuma, 1996; Johnson & Fein, 1991; McRoy, Grotevant & Zurcher, 1988). Attachment theory as developed by Bowlby (1969, 1973, 1988) was based on child development research which focused on infants and toddlers (Groze, 1993). However other theories of attachment, such as that of Hirschi (1969) did not look to child development research. Hirschi (1969) developed a theory of attachment which is based on social control theory has also been used in adoption and attachment research (Groze & Rosenthal, 1993).

Because attachment has had no single definition, researchers have sometimes had difficulty in measuring attachment constructs (Groze & Rosenthal, 1993). The

present study uses both Bowlby's (1969, 1973, 1988) developmental theory of attachment and Hirschi's (1969) social control perspective of attachment.

According to Bowlby's theory (1969, 1973, 1988) of attachment, the goal of early parenting is help a child develop secure attachment with their caregivers.

“Securely attached infants are affectionate and can be comforted and calmed when distressed (Bowlby, 1988). A secure attachment is developed when caregivers are responsive in meeting a child's needs. If the parents are unresponsive, hurtful or unavailable in meeting the child's needs, then attachment difficulties result. The two types of attachment difficulties identified by Bowlby (1988) are, one, anxious-avoidant or two, anxious ambivalent. The child with anxious avoidant attachment problems will express little affect or distress and tend to avoid attachment figures in situations in which a securely attached child would seek interaction with attachment figures. By contrast, the anxious ambivalent child will seek and receive interaction with attachment figures but are still not comforted or calmed by them when they are distressed.

Building on Bowlby's (1973) theory, Main and Weston (1981) made a third classification of attachment difficulties; they described some children as having a disorganized or disoriented pattern of attachment. In the case of a disorganized or disoriented attachment, the child will use both avoidant and ambivalent behaviors at times of separation and reunion with caregivers and appear at such times to be dazed or disoriented (Groze, 1993).

Hirschi's (1969) social control theory of attachment describes it as a social bond that influence behavior and is an emotional connection that one feels toward others. Hirschi (1969) suggests three aspects of attachment between parents and children. One, attached children are more likely to spend time in the presence of their parents. Two, When parent and child are not physically together, the parents will be psychologically present in the attached child. For example, the child will wonder, "what would my parents think if I did this?" when their parents are not with them. This second aspect demonstrates the social control aspect of attachment that Hirschi (1969) poses. Finally, Hirschi describes intimate communication as an important aspect of attachment. The focus and quality of parent-child communication is critical to understanding parent-child relationships. The better the quality of communication between parent and child, the greater the attachment and identification the child feels toward the parent. Kirk's (1964) adoption theory also includes parent-child communication about adoption as a key factor in acknowledgement of difference. Others have suggested that the greater the attachment and identification the child feels toward the parent, the greater the affection between parent and child (Groze, 1993).

Adoption literature that addresses issues of attachment recognizes the importance of parent/child attachment in adoptive family relationships. Nelson (1985) found that the strongest predictor of adoption disruption was difficulty in the development of parent-child attachment. Kirgan et al. (1983) found that children removed from their homes as a result of abuse, abandonment or neglect may have under-developed abilities to attach.

These theories of attachment emphasize the significance of the birth parents' roles in influencing a child's ability to form attachments, and suggest that the pre-adoptive placement history of a child can influence later adoptive family relationships (Fahlberg, 1979; McRoy et al, 1988). Many adopted children enter care with histories of abuse, neglect and abandonment which may not be conducive to the development of secure attachments with their adoptive families and can result in decreased parental satisfaction with the adoption (Groze, 1993).

As has been previously stated, African American families are most likely to adopt children with special need. Attachment theory suggests that the adoption of children who are older or have histories of abuse and neglect, may result in attachment or adjustment difficulties . The proposed study uses attachment theory from two different perspectives (Bowlby, 1988; Hirschi, 1969) to examine the role a child's behavior, pre-adoption history, and parent-child attachment play in adoptive family adjustment.

### Attribution Theory

Attribution theory, in social psychology, examines how individuals perceive their social world and how they make internal or dispositional attributions verses external or situational attributions for positive and negative events in their lives (Kelley, 1967). Kelley & Michela (1980) described attributions as affecting a person's feelings about past events and their expectations of future events. McRoy et

al. (1988) used attribution theory in a study of adoptive families and later described attribution as a process, versus a single or one-time event. These authors describe attribution as the process through which one understands past events and thus, develops expectations about future events.

Rosenberg (1992) states that “being a member of the adoptive family circle profoundly affects one’s sense of self (p. 139) and identifies several possible attributions that adoptive parents, birth-parents and children who are adopted might make with regard to placing a child for adoption, infertility and being adopted. The author notes that some adoptive couples may feel that their infertility is a sign of God’s will that they take care of the adopted child while others may feel it is a punishment for a past transgression. Birth parents may feel grateful to adoptive parents for giving their child a good home or may feel that they were young and impulsive and that this caused the pregnancy. Children who are adopted may view themselves as being bad and unworthy of their birth parents’ care or be thankful that the birth parents gave them to a good family (p 138-140). All members of the adoption triad share the experience of loss; all have been deprived of something that everyone is entitled to.

The attribution process causes one to develop terms to describe themselves that center on their differences. These differences are based on adoptive triad members’ deprivation of an entitled experience, the experiences of being raised by

one's birth parents, raising one's own child and the experience of being able to reproduce.

The adoption literature is replete with examples of self-identity problems, which are based on the differences in being a member of the adoptive triad versus being in a non-adoptive family. Sorosky et al. (1978) state those children who are adopted often feel inadequate or inferior. Frisk (1964) reported that children who are adopted tend to feel insecure and have poor self-images. Kirk (1964) describes the impact of infertility on adoptive parents' identify and self-image. He suggests that the adoption homestudy process itself can cause adoptive parents to question their competence, skill and confidence as parents. Adoptive parents must gain the approval of a third party in order to have the experience of parenting. Rosenberg (1992) also notes that adoptive parents may see themselves as inadequate as they lament their inability to be biological parents and go through the process of being approved to adopt.

The adoption process as it is experienced from the adoptive parent's perspective, confirms their lack of control over whether or not they become parents. Rosenberg (1992) points out that members of the adoptive triad may all feel as though they have little control over the circumstances that lead to the adoption being necessary and possible. In such cases the attributional process is viewed as an external or situational experience over which the players have no control. The

conclusions one draws about the cause of their situations, behaviors or that of another is a guiding concept in the attribution process (McRoy et al. 1988).

In addition to the shared issues of self-identity that all members of the adoption triad might have, African American adoptive parents and children may make additional attributions of difference because African Americans' identities have been dependent on both biologically and socially fixed qualities that make them different.

It is possible that African American adoptive families may attribute difficulties they experience as a part of the adoption process or problems they experience with the child after the adoption, to their child or themselves being treated differently by the adoption and child welfare systems because of their race. If an African American adoptive family has adopted a child with a history of abuse, abandonment or neglect, they may attribute child behavior problems to neglectful or abusive birth parents or the poor care provided while the child was in foster home.

Rosenthal & Groze, (1992) likened the social environment of minority families to that of the adopted child. Kirk recognized the biased and disfavored social status of the adopted child and family and referred to it as "role handicap." Rosenthal and Groze (1992) state that "like the minority family, the adopted child experiences rejection and is different" and suggest that minority families identify

with the adopted child's status which enhances empathy and facilitates the child's transition into the family and community (1992, p. 146).

### Kirk's Acknowledgement of Difference Theory

Kirk (1964) developed a theory based on the role of adoptive parents' perceptions of the differences between adoptive parents' and birth parents'. As stated above, role handicap is the result of social views of parenting. That is that society does not prepare us for infertility and the substitute role of adoptive parent. Adoption is viewed as a less fulfilling 'second best' way to assume the parenting role. According to Kirk's model of adoptive family relationships, parents manage their role handicap in a variety of ways. The way a family manages the role handicap is based on the attributions they make regarding their 'role handicap.' An African American adoptive family could acknowledge the differences (AD) in adoptive parenting by talking about such differences openly. A family could also reject any differences (RD) in that they discount the meaning of differences between the roles of adoptive parent and biological parent.

Brodzinsky (1987) later developed a method of classifying families in terms of their approach to dealing with the differences in adoption. Along with acknowledging or rejecting differences, families could also deal with differences in adoption through "insistence of difference." Brodzinsky (1987) noted that a

curvilinear relationship exists between the parents' view of differences and the type of impact this has on the child. One finds in the literature that both Brodzinsky (1987) and Kaye (1990) suggest that a moderate acknowledgment of difference promotes adaptive functioning. If adoptive parents are extreme in their insistence or rejection of difference, problematic adjustment is the result. Kaye (1990) states that extreme acknowledgement of difference may increase the adopted child's doubts of belonging. Kirk (1967) found that families that tended to acknowledged differences are more likely to have empathy for their adopted child, are more willing to think about the birth-parents and find their adoptive family relationships more satisfying.

Since the time of slavery African Americans have had to adjust their conceptions of family (Hill, 1972). Though blood ties have played a serious role in defining African American families, the parenting role and family boundaries have had to remain fluid and flexible (Stack, 1972). Families were frequently broken up and children were frequently taken in and informally adopted by new caregivers (Gutman, 1976). There continues to be a strong tradition among African Americans to take on the parenting responsibilities for extended family members and close friends (Stack, 1974 p 45-57).

Before child welfare and formal adoption services were extended to African American families, children were 'fostered' by extended family members and close

friends (fictive kin). Because African Americans were viewed as being 'role handicapped' because of their race, a primary cultural value is one of fairness, which emphasizes equality and equity (Grier & Cobbs, 1968; Davis et al. 1996). This emphasis on equality and equity of treatment, along with a long history of taking-in non-relatives and treating them as kin, may mediate African American adoptive families acknowledgement of differences in adoptive families which Kirk (1964; 1984) suggests is an indication of healthy adjustment.

### Family Systems Theory

Recently, theorists have attempted to integrate individual development, family development and the sociocultural context within which an individual and family are living, to better understand family systems (Feldman, 1992). As described by Kaslow & Celano (in Gurman & Messer, 1995), general systems theory provides the theoretical basis of the major family therapies. General systems theory emerged from the biological sciences and defines a system as a group of elements which interact with one another (von Bertalanffy, 1968). According to family systems theory, healthy family units are constantly involved in changes which establish greater levels of organization and functioning, while engaging in self-regulation so as to maintain equilibrium or homeostasis of the family unit. This balance between change and stability enables the family to function adaptively throughout both the family's and its' individual members' life cycles (Kaslow & Celano in Gurman & Messer, 1995).

Family systems exchange information continuously, using circular patterns of responses, or feedback loops, to exchange information within the system. The feedback within a family system can be either positive or negative. If the feedback is positive it will enable the family to evolve to a new and stronger state of being. Negative feedback is used to counteract behavioral deviations within the family system so as to restore homeostasis (Hepworth et al., 1997, p 278).

Family systems theory views the family in terms of its structure and function (Hepworth et al., 1997, p 445). Structure is defined as the family's organization making the 'whole greater than the sum of its parts. Each family is comprised of interdependent subsystems which carry out distinctive functions to maintain both the family system and itself. Each family member belongs to several subsystems which support differential relationships with other family members (Hepworth et al., 1997, p 292-295).

Boundaries are used to separate and delineate family subsystems which determine the extent to which outsiders are permitted to enter the family system (outer boundaries). "Boundaries protect the subsystems' integrity while allowing interaction between subsystems" (Kaslow & Celano in Gurman & Messer, 1995, p. 346). Kantor and Lehr (1995) described three prototypes of boundaries, open, closed and random Boundaries indicate distinctive styles of interaction with the external environment. The subsystem that holds the most influence within a family determines

which style of interaction will be used. A closed family system exemplifies strict codes that limit interactions with the outer environment. In open systems, families have malleable boundaries which favor interaction with the external environment. A family system with random boundaries is comprised of several boundary patterns which reflect the interaction styles of each member (Hepworth et al., 1997 p. 290).

Internal boundaries are the function of coalitions of subsystems formed with other members of the family system. These subsystems are formed on the basis of generation, gender and interests (Minuchin, 1974). The stable formation of the spouse, parental and sibling subsystems are vital to the well being of the family system. The integrity of the spouse-spouse, parent-child and child-child subsystems is directly influenced by family rules which clearly define and establish the lines of responsibility within the family system.

Because African American family's have long been dependent on mutual aid for their survival, more fluid boundaries, which allow for the open exchanges of information and assistance from external environment are common (Billingsley & Givannoni, 1972). These fluid boundaries may not apply to every outside system however. Hepworth et al. (1997) note the import of culture in determining how open a family system may be to external help. African Americans experiences with the dominant culture will determine how open their boundaries will be to members of the dominate culture. For example, a family might feel more comfortable going to an

African American adoption program or agency than one run directly by the government or members of the dominant culture. African Americans have a shared experience which reflect a long history of suffering the effects of both institutional and personal racism. Therefore an African American family may go through the adoption process where they are more confident that there will be staff members and agency policies which will not discriminate against them. Thus, while family systems theory generally promotes open boundaries as being healthier, there may be some instances in which closed boundaries and limited interactions with certain external systems, may better ensure homeostasis of the family system.

#### African American Family Relationship Theory

Theories which attempt to explain African American family's roles and relationships may elucidate the roles and relationships among African American adoptive families. Many of the findings in adoption research which report findings for African Americans in the sample seem to contradict or differ from findings for Caucasian families (Shireman., 1995; Rosenthal & Groze, 1992; Shireman & Johnson, 1985). These differences may in some way be explained by theories of African American family relationships.

In her description of African American families, Stack (1970) noted that there is an obligation among African American family members (kinsmen) to give. The process of mutual aid or the exchange (giving and receiving) process is what

establishes social networks among African American families. As Stack (1970, p. 44) notes, many researchers have ignored the interdependence and cooperation of kinsmen (relatives and friends who are defined as relatives) in their studies of African American family life.

Among African Americans, kin terms are frequently extended to non-kin and relationships with non-kin are expressed in the language of blood-kin. Family networks are not egocentric and members of networks share reciprocal obligations toward one another. These 'essential kin,' as Stack (1970) refers to them, are defined by the chain of parent-child connection and perform an essential function in structuring kin groups. While researchers have recognized the distinction between natural and social parenthood, the lack of classification of these roles has "lead to the persistent belief that a person is a kinsman of his biological mother and father (Stack, 1972).

Blood-ties can establish kin relationships and thus, parental rights are determined by two separate systems among African American families. The first of those systems are the legal systems which provides a universal definition to establish parental rights. In the second kin system, relationships are established among African Americans is through the "folk system." The folk system determines parental rights by both blood ties and fulfillment of parental duties. If a biological parent does not fulfill the duties of parenthood, then he or she is not considered to have the same rights as a fictive kinsman who does so. "Friends are recognized as kinsmen when

they assume recognized responsibilities of kinsmen” (Stack, 1970). Stack (1970) concludes that African American people show pride in all their kin, whether they are blood or fictive kin. She further concludes that the structural features of African American families create a positive response to life stresses and are a highly adaptive and resilient response to the socioeconomic conditions in their environments.

African American families’ flexible boundary systems and use of the folk system may explain differences in African American attitudes toward open adoption. For example, if an adoptive parent has had experiences with informal adoptions or fictive kin relationships in which contact was maintained with birth family members, it may explain their having a more positive attitude toward open adoption. If an adoptive parent has had experiences in which parental rights were not granted to a parent as defined by the legal system because that parent did not fulfill the responsibilities of that role, it may, in some way, explain negative attitudes toward open adoption.

### Chapter Summary

The theories described above provide the foundation upon which the study’s research questions and hypotheses were developed. Attachment theory is used to examine the goal of adoption, that adoptive parent and child will build an enduring bond which helps the child to develop into a competent and healthy adult. Attribution theory guides the exploration of the meaning and import African American adoptive

families place on the fact that their family was built through adoption versus birth. Kirk's acknowledgement of difference theory is used to examine how African American adoptive families cope with the differences inherent to their roles as adoptive parents. Systems theory provides a guiding framework for understanding the complexities of adoptive family life for African Americans. The theories of African American family life go further by providing a foundation for understanding how African Americans may interpret the fact of the adoption. These theories, which provide a guide to understanding African American adoptive family life were used to develop the selection of variables which are used to pose the following research questions which were explored in the study.

### Research Questions

This study attempted to address the following research questions to discover what, if any, differences exist between African Americans who have adopted as single verses two parent families and infant versus older child adopters.

Research Question One: Are single parent adoptive families more likely to experience child and family adjustment problems than two parent adoptive families?

Research Question Two: Are families who have adopted older children more likely to experience adjustment problems than families who have adopted infants?

Research Question Three: What are the factors that influence African American adoptive parents' attitudes toward open adoption?

Research Question Four: To what degree do the adopted child's placement and abuse history influence satisfaction with and adjustment to the adoption?

Research Question Five: Is there a relationship between African American adoptive parents' acknowledgement of difference in their status as adoptive families and their post-adoption adjustment?

The next chapter of the paper presents a description of the methodology used to explore the nature of African American adoptive family life and examine how well the aforementioned theories explain African American Adoptive family relationships.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### METHODOLOGY

#### Rationale for the Study

The lack of adoption research that examines outcomes among African American adoptive families is identified in Chapter Two, the review of the literature. Chapter Two also points out the methodological weaknesses of the very few studies that have examined outcomes among African American adoptive families. Though there has been a general failure to examine African American adoptive family life, there continues to be an over-representation of African American children in the child welfare system who are in need of permanent homes (Williams, 1995).

Recent changes in adoption law now require that efforts to place foster children in adoptive homes begin after a child has been in foster care only 12 months (Pavao, 1998). Previous adoption legislation allowed children to remain in foster care for 18 months before a permanent plan was developed for them. The combined emphasis on selecting adoption as the preferable plan for children who are in foster care placements and the reduced time limit that children can remain in care before permanent plans are determined will result in an even stronger need for adoptive families for African American children in care.

Some have suggested that transracial adoption is a viable alternative for reducing the large number of African American children in need of adoption. While transracial adoption is one way to reduce the number of African American children in need of adoption, such adoptions do not occur in significant enough numbers to have any real impact on reducing the number of African American children in need of adoption. According to Stolley (1993) only 8% of all adoptions, including international adoptions, are those in which the parents and children are of different races and only 1% of White women who adopt, adopt African American children. These statistics support Gershenson's (1984) findings from a decade earlier that the number of transracial adoptions is small when compared to the number of African American children adopted by African American families (Gershenson, 1984).

There are 568,000 children currently in foster care in the United States (US DHHS, 2001). Forty-four percent of these children, approximately 250,000, are African American. Fifty-one percent of all foster children who have been designated as "awaiting adoption" are African American (US DHHS, 2001). A strong and growing need exists for information which can aid in encouraging African American to adopt and increase our understanding the experiences and attitudes of African American adoptive families is warranted.. Extensive research on the post-adoptive adjustment of White adoptive families has been done (Brodzinsky, 1984; Gusukuma, 1996; Hoopes, 1982; Kirk, 1964, 1981; Grotevant & McRoy, 1998). This study is an

attempt to expand the knowledge base on African American adoptive families to better inform adoption practice with African American families.

Many of the variables and measure used in the study have been used in both studies of Caucasian adoptive family outcomes and outcomes of adoptive families of other ethnic groups (Grotevant & McRoy, 1998; Gusukuma, 1996; Rosenthal & Groze, 1992). The following describes the population, agencies, variables, hypotheses and data analysis process of the study.

#### Population and Sample Selection

The study population was comprised of African American adoptive families in California who have adopted African American children. Adoptive families who adopted children from one of two California adoption agencies, the Institute for Black Parenting in Los Angeles California and the Black Adoption Placement and Research Center in Oakland California participated in the study. Both agencies are private/non-profit adoption agencies which focus on facilitating adoptions for African American families and children. Each agency is described below:

#### The Institute for Black Parenting

The Institute for Black Parenting (IBP), was the first private/non-profit African American adoption and foster care agency in Southern California. IBP began

providing adoption services in September, 1988 and since that time has placed over 500 children with adoptive families. IBP provides services in four Southern California counties including, Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside and San Bernardino counties. In 1989 IBP was licensed by the State of California to provide foster care services and now has over 200 foster homes within the four counties. The adoptive families from the Institute for Black Parenting have not previously been asked to participate in any research studies.

#### The Black Adoption Placement and Research Center

The Black Adoption Placement and Research Center (BAPRC), is a sister agency to IBP and provides services to African American Adoptive families in Northern California. BAPRC is a private/non-profit adoption agency that was founded in 1983 in order to facilitate same race adoptive placements of African American and mixed race African American children in Northern California. BAPRC places an emphasis on the adoption of children with special needs and seeks to remove barriers that may discourage families from adoption by having a no-fee policy. BAPRC is unique in that it uses an exact racial matching policy. For example, if a child is African American/Japanese and is adopted by a two-parent family, one of the adoptive parents for the child would be African American and the other would be Japanese. Since its founding, BAPRC has placed over 300 children in adoptive families.

### Research Procedures

The first step in initiating the study was contacting the Institute for Black Parenting and the Black Adoption Placement and Research Center to request their participation in the study. Both agencies agreed to provide families to participate in the study. A synopsis of the proposed study (see appendices) along with copies of the consent letter (see appendices) was sent to a specified agency staff member following the initial verbal agreement with the agency to provide families to participate in the study. The formal letters from the agency indicating their agreement to participate in the study were sent after the agencies reviewed the questionnaire, consent and cover letters and synopsis of the proposal (see appendices).

The synopsis of the proposal outlined the purpose of the study and described the procedures that were to be used to accomplish the study. Along with the purpose of the study, the synopsis specified the criteria for participation in the study. The agencies were assured that the study would not require that any identifying information be disclosed to the investigator. Using this method, would require that agency staff identify the families eligible for participation in the study and that they affix the mailing labels to the surveys and mail them.

The African American Adoptive Family Questionnaire was pre-tested with six African American adoptive families from Texas and four adoptive families from

California. The group was comprised of six two parent adoptive families and four single parent adoptive families. Seven of the families had adopted infants; the remaining three had adopted children age 3 or above. The purpose of the focus group was to obtain feedback regarding the time it took to complete the survey, to determine if any ambiguities in the questionnaire existed and to assess whether the questionnaire failed to address any areas that focus group members felt were important. All the families expressed positive feelings about participating in the study and felt that the information was important and expressed that this is why they would participate in the study. With the exception of one family, the adoptive mother was the one who completed the survey. All members of the group felt the questions were clear and understandable. They did express concern about the “Then” portion of the Acknowledgment of Difference Scale. One member of the focus group stated that she could not remember what she was thinking during the first 6 months of her son’s adoption. She said that she simply marked the boxes the same for the ‘Then’ score as she did the “Now” score. In response to this, another category, “Don’t Remember” was added to the ADS. It took the families 30 minutes to an hour to complete the survey. The families felt that, though the survey was time consuming, they were motivated to complete it because they wanted to help other African American adoptive families. No additional changes were made to the survey.

## Research Design

An exploratory cross sectional research design was used in this study. Data for the study were collected through a self-administered mailed questionnaire. Studies of African American adoptive families seem to be equally divided between the use of self-administered mailed surveys and face-to-face interviews with adoptive families (Prater & King, 1988; Hariston & Williams, 1989; Hollingsworth, 1995; Hoopes et al., 1997). Hariston & Williams (1989) obtained a 56% response rate to their mailed survey assessing African American adoptive parents' view of adoption agency practices. Though, their sample was quite small, Prater & King (1988) obtained an 86% response rate to their self-administered mailed questionnaire that focused on African Americans' perceptions of their experiences as adoptive parents. Adoption studies, in general, have been found to have good response rates to self-administered mailed surveys. Rosenthal & Groze's study of race, social class and special needs adoptive family outcomes obtained a 60% response rate. In the initial mailing of Silverman's and Fiegelman (1977) longitudinal study of adoptive families, a 61% response rate was obtained.

Following Salant & Dillman's (1994) recommendation, data collection was comprised of a four-step mailing procedure. To maintain the complete confidentiality of subjects, mailings were sent directly to subjects by the agency through which they adopted. In addition to the four-step mailing procedure suggested by Salant &

Dillman (1994) and described below, additional strategies were used to increase the survey's response rate. These strategies included entering the in a lottery to win one of six \$50 savings bonds for their child upon receipt of the ir completed survey and enclosing a writing instrument (ballpoint pen) in each mailed survey with the thought that it could increase the probability that the adoptive parent will complete and return the survey more quickly.

### Sampling

A family's appropriateness for participation the study required that all five of the following selection criteria were met. 1) The adopted child must be between 4 and 16 years of age. 2) The adopted child must have been residing in the home for at least one year. 3) At least one of the adoptive parents must be African American. 4) The child must have at least one birth parent that is African American. 5) The family must have adopted a child who is not related to either adoptive parent by blood ties.

The aforementioned sampling frame was developed for a variety of reasons. The age of the adopted child was selected because the CBCL was developed and normed for children between the ages of 4 and 16 (Achenbach & Edelbrock, 1983) and has been normed for African American children. If the adopted child is less than four years old, the responses for the survey will not be included in the analysis.

Fahlberg (1995) points out that it takes time for both a child and his adoptive parents to adjust to their status as an adoptive family. Previous studies of African American adoption included families in which children had been in their adoptive placements from as little as one month (Prater & King, 1988) to as much as 10 years (Hariston & Williams, 1989). There is no established or preferential amount of time that a child should be in the home in the adoption literature. Thus, any length of time selected would be somewhat arbitrary. In order to maximize the number of families eligible for participation in the study and to allow sufficient time for the family and child to have adjusted to adoptive family life, a period of one year after the adoption was selected as the criteria for inclusion in the study.

The criterion that the adoptive parents and child not be related by blood was established because the majority of children awaiting adoption do not have blood relatives who are able to care for them. In addition, the majority of adoptions facilitated by the agencies participating in the study are those in which the adoptive parents and children are not blood relatives.

Adoptive families with more than one adopted child were asked to complete the survey and study measures based on their experiences with the oldest adopted child in their home. If the parents have adopted children that are of the same age, for example twins or unrelated children who are the same age, they were asked to

identify the child they wish to focus their answers on, and answer all survey questions with regard to that child.

The above sampling parameters were also established due to protocols of the standardized measures selected for the proposed study. The Child Behavior Checklist 4/18-Parent Version has been normed on children between the ages of 4 and 16 years. Kirk's Acknowledgement of Difference Scale was developed for parents whose adopted child has lived in their home for at least one year.

Based on the sampling frame selected for this study, surveys were sent to 368 African American adoptive families. All families from the Institute for Black Parenting and the Black Adoption Placement and Research Center which met the sampling criteria were surveyed. The Institute for Black Parenting had 241 adoptive families which met the criteria for selection. The Black Adoption Placement and Research Center has 127 families which met the criteria for the study.

One of the challenges of conducting research using mailed surveys is the accuracy of mailing lists. Hollingsworth (1995) also surveyed African American adoptive families five to 10 years after their adoptions and obtained a very low response rate (10.4%). Over 20% of her mailed questionnaires were returned because respondents had moved and forwarding information was not available. Response rates in the present study were also affected by outdated mailing lists. Offering

incentives to participation is one way to increase response rates (Salant & Dillman, 1994). While Hollingsworth (1995) did not offer any incentives for participation in her study, Rosenthal and Groze (1993) obtained a 60% response rate in their study of special-needs adoption families who adopted from large public agencies. The authors felt that offering the families who participated in their study the chance to win a gift increased their response rate. With this in mind the families participating in this study were offered the choice of participating in a drawing for one of six \$50 savings bonds for the adopted child.

Step One: The first step in the survey process involved preparing and mailing the initial surveys to the families. The study questionnaire was comprised of the Child Behavior Check List (parent version) (Achenbach & Edelbrock, 1983), the Parenting Stress Index (Abidin, 1986), the Acknowledgement of Difference Scale developed by Kirk (1964) and modified by McRoy, Grotevant and Zurcher (1988) and the African American Adoptive Family Questionnaire. The survey packet also included an introductory letter from the agency director and a letter from actress Victoria Rowell. Ms. Rowell is known as a strong advocate for African American adoption and children in foster care and has established a foundation to support children in the foster care system. Other survey materials included a cover letter, a writing instrument (ballpoint pen) with which to complete the survey and a self addressed stamped envelope with the investigator's address in which to return the survey (see appendices for copies of all survey materials). A writing instrument was enclosed in

the survey packet as it has been suggested that this may encourage respondents to complete the survey immediately upon its receipt

Survey packets were prepared in advance and delivered to the adoption agencies personally by the researcher. The agencies created mailing lists of families which fit the research protocol. Each family was assigned a survey number and a list was created documenting the assigned survey numbers of each family. The surveys were then mailed to the families by the agency

Step Two: Approximately two weeks after the questionnaire had been mailed, all members of the sample who had not returned the survey were sent a follow-up postcard which reminded the families to complete and return the questionnaire.

Step Three: Two weeks after the follow-up post card was mailed, families from the Institute for Black Parenting which had not yet responded to the survey, were sent another complete survey packet. Along with the second survey, a letter explaining why their participation was important was also sent. The second surveys were mailed in very bright color envelopes with the hope that it would catch the attention of the recipients. While the plan was that the second mailing to families from the Black Adoption Placement and Research Center would occur two weeks after the first reminder post-card was sent, the mailing did not actually occur until 4 weeks afterward.

Step Four Two weeks after the second mailing of surveys was completed by each agency, a second reminder post-card was sent to the adoptive families who had not yet responded. Two weeks after this, the data collection period ended.

### Study Variables and Their Relationships

There have been few studies that evaluate the post-adoption adjustment of African American adoptive families. The methodological shortcomings of the previous studies of African American adoptive family outcomes limit the generalizability of existing research in the area. The scarcity of prior research on African American adoptive family outcomes highlight the possibility that unique qualities may exist between African American and other adoptive families as well as among different types of African American adoptive families. It is also quite possible that such differences do not exist at all. The variables included in the study provide a basis for comparing demographic and outcome data between the agencies participating in the study and the different types of adoptive families as well (single versus two-parent families and younger versus older child adoptions). In addition, comparisons were made between demographic data on the study sample to demographic data on the population of California African American adoptive families.

Beyond the comparative analyses of study data, bivariate relationships were evaluated for statistical significance with the dependent variables. These analysis, which assessed the nature and strength of the relationship between the independent and dependent variables lead to further examination of the parent/child attachment construct. Given the exploratory nature of the study the hypothesized relationships are primarily based on the adoption literature. The variables examined in the study and the hypothesized relationships among the study variables are explicated below.

#### Study Variables

The independent variables in the study include Adoptive Parent Personal Factors, Adoptive Family Factors, Adopted Child Factors and Adoptive Family Demographic Characteristics. The Dependent Variables also include Child Behavior Problems as well as Adoptive Family Adjustment, Satisfaction with the Adoption, Acknowledgement or Rejection of Difference, and Parenting Stress. The following table (4.1) lists the variables included in the study.

Table 4.1  
Variable Names, Types and their Level of Measurement included in the study

<b>Factor</b>	<b>Variable Type</b>	<b>Variable Name</b>	<b>Level of Measurement</b>
Adoptive Parent	Independent	Parenting Stress	Interval/Ratio
	Independent	Experience w/Informal Adoption	Nominal
	Independent	Experience w/Formal Adoption	Nominal
Adoptive Family	Independent	Use of Post Adoption Services	Ordinal
	Independent	Type of Adoptive Family	Nominal
	Independent	Religious Involvement	Ordinal
Family Demographics	Control	Adoptive Parents' Ages	Interval/Ratio
	Control	Parents' Occupation	Ordinal
	Control	Parents' Education	Interval/Ratio
	Control	Parents' Employment	Ordinal
	Control	Parents' Income	Ordinal
Adopted Child	Mediating	Abuse History	Ordinal
	Mediating	Placement History	Ordinal
	Mediating	Child's Gender	Nominal
	Mediating	Age at Adoption	Interval/Ratio
	Mediating	Child's Present Age	Interval/Ratio
	Mediating	Child Behavior Type	Interval/Ratio
	Mediating	Parent/Child Attachment	Ordinal
Satisfaction	Dependent	Satisfaction w/Adoption	Ordinal
Child Behavior	Dependent	Child Behavior	Interval/Ratio
Acknowledgment of Difference	Dependent	Acknowledgement of Difference	Interval/Ratio
Adjustment to the Adoption	Dependent	Adoptive Family Adjustment	Interval/Ratio
Attitude toward Open Adoption	Dependent	Attitude toward Open Adoption	Ordinal
Parenting Stress	Dependent	Parenting Stress	Interval/Ratio

While some of the adoption literature suggests that hypothesis could be formed to indicate directional relationships between the variables being examined in

this study, many studies which have included African American subjects have not conducted separate analysis by race. Thus no information is available which can provide a foundation sufficiently strong to state directional hypothesis for an African American sample. For example, Rosenthal & Groze, 1991) found that there was no significant relationship between child behavior and satisfaction with the adoption among the 'minority' adoptive families in their study. Though the majority of the 'minority' families participating in their study were African American, the fact that the authors were not able to do any analysis comparing the scores of different 'minority' adoptive families, makes it difficult to conclude that this finding would be true of African American adoptive families.

Nonetheless, the adoption literature (Barth & Berry, 1988) suggests that there is a relationship between child behavior, child's age at placement, number of previous placements, and child abuse history and the development of parent/child attachment. Other theoretical models of adoptive family relationships, such as that of Kirk (p. 108-114, 1964) acknowledge that adoptive family relationships can be better understood when analyzed within the contexts of the genus of 'minority group' membership. Still there is no analysis or examination of how well the theoretical model works with members of ethnic minority groups. The question as to whether Kirk's theorized relationship between acknowledgement of the difference and adoptive family adjustment holds true for African American adoptive parents who have long had to deal with 'accepting their minority group position and make it a

position of strength' (Kirk, p. 111, 1964). The diagram entitled "Variable Relationship Model", which can be found in the appendices, displays the factors that influence post-adoption outcomes among African American adoptive families and outlines the relationship between these factors and the post-adoption outcomes examined in the study.

The model indicates a hypothesized relationship between the adoptive family's social economic status which include the variables adoptive parents' age, education, occupation, income and employment status are hypothesized to have a relationship with the adoptive parents' satisfaction with the adoption and level of parenting stress. Similarly, adoptive parents' personal factors which include infertility, experience with both formal and informal adoption are also hypothesized to have a relationship with Parenting Stress and Satisfaction with the adoption.

Attachment has always been an important factor in any discussion of adoptive family relationships (Fahlberg, 1979; Rosenthal & Groze, 1992). As is indicated in the variable relationship model, the variable parent/child attachment is viewed as both a dependent and a mediating variable. The diagram indicates a reciprocal relationship between Parent/Child Attachment and the variables Child Behavior and Satisfaction with the Adoption. Parent/Child Attachment is also thought to be influenced by Adoptive Parents' Personal Factors and Adoptive Family Factors. Adoptive Family Adjustment and Attitudes toward Openness (open adoption) are also hypothesized to

be influenced by Adoptive Family Factors, which include the variables Time Since the Adoption, Religious Involvement and Use of Post-Adoption Services.

Adopted Child Factors are also hypothesized to relate to Child Behavior and the Adoptive Family Adjustment. Child's Personal Factors include the variables which indicate the type of adoptive family (single vs. two-parent family), the child's age at placement, the number of pre-adoptive placements and the child's history of abuse and neglect. These variables are thought to have a relationship to the outcome variables, Child's Behavior and Adoptive Family's Adjustment. A description of the measures to be used in the proposed study and operational definitions of the variables in the relationship model are offered below.

### Research Variables and Measures

#### Child Behavior Checklist/4-18

The variable, Child Behavior, is based on scores on the Child Behavior Checklist & Profile for Ages 4-18 (CBCL/4-18). The Child Behavior Checklist (Achenbach & Edelbrock, 1983) is comprised of 138 items. The CBCL/4-18 obtains parents' reports of children's competencies and problems. The CBCL/4-18 includes 20 competency assessment items and 118 problem assessment items.

The Competency scale uses the ratings of the amount, quality and number of sports, hobbies, organizations and jobs the child participates in to evaluate the child on 3 competence scales and gives a total competence score. Parents are asked to evaluate the degree to which a child gets along with parents, peers and siblings, and the degree to which the child is able to work and play alone. The scale also asks parents to report on the child's academic performance, whether the child has repeated grades in school and whether the child attends special education classes.

The 118 problem evaluation items assess eight cross-informant syndromes, which include Aggressive Behavior, Anxiety/Depression, Attention Problems, Delinquent Behavior, Social Problems, Somatic Complaints, Thought Problems and Withdrawal.

The degree to which the child internalizes or externalizes feelings is assessed on the Internalizing and Externalizing scales and a Total Problem scale score is also given. Parents are asked to circle 0's, 1's and 2's to indicate the degree to which a problem occurs or is true. If an item is not true of their child, the parent circles the number 0. If the item is sometimes or somewhat true of their child the parent circles the number 1. If the item is often true or very true of their child, the parent circles the number 2. The Total Problem Score is the sum of all 0's, 1's and 2's. Cross-informant Syndromes scored from the CBCL/4-18 Scales are based on parents' ratings of 4,455 clinically referred children and were normed on 2,368 non-referred children. The test-

re-test reliability of the CBCL/4-18 is quite good with ranges of .82 for boys age 12-16 years and .90 for girls in the same age group.

### Parenting Stress Index:

Total scores on the parenting stress scale will be used to operationalize the variable, parenting stress. The Parenting Stress Index (PSI)(Abidin, 1986) is comprised of 101 items. The PSI uses parents' self-reports to identify stress factors accompanying parent-child interaction that may be associated with problems in both the child's development and unsatisfactory care taking on the part of the parents.

Items on the PSI fall into 13 subscales and are divided between two domains, child characteristics and mother characteristics. The 13 subscales assess the degree of:

1. Child Adaptability/Plasticity,
2. Acceptability of Child to Mother,
3. Child's Demandingness/Degree of Bother,
4. Child Mood
5. Child's Distractibility/Activity,
6. Child Reinforces Mother,
7. Mothers Sense of Competence,
8. Mother's Depression/Happiness/Guilt,
9. Mother's Attachment,
10. Restrictions Imposed by Parenting Role,
11. Social Isolation,
12. Relationship with Spouse and
13. Parental Health.

All items on the PSI are forced response using both multiple choice and Likert-Scale response categories. The majority of items use a Likert-scale, which indicates the degree to which the respondent agrees or disagrees with the items. The PSI has

been normed on samples of both clinical and non-clinical parents. The range of test-retest reliability of the PSI domains is mixed. The child domain is .61 which is the lowest test-retest reliability of the domains. The test-retest reliability for the mother domain is very good at .91 and the total score had a test-retest reliability of .96, which is also very good (Abidin, 1986).

#### Acknowledgement of Difference Scale:

The “Then and Now” scores from Kirk’s (1964) acknowledgement of difference scale, as modified by McRoy et al. (1988), will be used to operationalize the variable, acknowledgement of difference. The Acknowledgement of Difference Scale (ADS) was developed by Kirk (1964) and later modified by McRoy, Grotevant & Zurcher (1988). As modified by McRoy, Grotevant & Zurcher (1988), the ADS is a parent self-report scale which is comprised of two scales. Both scales use a Likert-scale response category to evaluate the degree to which adoptive parents acknowledge the differences of their status as adoptive parents, empathy toward the adopted child and parent-child communication on adoption within the family. One scale asks parents to answer items which relate back to the time when the child was 6 months old. The other scale asks parents to answer items based on the present. For the purposes of this study, adoptive parents will be asked to answer questions on the “Then” scale focusing on the time when the child was initially placed with them. Kirk (1997) clarified that in his conceptualization, rejection of difference is not a monolithic concept, but rather “a part of a continuum from “acknowledgement” to

“rejection of difference.” Some authors have interpreted Kirk’s theory to mean that there is a direct relationship between rejection of difference and low levels of parent child communication (Benson et al., 1994). However, in a recent publication, Kirk (1997) asserted that his work does not state that there is a direct relationship between “rejection of difference” and poor level of parent-child communication. Kirk (1997) states what his studies have found is, “a statistically probable association between “rejection of difference,” little empathy and inadequate parent-child communication.” Kirk (1981) sustains the validity of his theory by presenting several studies with findings that support his Acknowledgment or Rejection of Difference theory.

#### African American Adoptive Family Questionnaire:

The African American Adoptive Family Questionnaire is an 80 item forced response and short answer questionnaire that was developed for the purposes of this study. The items on the questionnaire were developed based on the literature on special needs adoption, open adoption and African American adoption.

Some questions on the African American Adoptive Family Questionnaire were constructed based on questions asked in other adoption studies (Grotevant & McRoy 1995; Groza, 1993; Gusukuma, 1996; Hollingsworth, 1990). The questionnaire asks adoptive parents to answer questions that explore their perceptions, experiences, motivation and attitudes toward adoptive family life.

The African American Adoptive Family Questionnaire (see appendices) is comprised of four sections which included Family Background Information, Child’s

Background Information, Adoption Agency Experiences, and Experiences with Adoption. The section on Family Background addresses demographic information on the adoptive parent(s). The section on the Child's Background asks questions about the child's pre-adoptive placement history and knowledge of the adoption. The section on Adoption Agency Experiences asks about families' experiences with the adoption process. The section on Experiences with Adoption explores the role of adoption in the family's life experiences and identity.

### Data Analysis

In spite of efforts to increase the response rate for the study, as with Hollingsworth (1995) the response rate was negatively impacted by inaccurate mailing addresses for the families. Using the response rate formula outlined by Lohr (1999) in which the number of responses received is divided by the number of possible responses (i.e. the number of African American families who actually received the survey), the response rate was as follows. Of the 368 surveys mailed, 102 were returned due to bad addresses or expired forwarding orders. In addition, seven of the surveys received could not be used as they did not meet the criteria for participation in the study. Thus the population from which surveys could be received was comprised of 259 families. The sample for this study is comprised of African American adoptive families in California who have adopted both children who have been voluntarily placed for adoption by their birth-parents and children in the California Foster Care system. The families were all recruited and had their home

studies completed by one of two private African American adoption agencies, the Institute for Black Parenting in Los Angeles, California or The Black Adoption Placement and Research Center in Oakland, California. A total of 83 completed surveys were received. Based on the reduced population size, this constitutes a response rate of 32.05%.

A series of statistical comparisons were made between State data on the population of all adoptive families in California to assess the degree to which the sample fits the study sample fits or is comparable with the population of California African American adopters. The purpose of this first step in the data analysis process was to rule out the possibility that alternative hypothesis are influencing the observed outcomes and to understand to whom the studies findings relate.

Data were coded and entered into SPSS data files. Statistical analysis of the data will be conducted using SPSS 10.1 for windows. Frequencies, means and standard deviations as well as other descriptive statistics were used to analyze and provide information regarding the demographic data on the adoptive families and children participating in the study. Depending on the level of measurement for the collected data, other inferential statistical methods were used. Initial analyses were conducted using parametric statistics such as the chi-square, T-test for equality of means and the Pearson's r correlation analysis. The findings of the initial analyses

were confirmed using equivalent non-parametric statistics such as the Spearman's Rho and Mann-Whitney U tests.

Three broad sets of comparisons were made as a part of the data analysis process. As was previously mentioned, the first set of comparisons focused on comparing family demographic information from the proposed study's sample with population statistics on family demographics. Comparisons of family demographic variables were also made across the two agencies participating in the study to support combining the groups into one sample. There was a two-fold purpose for these comparisons. The first purpose is to ascertain whether the study sample is representative of the population of all African American adoptive families or if differences between White public and private agency adopters are also present among African Americans. The second goal of these comparisons is to assess the degrees to which across agency comparisons are valid. That is, if significant differences on demographic data were found when comparing the adoptive families from the two agencies, the decision to combine the two data would not be supported.

The second set of comparisons focused on child characteristics. These comparisons assess the degree to which the adopted children from each agency participating in the study differ or are similar. Once again, these comparisons were done to determine whether it was appropriate to combine the agency samples.

The third set of comparisons, within study comparisons, included across family type comparisons (single versus two-parent families), across child type comparisons (children adopted as infants versus children adopted at an older age) across socioeconomic status comparisons (low, middle and high SES). These comparisons were used to assess the degree to which family type, age of child at adoption and socioeconomic status influence the outcome measures in the study.

Along with the comparisons between this study's data and state-wide adoption data, comparisons between the California Adoption Data and that of the individual agencies participating in the study will be based on the use of California data for Black families only. Population data were obtained from reports provided by the State Child Welfare Research Center (CWRC) at the University of California at Berkeley. CWRC collects and manages the statewide data on adoption and has made reports on the population statistics for the entire state. Statistical comparisons of the proposed study's data were made with statewide data which is reported on the California Adoptions 42R form. The 42R form must be submitted before an adoption can be finalized in the State of California. The 42R form reports data on adoptive family marital status, educational background, income, family size, race, gender and other demographic variables. The 42R also provides information on the child's age at adoption, date of birth and date of entry into child welfare custody as well as other information on the adopted child's background.

Comparisons to State adoption data were made to test whether the study sample is truly representative of the population of African American adoptive families in California. Diagrams one through three (see appendices) outline each set of comparisons which were conducted as a part of the study's data analysis. The diagrams indicate the comparison variables that will be used to compare data from this study to data reported by the Child Welfare Research Center on adoptive families in California. Comparisons between the California Adoption data and data for the agencies participating in the study were based on the use of California data for Black families only. The following section offers operational definitions and their measurement.

### Study Variables and their Measurement

#### Independent Variables

The independent variables used in the study are measured based on responses to questions on the African American Adoptive Family Questionnaire. The Independent variables and their measurement for the study include the following:

Family Factors as measured by responses to selected questions on the African American Adoptive Family survey.

Adoptive Parent Personal Factors as measured by responses to selected questions on the African American Adoptive Family survey.

Child Factors as measured by responses to selected questions on the African American Adoptive Family Questionnaire.

Demographic Characteristics as measured by responses to selected questions on the African American Adoptive Family Questionnaire.

#### Mediating Variables and Their Measurement

Mediating variables are extraneous attributes which are built into the study design as independent variables. The purpose of their inclusion in the study is to control for their effect on the dependent variables. For example in other adoption outcome studies family type, a child's age at adoption and the length of time a child has been in the adoptive home have been found to influence satisfaction with the adoption and post-adoption adjustment. Mediating variables and their measurement include:

Type of Family as reported by participants' report of whether theirs is a single or two-parent family.

Age at time of Adoption whether the child was adopted as an infant or an older child.

Older child is defined as those children adopted after the age of two.

Number of Children in the adoptive family is defined as the total number of biological and adopted children in the adoptive family as reported by participants.

Length of Placement is the amount of time that the adopted child has been in the home.

Adopted Child's History of Abuse is based on the parents' reports of the nature and severity of the abuse or neglect a child experienced prior to their adoptive placement.

Adopted Child's Pre-Adoptive Placement History is defined as the parents' report of the number of homes the adopted child lived in prior to their adoptive placement.

### Dependent Variables and Their Measurement

The African American Adoptive Family Questionnaire measures the dependent variables, child behavior parenting stress, attachment, satisfaction with the adoption, adoptive family adjustment, acknowledgment of difference and attitude toward open adoption. Standardized instruments were used to measure the dependent variables, Acknowledgement of Difference, Attachment, Child Behavior and Parenting Stress. Dependent Variables and their measurement are as follows:

Attachment Degree of attachment is operationalized as the score on the attachment scale for the Parenting Stress Index (Abidin, 1986).

Adoptive Family Adjustment is operationalized as the composite scores for the summed value of three Likert-scale questions on the African American Adoptive Family Questionnaire. All items related to post-adoption adjustment were entered into a reliability analysis in SPSS. The three questions identified in the analysis as reliable indicators of adoptive family adjustment (Chronbach's  $\alpha = .6945$ ) were "How well would you rate the degree to which your child fits in your family at the present time?" (question #51); How well has your family adjusted to the adoption? (question # 50) and respondents' agreement with the statement " Raising an adopted child is more difficult than I thought" (question #59). Scores for this variable could range from 3 to 18. Higher composite scores on these scales indicate better levels of adoptive family adjustment.

Satisfaction with the Adoption: Gusukuma (1996) used a composite variable to operationalize satisfaction with the adoption. Similarly, this study used the summed value of Likert-scale questions on the African American Adoptive Family Questionnaire to determine adoptive parents' satisfaction with the adoption. The following three items comprised the variable: "In general how satisfied are you with the adoption?" (question #42); "How would you rate the communication between you

and your child?” (question #45) and “How often do you and your child spend time together that you both enjoy? (question #46)” As with the composite variable for adjustment to the adoption, all questionnaire items were included in the reliability analysis and the above three items proved to be most reliable in measuring satisfaction with the adoption (Cronbach’s alpha = .8182). Scores for this variable could range from 3 to 14. Higher composite scores on these scales indicate higher levels of satisfaction with the adoption.

Attitude toward Open Adoption To evaluate the reliability of respondent’s attitudes toward open adoption, survey questions 52 through 58 on the African American Adoptive Family Questionnaire were entered into the reliability analysis. These too were Likert scale items which assessed the degree to which a family would be willing to have contact with the target child’s birth family members. A two item model emerged which provided the most reliable measure of respondents’ attitudes toward open adoption (Cronbach’s alpha = .7219). Scores for this variable could range from 2 to 10. Higher scores on the composite variable for Attitude Toward Openness indicate more positive attitudes toward open adoption.

The dependent variables that are measured using standardized instruments include:

Acknowledgment of Difference was measured based on the ‘Then’ and ‘Now’ scores of Kirk’s Acknowledgement of Difference Scale (1981) as modified by McRoy, Grotevant and Zurcher (1988). The scores assess the degree of acknowledgement of difference, empathy toward the adopted child and communication among adoptive family members.

Child Behavior was measured based on the total problem scores on the Parent Version of the Achenbach Child Behavior Checklist ( Achenbach & Edelbrock, 1983). Scores on the two sub-scales Internalizing Behaviors and Externalizing Behaviors were also analyzed. The scores assess a broad range of behavioral problems that concern both parents and children.

Parenting Stress was measured based on the total scores on the Parenting Stress Index developed by Abidin (1986). The Parenting Stress Index identifies stress factors, which emanate from the child, the parent and their context.

A detailed description of the sample is provided in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### DESCRIPTION OF THE SAMPLE

This chapter provides a description of the 83 African American adoptive families who participated in the study. The families had adopted children from one of two private African American adoption agencies in California. Seventy-three surveys (88%), were completed by the adoptive mother, the remaining 10 surveys (12%) were completed by the adoptive father. The 83 families from whom data were collected were comprised of 81 adoptive mothers, 60 adoptive fathers and 83 adopted children. Demographic data on the adoptive parents as well as their experiences with formal and informal adoption, motivation to adopt and participation in adoption assistance programs and other post-adoption services are detailed as well. Demographic information on the children adopted by these families is also outlined. Descriptions provided by the adoptive parents on their children's pre-adoption history, including the reason they were placed for adoption, the nature and degree of pre-adoption abuse and neglect and the number of pre-adoption homes they lived in are provided.

Analysis comparing the characteristics of the adoptive families from each agency revealed no statistically significant differences. Analyses comparing the adoptive family characteristics of the sample to those of the population of African American adoptive families in California revealed many significant differences which make clear the distinctions between African American families who adopt through

private versus public adoption agencies. Descriptions of the commonalties in characteristics across agencies and the disparities in the sample and population of African American adoptive families are explicated in specific sections of chapter six.

### Characteristics of Adoptive Parents in the Sample

#### Adoptive Parents' Age

Adoptive mothers ranged in age from 32 to 69 years at the time of the survey, with the average age for adoptive mothers being 45.14 years. Adoptive fathers were slightly older than adoptive mothers were; their ages ranged from 35 to 63 years. The average age for adoptive fathers at the time of the survey was 46.10 years. At the time of the finalization of their adoptions, adoptive mothers had an average age which was quite close to 38 years (mean = 37.98) and adoptive fathers were just slightly older (mean = 38.42 years).

#### Adoptive Parents' Marital Status

The majority (58 or 69.9%) of families participating in the study was two-parent households. Twenty-three (27.7%) of the participant families were members of single parent households. With the exception of one adoptive mother who reported that she was living with, but not married to her male partner, all of the two-parent families were married. One family was comprised of an adoptive mother living with a mate. Two (2.4%) respondents did not indicate their marital status. Of the 23

respondents who indicated that theirs was a single parent family, only two (8.3%) were headed by adoptive fathers. Not surprisingly, the overwhelming majority (91.7%) of single adoptive parents was adoptive mothers. Seventeen of the twenty-three (73.9%) single adoptive parents reported never having been married. Five of the single parent families (21.7%) had been previously married, but were now divorced; one (4.4%) single adoptive parent reported that they were separated from their spouse.

#### Adoptive Parents' Education

Respondents were asked to indicate the highest level of education they and their spouse/mated had obtained (See Table 5.1 for a summary of adoptive parents' education, profession and employment status). Among the adoptive mothers, those who had never attended college (5) were a substantial minority and comprised only 6.3% of the sample. Nineteen percent of the adoptive mothers (15) had attended some college and 12.7% (10) had Associates Degrees. Bachelor's Degrees were held by 22.8% (18) of the adoptive mothers and 8.9% (7) reported attending some graduate school. The largest group of adoptive mothers (24 or 30.4%) had graduate degrees. Educational attainment was missing for two adoptive mothers.

Though not as highly degreed as the adoptive mothers, the adoptive fathers were also highly educated. Only eight (13.3%) of the adoptive fathers did not go beyond earning a high school diploma. Adoptive fathers who had attended some

college comprised 21.7% (13) of the sample, 8 (13.3%) had Associate Degrees and 14 (23.3%) had Bachelor's Degrees. Adoptive fathers who had attended some graduate school totaled 6.7% (4) of the sample and graduate degrees were held by 21.7% (13) of the adoptive fathers. Educational status was missing for two adoptive fathers.

### Adoptive Parents' Profession

Many of the respondents did not note their job titles. The response was missing for 34.9% of mothers and 28.9% of fathers. As would be expected given their high level of education, most adoptive mother's and fathers who reported their job titles worked as professionals (i.e. teachers, social workers, attorneys and professors). 39(72.2%) of the adoptive mothers who reported their job titles worked as professionals. Eleven (20.4%) worked in clerical or secretarial positions and the remaining 7.5% (4) of adoptive mothers who reported their job titles worked in service or trade positions (i.e. hair stylist, childcare worker).

As with adoptive mothers, the majority (62.9%) of adoptive fathers worked in professional positions such as college professors, physicians and attorneys. Six adoptive fathers (17.1%) who reported their job titles worked in service industries (computer repair etc.), five (14.3%) worked in the professional trades as construction workers, carpenters and electricians) and the remaining 5.7% (2) worked as laborers.

Table 5.1  
 Adoptive Parents' Education, Profession & Employment Status

	<u>Mother (%)</u> (n = 79)	<u>Father (%)</u> (n = 60)
<b>Highest Education Level</b>		
GED/High School	5 (6.4)	8 (13.3)
Some College	15 (19.0)	13 (21.7)
Associate Degree	10 (12.7)	8 (13.3)
Bachelor Degree	18 (22.8)	14 (23.3)
Some Graduate School	7 (8.9)	4 (6.7)
Graduate Degree	24 (30.4)	13 (21.7)
<b>Professional Code</b>		
Professional	39 (72.2)	22 (62.9)
Clerical/Secretarial	11 (20.4)	-
Service	3 (5.6)	5 (17.1)
Trades	1 (1.9)	6 (14.3)
Laborer	-	2 (5.7)
<b>Employment Status</b>		
Full-Time	59 (74.7)	50 (83.3)
Part-Time	7 (8.9)	5 (8.3)
Unemployed	13 (16.5)	5 (8.3)

Adoptive Parents' Employment Status

Not surprisingly, given their high education and status as professionals, most of the adoptive mothers (59 or 74.7%) were employed full-time. Only 8.9% (7) of the adoptive mothers reported working part-time. The remaining 16.5% (13) adoptive mothers who responded to the question on employment status reported that they were “stay-at-home” mothers and did not work outside the home.

Fifty of the sixty adoptive fathers participating in the study (91.7%) worked full-time. Equal numbers of adoptive fathers (5 or 8.3% each) worked only part-time or were “stay-at-home” fathers.

### Adoptive Parents' Income

Education, profession and employment statuses are well-recognized indicators of income. The high level of education, tendency for full-time employment and working as professionals would indicate that the African American adoptive families in the sample would have higher incomes and this is what was found for the families that reported their gross yearly income. While these results should be interpreted in context of the fact that 38.6% of the respondents did not answer the question regarding their income, they may portray a fairly accurate picture. According to Brooks, Barth & Iyer (1995), in 1982, nearly two-thirds of adoptive families who adopted independently (through private agencies) in California earned yearly gross incomes of \$50,000 or more. When looking at the entire sample of African American adoptive families who answered the question on income, the average yearly gross income earned was approximately \$67,125 (s.d. = ~\$20,033). When analyzed according to family type, the mean yearly gross income earned by single-parent adoptive families was \$51,471 per year (s.d. = ~\$23,618). Two-parent adoptive families who reported their yearly gross incomes on average earned ~\$73,543 (s.d. = ~\$14,386) each year.

### Adoptive Parents' Religious Affiliation & Involvement

Eighty-two of the 83 adoptive families reported their religious affiliations. The majority of the adoptive parents (66.3%) identified themselves as members of

protestant faiths (African Methodist Episcopal, Baptist & Pentecostal). Twelve of the families (14.5%) indicated they were members of “Other” faiths such as Non-Denominational Christian, Jewish and B’hai. Eleven (13.3%) of the adoptive parents were Catholic and 4.8% (4) indicated that they had no religious affiliation.

Of those families reporting a religious affiliation, most indicated that they were actively involved in their religious communities. Thirty-eight percent described themselves as “Very Active” in terms of their involvement in their religious communities; an additional 36.7% said that they were “Moderately Active” to “Active” in their religious communities. Only 25.4% of those with a religious affiliation reported that they were “Slightly Active” or “Not Active.”

#### Adoptive Parents’ Experience with Informal Adoption

Twelve (16.4%) of the adoptive parents indicated that they had themselves been informally adopted. In explaining why they were informally adopted, most (33.3%) reported that their informal adoption was a result of their birth parents’ inability to care for them for financial or other reasons. Twenty-five percent were informally adopted after their parents’ death or remarriage and another 25% were informally adopted for unspecified (“Other”) reasons. Two (16.7%) went to live with another relative with their parents’ permission at that relatives request.

Twenty of the respondents (25%) indicated that one of their parents had been informally adopted. Again, the largest group (8 or 38.1%) was informally adopted as a result of their parents' inability to care for them for financial or other reasons. Five (23.9%) were informally adopted with their parents permission after their own or a relatives request. Seven (33.3%) indicated that the informal adoption was for an unspecified ("Other") reason.

#### Adoptive Parents' Experience with Formal Adoption

Though the great majority of adoptive parents had no experience with formal adoption, 25.3% (20) of the sample reported being adopted themselves or having an adopted spouse or other family member. Eight (36.4%) of the adopted family members were either the respondent or their spouse. Five (22.7%) of the adopted family members were the mother or father of an adoptive parent, 13.6% (3) were siblings of an adoptive parent and 27.3% (6) were cousins of the adoptive parent.

#### Adoptive Parents' Motivations to Adopt

When considering all adoptive families most cited (42.7%) infertility as their primary motivation to adopt. While 91.4% of the two-parent families cited infertility as their primary motivation, only 5.7% of single-parent families did the same. The second most often cited motivation to adopt (31.7%) was a desire on the part of adoptive parents to share their blessings with a child. This was the most often cited

reason (43.5%) for single-parent adoptions. Another 11% of the sample indicated that a desire to provide a home for an African American child was their primary motivation (21.7% of single and 6.9% of two parent families). This was the third most often cited reason motivating families to adopt.

#### Number of Adoptive Parents' Birth and Adopted Children

Thirty of the adoptive parents (36.2%) had birth children. Twenty-five percent (6) of the single adoptive parents had children by birth, with an average of two birth-children per single adoptive family. Twenty-four (41.4%) of the two-parent adoptive families had children by birth with an average of 1.58 birth-children per two-parent adoptive family. Taken as a whole, the sample had a mean of .61 birth-children per family.

The 24 single-parent adoptive families adopted a total of 41 children, averaging 1.7 adopted children per family. It is surprising that single parents had more adopted children than their married counterparts. These numbers are somewhat misleading at face value as one single-parent family had adopted five children and another had adopted seven. The 58 two parent adoptive families had adopted a total of 94 adopted children or 1.6 adopted children per family. The average number of adopted children for the entire sample was 1.64.

### Adoptive Parents' Methods of Discipline & Their Efficacy

Both single (39.1%) and two-parent families (43.1%) reported that they were most likely to use loss of privileges as a method of discipline. Forty-two percent (34) of all adoptive parents reported that they were most likely to use loss of privileges as a method of discipline. Single and two-parent families differed on the second most likely method of discipline used. Single parents indicated that restriction or having to stay home was the second most likely (34.8%) method of discipline, while only 15.5% of two-parent families using this method of discipline. Time-outs or sending a child to his or her room was the second most likely method of discipline (29.3%) for two-parent adoptive families. Four two-parent (6.9%) and one single parent (4.3%) families reported spanking as the method of discipline they were most likely to use.

Seventy-two percent of the adoptive families indicated that their most likely method of discipline was “Very Effective” or “Effective” the remaining 26.8% of the families described their methods of discipline as only “Somewhat Effective or “Not Very Effective.” There were no significant differences ( $p = .209$ ) in how effective single and two-parent families found their most likely methods of discipline.

## Characteristics of the Adopted Children in the Sample

### Adopted Children's Gender & Age

The eighty-three children for whom data were gathered were comprised of 42 girls (51.9%) and 39 boys (49.1%) with information on gender missing for two children. The mean age at the time of the survey for all adopted children in the sample was 8.73 years. There was no significant difference in the mean age for girls and boys at the time of the survey ( $p = .801$ ); the average age was 8.6 years for girls and 8.8 years for boys. Nor were significant gender differences ( $p = .902$ ) found for the mean age at the time of adoption. The mean age for girls at time of adoption was 21.81 months; the mean age for boys at the time of their adoptions was 22.55 months. The mean age, at the time of their adoptions, for all adopted children was 22.16 months.

### Adopted Children's Race

Sixty-three (75.9%) of the children in the survey were of 100% African American descent. Twelve (14.5%) of the children were bi-racial African American/Caucasian, seven (8.4%) were bi-racial African American Hispanic and one (1.2%) was bi-racial African American/Asian.

### Adopted Children's Health

Parents reported that at the time of their adoptions, most of the children (68.3%) were "Very Healthy" however, 26.8% of the children were described as being only "Somewhat Healthy" and 4.8% were described as being "Not Healthy." Since their adoptions, the children's health has improved. At the time of the survey, no children were seen as "Not Healthy." In fact, 91.5% of the children were reported to be "Very Healthy" and the remaining 8.5% were describes as being "Somewhat Healthy." A paired samples t-test revealed that this represented a statistically significant improvement ( $t = 4.284$ ,  $p = < .001$ ) in the children's health since they were adopted. When comparing boys' and girls' health both at time of adoption and at the time of the survey, no significant differences ( $p = .504$ ) in health were found.

### Reason Children Were Placed for Adoption

Thirty-one of the children in the sample (37.8%) were voluntarily placed for adoption by their birth parents. Of the remaining 52 children who were taken into child welfare custody, 18 (22.0%) were abandoned by their birth parents and 34 (40.2%) were removed from their birth parent's custody due to substantiated allegations of abuse or neglect. Table 15.2 explicates the adopted children's reason for adoption, history and degree of abuse and neglect.

Table 5.2  
 Adopted Children’s Reasons for Adoption and Removal From Birth Parents and  
 Degree of Abuse or Neglect

	n	Percent (%)
<b>Reason for Adoption</b>		
Voluntary Placement by Birth Parents	31	37.8
Abandonment by Birth Parents	18	22.0
Removed from Birth Parents’ Custody	33	40.2
Missing	1	-
Total	n = 83	100.0%
<b>Reason Removed From Birth Parents</b>		
Pre-Natal Drug Exposure	32	61.5
Neglect	11	21.2
Emotional Abuse	4	7.7
Parental Incarceration	4	7.7
Sexual Abuse	1	1.9
Missing	-	-
Total	n = 52*	100.0%
<b>Degree of Abuse or Neglect</b>		
Very Severe	10	20.0
Somewhat Severe	17	34.0
Not Severe	23	46.0
Missing	2	-
Total	n = 50*	100.0%

\*numbers differ as not all the adopted children were removed from their birth parents

Adopted Children’s History of Abuse & Neglect

The primary reason children were removed from their birth parents’ custody (61.5%) and placed for adoption was pre-natal drug exposure. The secondary reason children were removed from their birth parents’ custody was neglect (21.2%). While no children in the sample were removed from their birth parents’ custody due to physical abuse, 7.7% were removed due to emotional abuse. Another 7.7% of the

children were removed from birth parents' due to their parents' incarceration and 1.9% were removed due to sexual abuse.

#### Adopted Children's Degree of Abuse and Neglect

With regard to the degree of the abuse, neglect and pre-natal drug exposure the children experienced, according to adoptive parents' reports, 20% of the children experienced "Very Severe" abuse or neglect prior to being taken into child welfare custody. Thirty-four percent of respondents described their child's pre-adoption abuse as being "Somewhat Severe." Thus more than half (54%) of the respondents describes their child's abuse experience as having some degree of severity. The remaining 46% described their child's degree of abuse, neglect or pre-natal drug-exposure as "Not Severe."

When asked how confident they were in what they were told about the nature and degree of the abuse or neglect their children experienced, 61.8% of parents said they were "Very Certain" about it. Those indicating they were "Somewhat Certain" comprised 23.6% of parents while 14.5% of parents said they were "Uncertain" about the nature and degree of abuse their children experienced prior to being adopted. Significant age and gender differences were not found in the nature or degree of abuse the children experienced.

### Number of Pre-Adoption Placements

The majority of the children in the sample (58.5%) had only lived in zero to one foster home or pre-adoptive placement prior to living with their adoptive parents. Of the children who had lived in more than one pre-adoption setting, 30.5% had lived in two to three settings, 7.3% had lived in 4-5 settings and 3.7% had lived in six or more foster homes prior to their adoptions. Gender differences were not found in the number of pre-adoption placements a child had ( $p = .116$ ).

### Children's Awareness of the Adoption

Their adoptive parents reported that most children (84.1%) were aware that they were adopted. Of the 13 children who were not aware (15.9%), all but one (7.7%) had parents whom indicated that they planned to tell the child they were adopted. The mean age of the children who had been told that they were adopted was 4.12 years though the age at which children were told of the adoption ranges from age 1 to age 11.

### Adopted Children's Contact with Birth Relatives & Previous Caregivers

The majority of the children in this sample did not have contact with birth relatives (91.6%) or previous caregivers (83.8%). However of those who did have contact with birth relatives or previous caregivers, boys were significantly more likely

to have contact with birth relatives ( $p = .038$ ) than were girls. Neither the child's age at adoption nor the child's gender were not significantly related to their contact with previous caregivers, though children were twice as likely (16.3% vs. 8.4%) to have contact with previous caregivers than with birth relatives.

### Adopted Children's Behavior Problems

Analysis of the children's Child Behavior Checklist (Achenbach & Edelbrock, 1983) scores for total problems revealed that most of the children (81.2%) were in normal range in terms of the number of behavior problems they demonstrated. The mean CBCL Total Problem score for the entire sample was 24.74. Children who scored in the normal range for total problems represented 81.1% of the sample. The remaining 19.9% of the children had Total Problem scores in the clinical range. There were no significant differences in CBCL Total Problem scores of Boys and Girls.

As with the Total Problem scores, Internalizing (89.2%) and Externalizing (79.7%) scores were in the normal range for the great majority of children in the sample. Children with normal range Internalizing scores comprised 89.2% of the sample, while children with normal range externalizing scores accounted for 79.7% of the sample. Internalizing scores in the "Borderline" range were found for 4.1% of the children in the sample. Externalizing scores in the "borderline" range were found for 2.1% of the children in the sample. While only 6.8% of the children had

internalizing scores in the “clinical” range, 17.6% of the children had externalizing scores in the clinical range. That is to say that children were more than 2.5 times more likely to have clinical range Externalizing scores than clinical range internalizing scores. No gender differences were found in the number of children with clinical range scores for internalizing or externalizing behavior problems.

Neither the adopted child’s age at placement, nature, or degree of abuse experience was significantly related to child behavior problems. However, a child being adopted due to their birth parents’ incarceration was found to be statistically significant in it’s relationship to a child’s CBCL total problem scores and having CBCL externalizing and internalizing scores in the clinical range.

The following chapter will report the findings of statistical analysis process of comparing the survey sample to the population of African American adoptive families in California. Findings on statistical comparisons of outcomes among single and two-parent adoptive families and younger and older child adoptions will also be reported along with findings of analyses aimed at exploring the bivariate relationships between independent and dependent variables and explaining the variance in those dependent variables.

## CHAPTER SIX

### ANALYSES & RESULTS

#### Sample and Population Comparisons

The Independent Samples T-test and Chi Square Goodness-of Fit procedures were used to assess the degree to which the sample was representative of the population of African American adoptive families in California. Comparisons of Adoptive mothers' and fathers' age, education, income, employment status, number of adopted children, number of birth children and adopted child's age at adoption. Results of these analyses, as indicated in Table 6.1, revealed that, with the exception of adoptive father's employment status, the sample was in no way representative of the population.

It has been documented that private agency adoptive families differ dramatically from private agency adoptive families in terms of their demographic make-up (i.e. age, education, income, profession and age of children they adopt) (California Department of Social Services, 2001). And while these differences were confirmed in the results of the statistical comparisons of the study's sample of African American private agency adopters to the population of all African American adopters (public and private agency adopters), these differences have implications in

terms of the generalizability of the findings. The findings of the present study cannot necessarily be generalized to all African American adoptive families or to all African American families who adopt children from public agencies. It is with this in mind that the findings reported in this chapter should be interpreted.

### Adoptive Parents' Age

Among the population of California's African American adoptive mothers who adopted children between 1990 and 1995, at the time of the adoption's finalization, the mean age was 44 years versus a mean age of 38.98 for the mothers in the sample. Thus, mothers in the sample were significantly younger ( $p = < .001$ ) than those in the population. Similarly, the population of African American adoptive fathers had a mean age of 45 at the time of finalization, while the mean age for adoptive fathers in the sample was 38.40. As with the adoptive mothers, adoptive fathers in the sample were significantly younger ( $p = < .001$ ) than their population counterparts.

Table 6.1  
 Comparisons of Sample and Population Means on Demographic Variables for  
 African American Adoptive Families in California

Variable	Sample Mean	Population mean	Statistic	Sig.* (2-tailed)
<b>Age at Adoption Finalization</b>				
Adoptive Mother's Age	38.98	45.14	t = -6.598	<.001
Adoptive Father's Age	38.40	46.10	t = -6.845	<.001
<b>Adoptive Mother's Education</b>				
High School Grad. **	5.0	38.4	X <sup>2</sup> = 89.979	<.001
College Grad. **	54.4	55.4		
Graduate School Grad. **	39.2	5.8		
<b>Adoptive Father's Education</b>				
High School Grad. **	13.3	37.0	X <sup>2</sup> = 42.438	<.001
College Grad. **	58.3	57.9		
Graduate School Grad. **	28.3	5.1		
<b>Adoptive Mother's Employment</b>				
Full-Time**	74.7	50.1	X <sup>2</sup> = 19.459	<.001
Part-Time**	8.9	13.3		
Unemployed**	16.5	36.6		
<b>Adoptive Father's Employment</b>				
Full-Time**	83.3	81.2	X <sup>2</sup> = 3.102	.212
Part-Time**	8.3	5.0		
Unemployed**	8.3	13.8		
<b>Annual Gross Family Income</b>	\$67,124	\$46,833	t = -6.845	<.001
<b>Child Demographics</b>				
Number of Birth Children	.61	2	t = 12.869	<.001
Number of Adopted Children	1.64	2	t = -3.194	.002
Child's Age at Adoption	22.16	50.40	t = -10.519	<.001

\*p = < .01

\*\* value represents % of sample or population

#### Adoptive Parents' Education

For purposes of statistical comparisons highest education levels obtained were collapsed into three groups, those with High School Diplomas or their equivalents, those with a Bachelor's Degree and those with a Graduate or Professional School

Degree. High School diplomas were held by 38.4% of adoptive mother's in the population versus 6.3% of the mothers in the sample. Bachelor's Degrees were held by close to equal numbers of adoptive mothers in the population (55.4%) and the sample (54.4%), however adoptive mothers in the population (5.8%) were much less likely to have Graduate Degrees than adoptive mothers in the sample (39.2%).

Thirty-seven percent of adoptive fathers in the population earned High School diplomas, while only 13.3% of adoptive fathers earned High School Diplomas. Undergraduate degrees were earned by 57.9% of adoptive fathers in the population and similar numbers of adoptive fathers in the sample (58.3) had Undergraduate degrees. While only 5.1% of adoptive fathers in the population had Graduate or Professional School degrees, more than five times as many fathers in the population (28.3%) held Graduate School degrees.

#### Adoptive Parents' Employment

Adoptive mothers in the sample were more likely to be employed full-time (74.7%) than those in the population (50.1). Adoptive mothers in the population were more than twice as likely to be unemployed (36.6%) than were adoptive mothers in the sample (16.5%). More mothers in the population worked part-time (13.3%) than did mothers in the sample (8.9%) These differences in employment status were statistically significant (chi-square = 19.459,  $p < .001$ ). As was mentioned, the

differences in employment status between the population and sample of adoptive fathers were not significant (chi-square = 3.102,  $p = .212$ ).

### Adoptive Parents' Income

While the mean annual gross income for the population of African American adoptive families in California was \$46,882, the mean for the adoptive families in the sample, \$67, 124, was significantly higher ( $p = < .001$ ).

### Adoptive Parents' Children

The population of African American adoptive parents in California has, on average, two birth and two adoptive children. Adoptive families in the sample had an average of .61 birth children and 1.64 adopted children. The differences in both the number of birth children ( $p = < .001$ ) and adoptive children ( $p = .002$ ) were statistically significant as was the average age at the time the adoption for children adopted in the population (mean = 54.29 months) and the average age of children in the sample (22.16 months). Adopted children in the population were, at the time of their adoptions, on average, more than twice the age of children in the sample at the time of their adoptions. Thus, the children adopted by African American parents from private agencies are younger in age, adopted into homes which have fewer birth and adopted siblings by parents who are younger, with higher education, incomes and

more full-time employed parents than those children adopted by parents from public child welfare agencies.

Having described the sample of African American families who participated in the study and compared them to the population of African American adoptive parents in California, the focus will now turn to the findings of analyses as they relate to the examination of relationships between study variables within the sample and answering the stated research questions posed in Chapter Three.

#### Relationships Between Variables

The bivariate relationships between the study's independent and dependent variables were examined to assess the degree to which variables established as correlates to outcome measures in previous adoption studies were evident when applied to a sample of African American adoptive families. Spearman's rho, a non-parametric test of bivariate relationships was used to confirm the results of the Pearson r tests to ensure that results were accurate should the dependent variable not meet the assumption of normal distribution. No discrepancies were found in the results of the Spearman's rho and Pearson's r tests for bivariate relationships.

Tables 6.2 through 6.10 portray the two-tailed significance of bivariate relationships between the study's independent variables and the dependent variables, total child behavior problems, internalizing behavior problems, externalizing behavior

problems, parenting stress, acknowledgement of difference, satisfaction with the adoption, adoptive family adjustment, parent/child attachment and attitude toward open adoption.

### Child Behavior Problems

The independent variables initially examined to assess their relationships to post adoption outcomes were selected for inclusion in the study (see Table 4.1 based on their traditional appearance in the adoption literature and identification as variables which have an influence on adoption outcomes. In examining the bivariate relationship between these and other independent variables and child behavior problems, Pearson's  $r$  was used and the results of the analysis are reported in table 6.2a below.

Table 6.2a

## Pearson's Correlations with Total Child Behavior Problem Scores

Pearson's Correlations					
Outcome Variable: Total Child Behavior Problems					
Variable Type	Variables	Components	Pearson r	p	
Adoptive Parent Factors	Parents Age	Adoptive Mother's Age	-.040	.743	
		Adoptive Father's Age	.128	.362	
	Parent Education	Adoptive Mother's Education	.086	.481	
		Adoptive Father's Education	.096	.497	
	Parent Occupation	Adoptive Mother's Occupation	.256	.080	
		Adoptive Father's Occupation	-.045	.810	
	Parent Employment	Adoptive Mother's Employment	.106	.385	
		Adoptive Father's Employment	-.100	.481	
	Income	Adoptive Family Income	.031	.838	
		Family Structure	Two Parent Adoptive Family	.129	.272
			Birth Children in the Home	.087	.463
		Parenting Stress	PSI Total Score	.491	< .001
		Adoption Experience	Experience w/Formal Adoption	-.119	.317
			Experience w/Informal Adoption	.120	.341
		Adjustment to Adoption	Composite Adjustment Score	.004	.974
		Attachment	Parent/Child Attachment	.207	.091
	Adoption Services	Post Adoption Services Use	.125	.290	
	Satisfaction	Satisfaction with the Adoption	.376	.001**	
	Acknowledgment of Difference	Discussion of Adoption	.153	.196	
		Child Awareness of Adoption	.279	.017*	
		ADS Score	.001	.933	
	Attitude Toward Openness	Positive Attitude Toward Openness	-.122	.300	
	Religion	Religious Involvement	-.143	.239	
		Protestant Faith	.032	.794	
Adopted Child Factors	Placement Age Pre-Adoptive Placements	Child's Age at Placement	.142	.267	
		Male Child	.052	.658	
		Number of Pre-Adoption Placements	.288	.013*	
		Sexual Abuse	.093	.521	
		Neglect	.136	.347	
		Severity of Abuse	-.240	.109	
		Length of Time in Family	.089	.453	
	Child Behavior	Total Problems Score	-	-	
		Externalizing Score	.934	< .001	
		Internalizing Score	.922	< .001	

\*p = &lt; .05

\*\*p = &lt; .01

Child behavior problems were operationalized in the study as the CBCL Total Problems score. The CBCL total problem score is the summed number of problems identified by eight syndrome or problem behavior scales. The eight syndrome type scales are 1) withdrawn behaviors; 2) somatic complaints; 3) anxious/depressed behaviors; 4) social problems; 5) thought problems; 6) attention problems; 7) delinquent behavior and 8) aggressive behavior. Table 6.2a (see appendices) presents the Pearson  $r$ -values, their significance and the trends in the relationships between the variables examined in the study which the literature suggests play a role in child behavior problems and are predictive of adoption disruption. Most of the variables found to be significant in previous studies, and thus examined in this study did not prove to have statistically significant relationships to child behavior problem. Those that did are outlined in Table 6.2b.

Table 6.2b

Dependent Variables with Significant Correlations to Total Child Behavior Problems Scores

Pearson's Correlations				
Outcome Variable: Total Child Behavior Problems				
Variable Type	Variables	Components	Pearson r	p
Adoptive Parent Factors	Parenting Stress	PSI Total Score	.491	< .001
	Satisfaction	Satisfaction with the Adoption	.376	.001**
	Acknowledgment of Difference	Child Awareness of Adoption	.279	.017*
Adopted Child Factors	Placement History	Number of Pre-Adoption Placements	.288	.013*
	Child Behavior	Externalizing Score	.934	< .001
		Internalizing Score	.922	< .001

\*p = <.05

\*\*p = < .01

As is presented in Table 6.2c, other variables, heretofore unreported in the adoption literature, proved to have significant relationships with child behavior problems. These variables include adoptive parent factors such as, the quality of communication between the parent and child ( $p = .002$ ), the efficacy of the parents most likely method of discipline ( $p = .003$ ), the amount of enjoyable time the parent and child spend together ( $p = .001$ ) and the frequency with which the parent thinks of the child when they are separated ( $p = .001$ ). There were two child factors that proved to be significantly related to child behavior problems. They were, the child's health status ( $p = .005$ ), and the child having been adopted due to their parents incarceration ( $p = < .001$ ). In fact, while the variables proposed in the literature as important,

child's awareness of adoption and the number of pre-adoptive placements, were significant at the .05 level of confidence, the variables listed above and found in Table 6.2b, were all found to be significant at the .01 level of confidence.

Table 6.2c  
Independent Variables with Significant Pearson's Correlations to Total Child Behavior Problem Scores

<b>Independent Variable</b>	<b>Pearson r</b>	<b>Significance</b>
<b>Parent Factors</b>		
Quality of Parent/Child Communication	.353	.002**
Efficacy of Discipline Method	.343	.003**
Amount of Parent/Child Enjoyable Time	.271	.001**
Frequency Parent Thinks of Child When Separated	.385	.001**
<b>Child Factors</b>		
Child's Current Health	.327	.005**
Removed Due to Parental Incarceration	.475	< .001

\*p = <.05

\*\*p = < .01

As was mentioned previously, internalizing behavior problems and externalizing behavior problems are counted as a part of the CBCL total problem score. The syndrome scales that combine to make the internalizing behavior problem scale are the withdrawn behavior problem scale, the somatic complaint scale and the anxious/depressed behavior problem scale. Externalizing behavior problems are comprised of two syndromes, the aggressive behavior problem scale and the delinquent behavior problem scale. After examining the relationship between the independent variables and the total problem score, relationships between internalizing

behavior problems, externalizing behavior problems and the independent variables were examined to see if a better picture of behavior problems could be developed. Table 6.3a presents the Pearson r-values and their significance for the bivariate relationships between all the independent variables and internalizing behavior problems. Two variables previously identified in the literature as impacting internalizing behaviors among White adopted children were also found to influence internalizing behaviors among the sample's African American children.

Table 6.3a Pearson's Correlations with Internalizing Behavior Problem Scores

Pearson's Correlations Outcome Variable: Internalizing Behavior Problems				
Variable Type	Variables	Components	Pearson r	p
Adoptive Parent Factors	Parents Age	Adoptive Mother's Age	-.065	.589
		Adoptive Father's Age	.099	.480
	Parent Education	Adoptive Mother's Education	-.036	.765
		Adoptive Father's Education	.112	.430
	Parent Occupation	Adoptive Mother's Occupation	.347	.016*
		Adoptive Father's Occupation	-.163	.380
	Parent Employment	Adoptive Mother's Employment	.002	.984
		Adoptive Father's Employment	-.144	.307
	Income	Adoptive Family Income	.012	.939
		Family Structure	Two Parent Adoptive Family	-.085
			Birth Children in the Home	.147
	Parenting Stress	PSI Total Score	.462	< .001
	Adoption Experience	Experience w/Formal Adoption	.036	.765
		Experience w/Informal Adoption	.089	.481
	Adjustment to Adoption	Composite Adjustment Score	.001	.992
Attachment	Parent/Child Attachment	.154	.210	
Adoption Services	Post Adoption Services Use	.057	.631	
Satisfaction	Satisfaction with the Adoption	.396	.001**	
Acknowledgment of Difference	Discussion of Adoption	.107	.367	
	Child Awareness of Adoption	.243	.038*	
	ADS Score	.018	.890	
Attitude Toward Openness	Positive Attitude Toward Openness	-.073	.537	
Religion	Religious Involvement	-.147	.226	
	Protestant Faith	-.024	.844	
Adopted Child Factors	Placement Age Pre-Adoptive Placements	Child's Age at Placement	.089	.988
		Male Child	-.064	.587
		Number of Pre -Adoption Placements	.169	.152
		Sexual Abuse	-.052	.772
		Neglect	.165	.253
		Severity of Abuse	-.248	.096
		Length of Time in Family	.125	.289
Child Behavior	Total Problems Score	.922	< .001	
	Externalizing Score	.790	< .001	
	Internalizing Score	-	-	

\*p = < .05

\*\*p = < .01

As was the case with the CBCL total problems score, only two independent variables which are suggested as important in the literature, adoptive mother's occupation ( $p = .016$ ) and the child's awareness that he or she was adopted ( $p = .038$ ) were found to have significant correlations to internalizing behaviors. Specifically, children whose mother's worked in clerical or hourly wage type positions had higher levels of internalizing behavior problems and children who were aware of that they were adopted were also more prone to internalizing behavior problems. In addition to mother's occupation and a child's awareness of the adoption, other independent variables such as level of parenting stress and a parent's satisfaction with the adoption were also found in the study's sample, to be significantly correlated to a child's internalizing behavior problems score were also identified.

As is depicted in table 6.3b, the independent variables found to have significant relationships with the total number of child behavior problems, were quite similar to those found to have significant relationships with internalizing behavior problems. While previously identified variables were found to play a role in internalizing behaviors, other more relationship-oriented factors were also significant. Quality of parent/child communication, the amount of enjoyable time the parent and child spend together and the frequency with which the parent thinks of the child when they were separated were the parent factors correlated to internalizing behavior problems as the case with their relationships to total problem scores. In addition, internalizing behavior problems and total child behavior problems shared having a

significant relationship with the child’s current health status as well. Parental incarceration was not significant to internalizing behavior problems, however an additional child related factor, the child’s health at the time of their adoption also proved to have significance to internalizing behavior problems. While all other variables in Table 6.3b were significantly related to internalizing behavior problems at the .01 level of significance, child health at the time of adoption was related at the .05 level of significance.

Table 6.3b  
Variables with Significant Pearson’s Correlations to Internalizing Behavior Problems Scores

Variable	Pearson r	Significance
<b>Parent Factors</b>		
Quality of Parent/Child Communication	.353	.002**
Amount of Parent/Child Enjoyable Time	.271	.001**
Frequency Parent Thinks of Child When Separated	.385	.001**
<b>Child Factors</b>		
Child’s Health at the Time of Adoption	.246	.036*
Child’s Current Health	.365	.002**

\* p = < .05

\*\* p = < .01

Externalizing behavior problem score was also evaluated in terms of its significance to other independent variables in the study. For the most part, only independent variables suggested as significant in the literature were found to have significant relationships with externalizing behavior problems. As is depicted in Table 6.4a the adopted child’s awareness that he or she is adopted (p = .022) and the

number of pre-adoptive placements ( $p = .010$ ) were found to have significant bivariate relationships with externalizing behavior problems. The one variable not discussed in the literature, but found to have a strong and significant relationship with externalizing behaviors was the child having been placed for adoption as a result of parental incarceration ( $p = < 0.001$ ).

Table 6.4a  
Pearson's Correlations with Externalizing Behavior Problem Scores

Pearson's Correlations				
Outcome Variable: Externalizing Behavior Problems				
Variable Type	Variables	Components	Pearson r	p
Adoptive Parent Factors	Parents Age	Adoptive Mother's Age	-.013	.913
		Adoptive Father's Age	.051	.719
	Parent Education	Adoptive Mother's Education	.093	.444
		Adoptive Father's Education	.043	.764
	Parent Occupation	Adoptive Mother's Occupation	-.169	.253
		Adoptive Father's Occupation	.035	.853
	Parent Employment	Adoptive Mother's Employment	.158	.192
		Adoptive Father's Employment	.034	.810
	Income	Adoptive Family Income	.027	.861
	Family Structure	Two Parent Adoptive Family	-.134	.254
		Birth Children in the Home	.027	.822
	Parenting Stress	PSI Total Score	.462	< .001
	Adoption Experience	Experience w/Formal Adoption	-.127	.283
		Experience w/Informal Adoption	.108	.393
	Adjustment to Adoption	Composite Adjustment Score	-.001	.095
	Attachment	Parent/Child Attachment	.154	.210
	Adoption Services	Post Adoption Services Use	.125	.290
Satisfaction	Satisfaction with the Adoption	.385	< .001	
Acknowledgment of Difference	Discussion of Adoption	.158	.182	
	Child Awareness of Adoption	.268	.022*	
	ADS Score	.000	.999	
Attitude Toward Openness	Positive Attitude Toward Openness	-.124	.292	
Religion	Religious Involvement	-.068	.574	
	Protestant Faith	.012	.921	
Adopted Child Factors	Placement Age	Child's Age at Placement	.122	.342
		Male Child	.073	.537
	Pre-Adoptive Placements	Number of Pre-Adoption Placements	.299	.010*
		Sexual Abuse	-.109	.452
		Neglect	.111	.444
		Severity of Abuse	-.114	.449
		Length of Time in Family	.040	.732
Child Behavior	Total Problems Score	.934	< .001	
	Externalizing Score	-		
	Internalizing Score	.790	< .001	

\*p = < .05

\*\*p = < .01

Parental incarceration was the one factor that appeared to play a strong role in all three measures of child behavior problems. To evaluate whether the 4 children who had been adopted due to parental incarceration were in some way different from other children in the sample, independent sample t-tests were used to see if the two groups differed in terms of key background experiences. A procedure similar to that used to confirm results of the bivariate relationships tests, was implemented to evaluate the results of the independent sample T-tests. Again confirmatory tests were run in order to ensure that results were accurate when a violation of the assumption of normal distribution was violated. The Mann-Whitney U test was used to confirm the results of the independent sample T-tests. As with the confirmatory Spearman's rho tests, results of the Mann-Whitney U test confirmed the results of the T-tests and no discrepancies in results were noted.

For example, with regard to age at adoption, the mean age for the children adopted as a result of parental incarceration was 27.5 months. One of the children had been adopted at four months, and another was 10 months old at the time of adoption, the remaining two were 48 months old at the time of their adoptions. In terms of pre-adoptive placements, two of the children had been in zero to one homes and two had been in two to three homes. None of the children was reported to have backgrounds of physical, emotional or sexual abuse. One was reported as having experienced prenatal drug exposure that was "not severe" and three were reported as having experienced neglect to a "somewhat severe" degree. None of these features was found

to differentiate these four children from other children who had been adopted at the same age, had the same number of placements or the same history of neglect or pre-natal drug exposure. Thus, apart from their having been adopted as a result of parental incarceration, nothing distinguishes these children from the rest of the children in the sample, except their higher levels of behavior problems.

Table 6.4b  
 T-Test For Equality of Means: Children Adopted Due to Parental Incarceration Compared to Children Adopted For All Other Reasons on Variables With Statistically Significant Pearson r Correlations to Child Behavior Problems

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Adopted Due to Parental Incarceration</b>	<b>Adopted Due to Other Than Parental Incarceration</b>	<b>T Value</b>	<b>Sig.*</b>
Child's Age at Time of Adoption	27.50	26.60	-.062	.951
Number of Pre-Adoptive Placements	1.50	1.67	.379	.706
Child's Health at Adoption	1.75	1.47	-.842	.404
Child's Current Health	1.25	1.10	-.888	.379
Efficacy of Discipline	1.75	2.10	.814	.419
Frequency Parent Thinks of Child When Separated	1.75	1.47	-.771	.444
Quality of Parent/Child Communication	1.25	1.35	.260	.796
Externalizing Behavior Problems Score	30.67	10.13	4.046	< .001**
Externalizing Score in the Clinical Range (n)	4.00	1.34	3.897	<.001**

\*p = < .01  
 \*\*p = < .001

While there were only four children who were adopted due to parental incarceration, the results of the correlation tests indicated that there was a statistically significant relationship between a child being adopted due to parental incarceration and having externalizing scores in the clinical range ( $r = .409, p = < .001$ )

Findings for the mean comparison tests are recorded in Table 6.4b. The results displayed in the table indicate that children of incarcerated parents were not significantly different than other children in the sample for any of the variables, except for their externalizing behavior scores ( $t = -4.406, p = < .001$ ) and whether those scores were in the clinical range ( $t = -3.897, p = < .001$ ). The mean externalizing scores for other children in the sample was 10.13 while the mean for children adopted due to parental incarceration was 30.67. All the children who had been adopted due to parental incarceration had externalizing behavior problem scores in the clinical range.

### Parenting Stress

Parenting Stress was operationalized as the respondent's total score on the Parenting Stress Index (Abidin, 1986). Table 6.5a (see Appendices) presents the Pearson's  $r$ -values and its two-tailed significance for all the indicated variables as they relate to parenting stress. As is indicated in Table 6.5b, six variables in the study were found to have significant bivariate relationships with parenting stress. The parent factor independent variables were adoptive mothers occupation ( $r = .319, p = .027$ ), parent/child attachment ( $r = .443, p = < .001$ ), and frequency of contact with

adoptive parents' relatives ( $r = -.290, p = .015$ ). The child factor variables found to have statistically significant relationships with parenting stress were total behavior problems ( $r = .491, p < .001$ ), externalizing behavior problems ( $r = .462, p < .001$ ) and internalizing behavior problems ( $r = .448, p < .001$ ).

Table 6.5a  
Independent Variables with Significant Pearson's Correlations to Parenting Stress Index Scores

Pearson's Correlations Outcome Variable: Parenting Stress				
Variable Type	Variables	Components	Pearson r	p
Adoptive Parent Factors	Parents' Occupation	Adoptive Mother's Occupation	.319	.027*
	Family Structure	Contact with Adoptive Parents' Relatives	.290	.015*
	Attachment	Parent/Child Attachment	.443	< .001
Adopted Child Factors	Child Behavior	Total Problems Score	.491	< .001
		Externalizing Score	.462	< .001
		Internalizing Score	.448	< .001

\* $p < .05$

\*\*  $p < .01$

#### Acknowledgement of Difference

Acknowledgement of difference was operationalized as the "Now" score on the Acknowledgement of difference scale. Acknowledgement of difference scores had significant bivariate relationships with four variables, which are noted in Table 6.6b. They were adjustment to the adoption ( $r = .934, p < .001$ ), child's age at placement ( $r = -.301, p = .022$ ), number of pre-adoption placements ( $r = -.242, p =$

.043) and the variable indicating the frequency of contact with adoptive family relatives ( $r = -.343, p = .010$ ). With the exception of adjustment to the adoption, all other significant variable relationships were negative.

Table 6.6b  
Independent Variables with Significant Pearson's Correlations to Acknowledgement of Difference Now Scores

Pearson' Correlations Outcome Variable: Acknowledgement of Difference Now Score				
Variable Type	Variables	Components	Pearson r	p
Adoptive Parent Factors	Family Structure	Contact with Relatives	-.313	.010**
	Parenting Stress	PSI Total Score	.220	.880
	Adjustment to Adoption	Composite Adjustment Score	.934	.000**
Adopted Child Factors	Placement Age Pre-Adoptive Placements	Child's Age at Placement	-.301	.022*
		Number of Pre-Adoption Placements	-.242	.043*

\* $p < .05$

\*\*  $p < .01$

### Satisfaction with the Adoption

Satisfaction with the adoption was operationalized as the score on the composite variable specified in Chapter Three. While many of the independent variables examined did not have significant relationships with satisfaction with the adoption (See Table 6.7a in the appendices), nine variables were identified as significant. Adoptive parents' satisfaction with their adoption had statistically significant relationships with four variables suggested as important in previous

adoption literature, and five which are not. Table 6.7b notes that all three measures of child behavior problems had significant relationships to satisfaction with the adoption ( $p = < .001$ ). Child's age at adoption was also significantly related to satisfaction with the adoption ( $r = .249, p = .042$ ), with results indicating that parents who adopted older children were more satisfied than those who adopted infants. The adopted child's current age was also significant to satisfaction with the adoption ( $r = .296, p = .015$ ), with parents' satisfaction increasing with the current age of the adopted child.

Table 6.7b  
Previously Studied Independent Variables with Significant Pearson's Correlations to Adoption Satisfaction Scores

Variable	Pearson r	Significance
Child's Age at Adoption	.249	.042*
CBCL Total Problems	.376	< .001
CBCL Internalizing Behavior Problems	.385	< .001
CBCL Externalizing Behavior Problems	.396	< .001

\*  $p = < .05$

Consistent with all three measures of child behavior problems, other variables found to be significant to adoptive parents' satisfaction with the adoption include the quality of parent/child communication, the amount of enjoyable time the parent and child spend together, the frequency with which the parent thinks of the child when they are separated and the degree to which the parents most likely method of discipline is effective. Table 6.7c shows the Pearson r-values and significance of the above listed variables. Findings indicate that the quality of parent/child

communication is a very strong and important indicator of adoptive parents' satisfaction with the adoption.

Table 6.7c  
Independent Variables Not Previously Studied with Significant Pearson's Correlations to Adoption Satisfaction Scores

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Pearson r</b>	<b>Significance (2-tailed)</b>
<b>Parent Factors</b>		
Quality of Parent/Child Communication	.900	p = < .001
Amount of Parent/Child Enjoyable Time	.866	p = < .001
Frequency Parent Thinks of Child When Separated	..542	p = < .001
Effectiveness of Discipline Method	.393	p = < .001
<b>Child Factors</b>		
Child's Current Age	.296	.015*

\* p = < .05

### Adoptive Family Adjustment

For the purposes of this study, adoptive family adjustment was operationalized as the score on a composite variable comprised of the responses to three items on the African American Adoptive Family Questionnaire. Evaluation of the relationship between independent variables and adoptive family adjustment revealed that the adoptive parents' experience with formal adoption, acknowledgement of difference and the adopted child's number of pre-adoptive homes were significant (see appendices for Table 6.8a). Contrary to suggestions in the literature, child behavior problems of any sort did not have any significant influence on how well or how poorly families adjusted to the adoption.

Other variables (see Table 6.8b) were also found to have significant relationships with adjustment to the adoption. As was the case with other dependent variables, the amount of enjoyable time the adoptive parents and children spend together was also found to be significant to adoptive family adjustment ( $r = .271, p = .023$ ). Frequency of contact with adoptive family relatives appeared to have a statistically significant relationship to adoptive family adjustment ( $r = -.320, p = .009$ ) with more frequent contact indicating greater adjustment.

Table 6.8b  
Variables with Significant Pearson's Correlations to Adoptive Family Adjustment Scores

Variable	Pearson r	Significance
<b>Parent Factors</b>		
Contact with Adoptive Parents' Relatives	-.320	.009**
Amount of Parent/Child Enjoyable Time	.271	.023*
Age Child Was Told He or She Was Adopted	-.306	.022*
Acknowledgement of Difference Now	.934	<.001
Acknowledgement of Difference 6 Months After the Adoption	.606	<.001
<b>Child Factors</b>		
Child's Current Age	.296	.015*

\*  $p < .05$

\*\*  $p < .01$

#### Parent/Child Attachment

Attachment was operationalized as the attachment scale score on the Parenting Stress Index (Abidin, 1986). Of all the variables examined in the study only one,

parenting stress ( $r = .443$ ,  $p = < .001$ ), was found to have a significant relationship with parent/child attachment. This relationship is not surprising as attachment was operationalized as the attachment score on the Parenting Stress Index (Abidin, 1986). However, finding that a reciprocal relationship exists between parenting stress and attachment is not a surprising one. The seeming lack of relationship between parent/child attachment and other study variables is demonstrated in the contents of Table 6.9a (see Appendices). The complete absence of significant relationships found between the initially examined demographic variables, was a curious finding, which prompted further analysis. The aim of the further analysis was to determine if any variables in the study related to parent/child attachment could be identified.

Table 6.9b  
Independent Variables with Significant Pearson’s Correlations to PSI Parent/Child Attachment Scale Scores

Pearson’s Correlations Outcome Variable: Parent/Child Attachment				
Variable Type	Variables	Components	Pearson r	p
Adoptive Parent Factors	Parenting Stress	PSI Total Score	.443	<.001**

\*\*  $p = < .01$

A new variable was created which indicated whether or not a family’s parent/child attachment score was in the clinical or borderline range. According to norms for the Parenting Stress Index, scores ranging in the 16<sup>th</sup> to 80<sup>th</sup> percentile are

considered to be in the “normal” range. Scores between the 81<sup>st</sup> and 84<sup>th</sup> percentile are scored as being in the “borderline” range, while scores reaching at or above 85<sup>th</sup> percentile are in the clinical range. Those adoptive parents with scores at or below the 84<sup>th</sup> percentile were coded as having normal scores, while those with scores at or above the 85<sup>th</sup> percentile were scores as having clinical scores and the new variable, “clinical attachment” was created.

After creating the new variable, Pearson’s correlation analyses were run with the clinical attachment score variable and all variables for which data had been gathered in the survey. While no independent variables were found to be significantly related to the general attachment score, five variables were found to be significantly related to having an attachment score in the clinical range. These variables were the adopted mother’s profession, contact with previous caregivers, willingness to consider some type of open adoption, friends and neighbors support of the adoption and externalizing behavior scores in the clinical range.

Table 6.9c  
 Variables with Significant Pearson's Correlations to Clinical Level PSI Attachment Scores

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Pearson r</b>	<b>Significance (2-tailed)</b>
<b>Parent Factors</b>		
Adopted Mother's Profession	.315	.033*
Family Contact with Child's Previous Caregivers	.234	.049*
Would Consider Some Type of Openness	.273	.019*
Friends and Neighbors supported the adoption	-.239	.042*
<b>Child Factors</b>		
Clinical Range Externalizing Behavior Score	.239	.049*

\*p = < .05

T-tests to compare the means on the statistically significant variables were conducted to assess the degree and nature of the differences between families with normal attachment levels and adoptive parents with clinical levels of parent/child attachment. Those families with scores in the clinical range more often had mothers who work in secretarial type positions, while mothers of those with scores in the normal range more often had mothers working in professional positions. Those families with clinical level attachment scores were more likely to have contact with previous caregiver's of their adopted child and also more often said they would choose higher levels of openness than those with attachment scores in the normal range. Results also indicated that those with attachment scores in the clinical range had less support of friends and neighbors for their adoptions than did those with normal levels of attachment. In addition, those parents with lower or clinical level of

parent child attachment more often had children with externalizing behavior scores in the clinical range.

Table 6.9d  
T-test to Compare Mean Scores on Variables with Significant Pearson's Correlations to Clinical Level PSI Attachment Scores

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Normal Score Mean ( n )</b>	<b>Clinical Score Mean ( n )</b>	<b>t value</b>	<b>Sig. (2- Tailed)</b>
Adopted Mother's Profession	1.81 (47)	1.27 (21)	2.198	.042*
Family Contact with Child's Previous Caregivers	1.32 (52)	1.12 (52)	-2.000	.049*
Would Consider Some Type of Openness	2.86 (49)	1.98 (22)	-2.408	.019*
Friends and Neighbors Supported the Adoption	3.36 (51)	3.71 (22)	2.075	.042*
Clinical Range Externalizing Behavior Problems Score	1.62 (30)	1.23 (16)	-2.003	.049*

\*p = < .05

#### Attitude Toward Open Adoption

Attitude toward adoption was operationalized as the score on a composite variable comprised of items selected from the African American Adoptive Family Questionnaire. Most families in the study did not express a positive attitude toward open adoption. The majority of families (71.1%) said that they would not, if given the choice, choose to have any sort of open adoption arrangement. This attitude seemed

to be most influenced by the adoptive parents concern that if there were some level of openness, the birth parents may want the child back. Approximately 66% of adoptive parents expressed some level of concern that the birth parents would want the child back, with 42.7% of those saying they would be “very concerned” that the birth parents would want the child back. Adoptive parents were also concerned that contact with birth relatives would prove to be confusing for the adopted child. Parents expressed some level of concern that contact with the birth family would confuse the child 84.3% of the time, with 48.2% of those concerned saying they would be “very concerned.” An examination of the relationship between the independent variables first examined in the study revealed only two variables with statistically significant relationships to attitudes toward open adoption (see Appendices Table 6.10a).

As is indicated in Table 6.10 b, family structure and experience with informal adoption were also significant in their relationship to adoptive parents’ attitude toward open adoption. The relationship between family structure and attitude toward open adoption was quite strong ( $r = .916$ ). Two parent adoptive families were significantly more likely to be willing to consider having some level of open adoption arrangement, than were single parent families. Though not as strong a relationship ( $r = .282$ ), experience with informal adoption was also significantly related to attitudes about open adoption. If one of the adoptive parents had themselves been informally adopted, they too were significantly more likely to be willing to consider having some

level of open adoption arrangement when compared to those who had not had the experience of being informally adopted.

Table 6.10b  
Variables with Significant Pearson's Correlations to Attitude Toward Open Adoption Scores

Pearson's Correlations Dependent Variable: Attitude Toward Open Adoption				
Variable Type	Variables	Components	Pearson r	p
Adoptive Family Factor	Family Structure	Two Parent Adoptive Family	.961	< .001
	Adoption Experience	Experience w/Informal Adoption	.282	.015**

\*p = < .05

\*\*p = < .01

In summary, most of the demographic variables included in the study and thought to be significantly related to adoption outcomes, were not found to have statistically significant relationships with the various outcome measures examined in the study. Upon further analysis, other variables related to the parent/child relationship and reason for adoption were found to be more strongly and significantly related to adoption outcomes. The focus of the next section of the paper will be on describing the analysis process used and will present the findings that answer the research questions posed by the study.

## Research Questions

The following section discusses the answers to the study's research questions. The answers were developed based on the results of the data analysis process discussed in the previous sections of this chapter. When additional analyses were done to answer a research question, the analyses are described in the specific section for the research question.

### Research Question One

Are single parent adoptive families more likely to experience child and family adjustment problems than two parent adoptive families?

Though children of single adoptive parents had significantly higher CBCL externalizing scores ( $p = .020$ ), they were not more likely to have externalizing scores in the clinical range. No other significant differences in outcomes among single and two-parent adoptive families were found. Results also indicated that, though the differences were not statistically significant, single adoptive parents (1.26) had lower mean Parenting Stress Index (Abidin, 1986) scores than did married adoptive parents (1.39). These findings were somewhat expected given the lack of significance family type was found to have in the correlation analyses of the dependent variables (Refer to Tables 6.2, through 6.10).

The answer to the research question regarding whether there are differences in outcomes for single versus two-parent African American adoptive families is “yes, but few”. African American single-parent adoptive families are more likely to experience child adjustment problems in that the children of single adoptive parents have significantly higher externalizing behavior scores. However, on all other outcome measures single parent and two-parent African American adoptive families do not differ.

Table 6.11  
T-Test for Equality of Means: Single Parent Families Compared to Two-Parent Families on Externalizing Behavior Problems Scores

<b>CBCL Externalizing Scores</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>t</b>	<b>Sig. (2-tailed)</b>
Single Parent Families	22	14.27	2.372	.020*
Two-Parent Families	51	8.59		

\*p = < .05

Research Question Two: Are families who have adopted older children more likely to experience adjustment problems than families who have adopted infants?

The age of older than 24 months or 2 years at the time of adoption was initially selected as the age at which to separate older versus younger children for the comparative analysis of younger versus older child adopters. This age was selected

based on the age at which federal guidelines consider a child to be special need or “hard to place.” As with, single versus two-parent families, comparisons of outcomes among families who adopted younger children (24 months or less) to families who adopted older children (25 months or more) were minimal. Younger child adopters did have significantly higher acknowledgement of difference scores (ADS “Now” Score) at the present time. However, 6 months after the adoption, younger and older child adopters did not differ on acknowledgement of difference scores (ADS “Then” Score). This finding is interesting in that one would think that families who adopted children at an older age would have higher acknowledgement of difference scores.

To test the veracity of the findings on comparisons of outcomes among younger versus older child adopters, another set of comparisons were done in which children adopted at 3, 4, 5, and 6 years of age or less were compared to children adopted at more than 3, 4, 5, and 6 years of age to see if differences in outcomes would be observed. Results found no significant differences in outcomes among these age groups either. Again, given that a child’s age at adoption was not found to be significantly correlated to study outcomes in the analysis of bivariate relationships, these findings were somewhat anticipated.

The answer to the research question which asks whether a child’s age at the time of their adoption makes a difference in post-adoption outcomes is no, at least not for children adopted at age 6 or younger. While adoptive families of younger children

are more likely to acknowledge the differences in adoptive parenting than families who have adopted older children, this is not necessarily indicative of a greater degree of adjustment problems. There were no statistical differences in the post-adoption adjustment scores of those families who adopted younger versus older children.

Table 6.12  
T-Test for Equality of Means: Younger Child Adopters Compared to Older Child Adopters on Acknowledgement of Difference Now Scores

<b>ADS Now Score</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>ADS Mean</b>	<b>t</b>	<b>Sig.* (2- tailed)</b>
Child Adopted at age 2 Years or Less	24	5.70	2.751	.008
Child Adopted at age More than 2 Years	58	3.21		

\*p = < .01

Research Question Three: What are the factors that influence African American adoptive parents' attitudes toward open adoption?

In comparing families' attitudes toward open adoption, one factor was found to be influential. Independent sample T-tests were run comparing families who indicated that they would consider some level of open adoption to those who indicated that they would not consider any level of open adoption. Results indicated that the sole factor in determining a family's willingness to consider some level of

open adoption was their fear that the birth-parents would want the child back if there was contact between the birth and adoptive families. The fear of the birth parent wanting the child back and willingness to consider some level of open adoption had a statistically significant relationship in terms of the correlation analysis ( $r = .905$ ,  $p = < .001$ ). Independent sample means tests indicated that those who would consider some level of open adoption were, on average, “slightly concerned” that contact with the birth parents would result in their wanting the adopted child back. Those who would not consider any type of open adoption were moderately to very concerned that having contact would result in the birth parents wanting the child back. Though these differences were not statistically significant, they were related to whether a family would consider open adoption. With regard to the fear that contact with the birth parents would prove to be confusing to the child, statistically significant differences were present when comparing those who would consider some level of open adoption and those who would not. Those who would not consider any level of open adoption were much more likely to say that they were moderately (10.8 %) or very concerned (15.7%) that any level of contact with the birth parents (open adoption) would be confusing to the child.

The answer to the question of what factors influence African American adoptive families attitudes toward open adoption is that those factors are centered on fear. Attitudes toward open adoption are first influenced by the adoptive parents’ fear

that contact with birth parents may lead to the birth parents wanting the child back.

The second influence on African American adoptive families' willingness to consider some level of open adoption was their fear that contact with the birth parents may be confusing or harmful to the adopted child.

Table 6.13

T-Test For Equality of Means: Families Who Would Consider Open Adoption Compared To Those Who Would Not on Fear That The Birth Parents Would Want The Adopted Child Back & Openness Would Confuse Adopted Child

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Would Consider Open Adoption (mean) (n)</b>	<b>Would Not Consider Open Adoption (mean) (n)</b>	<b>t</b>	<b>Sig. (2-tailed)</b>
Fear that with Contact, Birth Parents Would want the Child Back	3.26 (58)	2.72 (23)	-3.116	.245*
Fear that Contact with Birth Parents Would Confuse the Adopted Child	2.02 (58)	3.13 (24)	-1.172	.004**

\*p < .05

\*\*p < .01

Research Question Four: To what degree do the adopted child's placement and abuse history influence satisfaction with and adjustment to the adoption?

In the analyses of bivariate relationships between the independent variables and measures of adoption satisfaction (see Table 6.7a & b) indicated that there was a

statistically significant, though not particularly strong, relationship ( $r = .249$ ,  $p = .042$ ) between the child's age at placement and satisfaction with the adoption. The analysis of adjustment to the adoption and independent variables (see table 6.8a & b) indicated that the number of pre-adoptive placements the child had lived in had a statistically significant relationship with adjustment ( $r = -.250$ ,  $p = .038$ ).

While both the child's age at adoption and the number of pre-adoptive placements had significant relationships with satisfaction and adjustment, no significant differences on any of the outcomes were found based on the child's age at adoption or the number of pre-adoptive placements they lived in. Neither the nature of the abuse the child experienced, nor the degree of the abuse in the child's history had any influence on the adoptive parent's satisfaction with the adoption or post adoption adjustment.

The answer to the research question regarding the influence a child's abuse and placement history has on satisfaction with the adoption and post-adoption adjustment is not fully answered in the present study. Though the data did not allow for examination of the role a child's having a history of physical or sexual abuse plays on satisfaction with, and adjustment to the adoption, we do know that a child being adopted due to parental incarceration has a significant relationship to the number, nature and severity of child behavior problems. However results indicate that

there is no relationship between the nature, number or degree of behavior problems and the adoptive parent(s) overall satisfaction with and adjustment to the adoption.

Research Question Five: Is there a relationship between African American adoptive parents' acknowledgement of difference in their status as adoptive families and the families' adjustment to the adoption?

In terms of their status as single or two-parent families, adoptive parents were not found to have significant differences in their acknowledgment of difference scores. However, a family's status as adoptive parents of younger or older child children did play a role both in acknowledgement of difference. The results of the Pearson r correlations test for acknowledgement of difference (see Table 6.6) found a significant relationship between the child's age at adoption and acknowledgement of difference ( $r = -.301, p = .022$ ). As was discussed in the section on younger versus older child adopters, though there were not statistically significant differences, the younger a child was at the time of adoption, the greater the acknowledgement of difference.

With regard to the relationship between acknowledgement of difference and adjustment to the adoption, Pearson r analyses revealed a strong and statistically significant relationship ( $r = .934, p = < .001$ ). Based on these findings a composite

variable for acknowledgment of difference was created by combining the scores on the acknowledgment of difference “then” and the acknowledgment of difference “now” score. A frequency and descriptive statistics analysis of the composite acknowledgment of difference variable was done to determine the overall acknowledgment of difference mean score for the sample.

Another variable was then created which indicated whether a family’s overall acknowledgment of difference score was above or below the mean for composite acknowledgment of difference variable. Then a series of analyses were done to determine if a family’s acknowledgment of difference had a significant influence on any of the outcome measures. Results indicated that families with, at or above average scores, on the composite variable for acknowledgement of difference had statistically significant higher levels of post-adoption adjustment.

Table 6.14  
T-Test for Equality of Means: Adoptive Parents with Above Average ADS Scores Compared to Adoptive Parents with Below Average ADS Scores on Adoptive Family Adjustment

<b>Composite ADS Score</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>Overall Adjustment to The Adoption (mean)</b>	<b>t</b>	<b>Sig. (2-Tailed)</b>
Above Average Composite ADS Scores	28	20.67	-7.447	< .001*
Below Average Composite ADS Scores	43	15.91		

\*  $p < .05$

### Summary of Findings

Chapter Six presented results gathered from the data analysis process for the survey sample of African American adoptive families who had adopted children from African American adoption agencies in California. Few differences were found in comparisons of single and two parent families and younger and older child adoptive families. Children in single parent adoptive families had significantly more externalizing behavior problems and families who adopted younger children had significantly greater degrees of acknowledgement of difference and satisfaction with their adoptions.

The nature and degree of abuse was not significant in its relationship to child behavior or family outcomes. However, a child being adopted due to parental incarceration was found to be a strong factor in whether a child had clinical level scores on all measures of child behavior. The number of pre-adoptive placements was found to be significant with several outcomes. Child behavior problems, externalizing behavior problems, acknowledgment of difference, and adoptive family adjustment all had significant bivariate relationships with the number of pre-adoptive placements a child had. However, the means on these variables did not vary based on the number of pre-adoptive homes a child had lived in.

Demographic factors such as the adoptive parent's age, education, profession and income were not significant in their influence on outcomes with the one exception of internalizing behavior problems. Adoptive mothers who were in secretarial/clerical type professions were more likely to have children with internalizing behavior problems than mothers in professional or trade professions.

In general, variables that were identified in the literature were not ones that proved to be most significant in influencing post-adoption outcomes among African American adoptive families. Variables such as the quality of parent/child communication, the amount of enjoyable time the parent and child spent together, the effectiveness of the parents' methods of discipline, the frequency with which the

parent thinks of the child when they are separated and the child's current health were stronger indicators of post-adoption outcomes.

The limitations and implications of this study with regard to adoption research, policy and practice are presented in the next chapter, Chapter Seven, Implications and Conclusions.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

While the previous chapter's primary focus was on the empirical findings of the study, the current chapter turns its attention to the study's implications for future adoption research, practice and policy. The present study had several purposes. They were 1) to explore the characteristics of African American adoptive families who adopted children from private African American adoption agencies. 2) To compare the outcomes of single parent and two-parent African American adoptive families. 3) To compare outcomes of African American children adopted at a younger age to those adopted at an older age. 4) To identify factors which influence African American adoptive families' attitudes toward open adoption. 5) To explore the role a child's abuse and pre-adoption placement history influence child behavior problems and 6) to explore the role family structure and other factors influence acknowledgement of difference. In interpreting these findings it is imperative to keep in mind that that the study sample represents a 32% response rate. Thus, the findings and conclusions may only be reflective of the respondents to the survey and not necessarily all African American families who adopt from private African American adoption agencies. Succinctly put, the study of 83 African American Adoptive families who adopted children from African American adoption agencies in California found that:

- ◆ Differences in outcomes for younger and older child adopters are not significant.
- ◆ Single and two-parent African American adoptive families differ only in that children of single adoptive parents have significantly more externalizing behavior problems.
- ◆ Regardless of their age at adoption, number of pre-adoptive homes and abuse histories, 80% of African American adopted children had a normal range of behavior problems.
- ◆ 80% of African American adoptive families describe themselves as being “extremely satisfied” with their adoptions and 84% describe their child as being a “perfect fit” for their families.
- ◆ African American adoptive families’ negative attitudes toward open adoption are primarily based on the concern that birth parents will want the adopted child back.
- ◆ Relationship factors such as the quality of communication, effectiveness of discipline and amount of time spent together play a more significant role in child behavior outcomes than family and child background and demographic variables suggested as relevant to outcomes in the literature.
- ◆ A child being placed for adoption due to their birth parents’ incarceration is a strong indicator of clinical levels of behavior problems.

- ◆ Child behavior problems are strongly related to parenting stress, parents' satisfaction with the adoption and adoptive family adjustment.

## Demographic Characteristics of African American Adoptive Parents

### The Population Verses the Sample

The population of African American adoptive families to which the sample was compared was comprised of all African American adoptive families who had adopted from both public and private agencies in California from 1990 to 1995. The finding that the study's sample of African American adoptive families who adopt from private African American adoption agencies are significantly different from the population which includes public agency families of African American adoptive families in all demographic comparisons is important in two ways.

First the findings suggest that there are similarities in African American and Caucasian families who adopt through private agencies. The results of the comparisons of African American private and public agency adopters are consistent with findings for comparisons of Caucasian private and public agency adopters. These differences in private and public agency adopters have been explained by the greater likelihood that private agency adopters are couples who have delayed parenting in the pursuit of professional careers and, though they are better off financially, they are also more likely to be infertile. These families tend to seek

healthy (non-drug exposed, neglected or abused) or voluntarily relinquished infants to adopt. Such children are much less likely to be found in the custody of public child welfare agencies and are more likely to be placed through private adoption agencies and attorneys.

Data provided by the California Department of Social Services (California Department of Social Services, 2001) indicates that Caucasian families who adopt from private agencies in California, when compared to Caucasian families who adopt through public agencies, are quite different. Private agency adopters have higher annual incomes. The average annual income for Caucasian private agency adopters is \$78,200 as compared to \$35,000 for their public agency counterparts. Caucasian private agency adopters adopt younger children as well. The mean age at adoption for Caucasian private agency adopters is 1 month versus 45 months for public agency adopters. In addition, Caucasian private agency adopters are younger at the time of their adoptions when compared to Caucasian public agency adopters. The mean age at time of adoption for private agency adoptive mothers is 38 years versus 41 years for Caucasian public agency mothers. The mean age for Caucasian private agency adoptive fathers is 39 years versus 41 years for those Caucasian fathers who adopt from public agencies. And Caucasian private agency adopters are more educated than Caucasian private agency adopters are. While 71.2% of private agency adoptive fathers have bachelor degrees or higher, only 25.7% of Caucasian public agency adoptive fathers have college degrees. Caucasian private agency adoptive mothers

have bachelor degrees or higher 61.3% of the time, while only 20% of their public agency counterparts have bachelor degrees of higher.

As has been found in studies of Caucasian adoptive families who adopt through private agencies, African American adoptive families who adopt through private African American agencies are wealthier, younger, more educated and more apt to cite infertility as their primary motive for adoption when compared to those who adopt through public agencies. These African American private agency families adopt fewer children, who are younger than those who adopt children directly from public adoption agencies. While these differences certainly have negative implications in terms of the ability to generalize the findings of this study to all African American adoptive families in California, they may provide a picture of the “typical” African American family who adopts from African American adoption agencies.

The second possible explanation for the demographic differences found in the comparison of African American private and public agency adopters could also be influenced by the inclusion of foster parent and relative adoptions in the sample of public agency adopters. The study did not include relative and foster parent adoptions in the sample and because data were not available on the demographics for public agency adoptive parents who were neither foster-parents nor relatives at the time of the study.

It is beyond the scope of this study to speculate as to whether or not the typical African American private agency family would still adopt if a public agency adoption were their only option. However it seems that the availability of an African American adoption agency is important to the study families' decision to adopt. This is based on the fact that 86.4% of the families reported that the availability of an African American adoption agency was either "very important" or "important to them."

The children that African American adoptive families adopt from private, African American adoption agencies are younger and, for the most part, normal in their functioning and behavior when compared to the typical African American children awaiting adoption in foster care. With this in mind, one might argue that African American adoption agencies are essentially placing children for whom adoptive families are more easily found. While it cannot be definitively said that African American private agency adopters would not adopt if such agencies did not exist, there is other evidence which supports the existence and use of private African American adoption agencies as an effective practice model for placing African American children who are in child welfare custody.

First and foremost in supporting the effectiveness of an African American adoption agency as a model of practice in child welfare is the fact that the majority of children placed by such agencies are children who are in child welfare custody. For

example, in this study, approximately sixty-two percent of the children were in child welfare custody at the time of their adoptions. Barth (1997) documented that, simply by virtue of being of African descent, a child will spend more time in foster care and will be a less likely candidate for adoption. Further, studies have shown (McRoy et al, 1997; Jackson-White et al., 1997) that African American families are more successful in their attempts to adopt when those attempts are made through African American adoption agencies. There are currently 35 African American adoption agencies in the United States (NABSW, 2001). The development of African American adoption agencies, staffed by African American social workers, originated with a public agency in San Diego, California. In 1971, the San Diego County Adoption Division leased office space in a San Diego African American neighborhood and staffed the office with African American social workers who were already employed by the adoption division. In the first year of its operation, the number of finalized adoptions by African American families increased dramatically (Nielson, 1976). The two agencies surveyed in the present study developed their practice models based on that of Tyari, the public African American agency in San Diego. Both agencies have held long-term contracts with the state and their local public child welfare agencies to recruit and conduct the home studies for African American adoptive families. And it has long been demonstrated (Fischer, 1971; Jackson-White et al., 1997; National Black Child Development Institute, 1995; (Nielson, 1976) that such agencies practice methods have been more effective in placing African American children in adoptive homes, than have traditional adoption agencies. Finally, when one considers that

according to legal definitions, all African American children in child welfare custody are considered “hard to place.” African American adoption agencies have been successful in accessing a previously untapped segment of the population of prospective adoptive families with which to place these children. Any method of practice which effectively increases the pool of adoptive parents and thus increases the probability of an African American child being adopted, should be considered a viable and valuable method of adoption practice and child welfare service.

#### Adoptive Family Demographic Factors

Studies of disruption rates, socioeconomic status and other demographic factors have mixed results with regard to their findings. While some studies report these variables as predictors of adoption outcomes others do not. For example, while Barth & Berry (1988) found that higher education levels in adoptive mothers and higher income levels for adoptive parents were predictive of disruption, Partridge et al. (1986) found education and disruption to be unrelated. Rosenthal and Groze (1982) found that lower income families had better outcomes than middle and upper income families. Results of this study found that income did not play a role in satisfaction or adjustment outcomes for parents or behavior and attachment outcomes for children. However, given the elevated income levels of the families in the study, the role of income may not have been possible to detect.

Though there has not been much research to date, studies of single-parent adoptive families (Feigleman and Silverman, 1983; Rosenthal & Groze, 1992; Shireman, 1996) have found no specific problems in single-parent adoptions compared to two-parent adoptions. In one study, evidence was found that single-parents might be better able to handle more disturbed children (Rosenthal & Groze, 1992). These findings seem to hold true with the African American single parent adoptive families in this study in terms of measures of adoptive parents' satisfaction, adjustment, attachment and acknowledgement of difference. One important difference in single and two-parent adoptive families was found however. Findings of this study indicate that children of single adoptive parents had significantly higher externalizing behavior problem scores.

It has been suggested that because they are considered less desirable, single adoptive parents are given "harder to place" children. While it is possible that the single adoptive parents in this study were intentionally given "more disturbed" or less desirable children to adopt, there is no evidence that this was the case. There were no significant differences in the children of single adoptive parents and the children of two parent adoptive families in terms of age at adoption, number of previous placements or abuse histories. The only sure method of answering these questions would be to assess the nature and degree of behavior problems that children of single and two parent adoptive families had at the time of their adoptions and to follow-up and follow up with post-tests of their behavior after the adoption. While it is possible

that the children of single adoptive parents came to their adoptions with more disturbed behaviors, there are other possible explanations as to why the children of single adoptive parents were found to have significantly higher externalizing behavior problems.

The literature also suggests that a child's age at adoption, number of pre-adoption placements and the nature and degree of abuse a child experienced prior to adoption are predictive of externalizing behavior problems (Barth & Berry, 1988; Rosenthal & Groze, 1992). However, among the African American children and families in this study, only the number of pre-adoptive placements was found to have a significant relationship to externalizing behavior problems. However, when mean comparisons were done of those children having clinical levels of externalizing behavior problems to those who did not, the two groups were virtually identical in the number of pre-adoptive placements they experienced (mean number of pre-adoptive placements = 1.47 vs. 1.50).

The lack of differentiation in the outcomes among children with more pre-adoptive placements may be the result of several methodological issues, not the least of which is that there is no universal definition of a "placement." A methodological issue in the present study is that the data on the number of pre-adoptive homes the adopted child lived in were collected at the ordinal level of measurement as opposed to the interval/ratio level of measurement. This limited the precision with which

differences could be detected. Secondly, and perhaps more importantly the literature does not clearly specify the number of pre-adoptive placements a child must experience prior to adoption before it becomes a problem. The majority of children in the sample (89%) had experienced three or fewer placements prior to their adoptions. It is possible that the number, at which pre-adoptive placements become a problem, far exceeds the highest number of placements experienced by children in this study's sample. Thus, it would be impossible to detect the influence the number of pre-adoptive placements had on the adoption outcomes of interest. Still, the number of pre-adoption placements experienced by the children in this sample ranged from zero to at least six, and no differences were found in the comparison of outcomes for those who had one or fewer placements to those who had six or more.

It is impossible for a cross-sectional survey design, such as is used in this study, to sufficiently account for all factors which might influence a specific outcome. However, factors thought to be influential were included as variables and examined in the study. In sum, the data collected in this study did not provide an explanation as to why the children in single parent adoptive families had significantly higher externalizing behavior problems. However reasonable explanations for this finding likely exist. The reasons underlying significantly higher externalizing behavior problems among children of African American single adoptive parents calls for further exploration and study.

Considering that certain demographic or background factors previously thought of as influential did not appear to explain some of the outcomes among African American adoptive families, it is reasonable to conclude traditional conceptualizations of factors influencing adoption outcomes may not fully apply to, or sufficiently explain outcomes among African American adoptive families. In the following section of the paper, factors influencing post-adoption adjustment and satisfaction with the adoption are discussed. These outcomes were found to be most strongly influenced by factors that have not been thoroughly explored in previous African American or other adoption research.

### Post-Adoption Adjustment and Satisfaction with the Adoption

As was the case with the higher levels of externalizing behavior problems, adoptive parent and child factors historically thought to influence post-adoption adjustment and satisfaction with the adoption did not provide a full picture of the influences on adoptive parent's satisfaction with the adoption or post-adoption adjustment. There are some indications in the literature that minority families are more accepting of child behavior problems and thus have more positive adoption outcomes (Rosenthal & Groze, 1992) than adoptive families of other races. By and large, the outcomes in terms of satisfaction and adjustment were quite positive for families in this study. Still, there were some families who had not adjusted positively (15.7%) and others (16.8%) who were not completely satisfied with their adoptions. What factors influenced positive or negative satisfaction and adjustment?

Rosenthal & Groze's (1992) conclusion that African American adoptive families are more accepting of behavior problems may be true, but it is not true that African American adoptive families are impervious to child behavior problems. The total problem score, externalizing and internalizing behavior problems were all strongly and significantly correlated to satisfaction with the adoption. That is, the greater the number of behavior problems a child had, the less satisfaction adoptive parents expressed.

Adoption satisfaction was also influenced by the quality of the parent/child communication, the amount of enjoyable time that was shared by the parent and child

together and the effectiveness of the adoptive parents' most likely method of discipline all had statistically significant relationships to satisfaction with the adoption.

Other variables seemed to explain post adoption adjustment. For example, the greater the acknowledgement of difference, the less positive post-adoption adjustment appeared to be. A logical, but yet to be fully explored, influence on post-adoption adjustment was the amount of enjoyable time the adoptive/parent and child spend together and the frequency with which the adoptive family has contact with extended family members. The more the time shared between adoptive parent and child and spent with extended family members, the greater the adjustment.

An adoptive parent having had experiences with formal adoption also plays a role in post-adoption adjustment. A parent was considered to have experience with formal adoption if they, or a close family member, had been formally adopted. Twenty (24.4%) of the adoptive parents in the sample were formally adopted or had relatives that were formally adopted. Of those adoptive parents who had experiences with formal adoption, eight (36.4%) of the adoptive parents in the sample had themselves been formally adopted. Five (22.7%) had a parent who was formally adopted, three (13.6%) had an adopted sibling who was formally adopted and six (27.3%) had a cousin who was formally adopted. Those adoptive parents who had

experiences with formal adoption had higher post-adoption adjustment scores than those who did not, though the differences were not statistically significant.

While few of these findings seem surprising and in some instances they may seem fairly obvious, they are worthy of further consideration in that many outcomes among the sample were not related to the adopted child's background, behavior problems, adoptive parents' demography or perhaps even the fact that the child was adopted. However, such background and demographic factors are what tend to be emphasized in the special-needs adoption literature. The finding that parent/child relationship factors play a more significant role in post-adoption outcomes is important in that it points to the fact that African American families are not a monolithic group. While African American families have been found in other studies to be more likely to have positive adjustment, one cannot assume that all African American families are problem free. What these findings point to is the idea that adoption researchers and practitioners may have to look beyond the literature and approach research and practice with African American adoptive families in a broader context.

One cannot make assumptions that widely held conceptualizations of adoptive family functioning necessarily work, or work in the same way across racial and socioeconomic lines. For example, findings in this study indicate that parents who adopted children at a younger age had higher acknowledgement of difference scores. This does not make intuitive sense from a traditional theoretical perspective, however

in the context of African American families it may be better understood. One possible explanation for this finding is that given a child's older age at adoption differences may be more obvious. African Americans' more fluid definitions of family may therefore focus on de-emphasizing differences out of strongly held cultural beliefs which place a premium on equality.

### Attachment

Though not a majority, a significant number (approximately 30%) of the families in the study were found to have clinical level attachment scores on the PSI attachment scale. Exploring factors which might have an influence on a parent and child having clinically low levels of attachment revealed that adopted mother's working in secretarial positions, having contact with the adopted child's previous caregivers, lack of support for the adoption from friends, and willingness to consider some type of open adoption arrangement had a significant relationship to parent's having clinical range attachment scores. Yet when comparing those adoptive parents with clinical level attachment scores to those with normal attachment scores, no significant differences were found in mean scores for the amount of enjoyable time the parent and child spend together or any of the other variables found to have significant relationships with clinical level attachment scores.

This seeming inconsistency could be explained by how attachment is conceptualized and operationalized in the instrument itself, or once again, there could

be other factors outside those examined in this and previous adoption studies which explain the findings. Again, further research on African American adoptive families and issues related to attachment is called for.

#### Adopted Child Demographic Factors

The results of the study are somewhat perplexing, not just in terms of what was found, but also with regard to what was not found. Factors thought to be influential for dissatisfaction with the adoption and disruption in other studies (Rosenthal & Groze, 1992; Partridge & Hornby, 1991; Barth & Berry, 1988; Festinger, 1986), such as the age of the child at the time of adoption and the number of previous placements a child experienced were not found to be significant influences on child behavior problems or satisfaction with the adoption.

Other factors found to play a role in post-adoption outcomes in the previous research such as a child having experienced sexual abuse or physical abuse (Partridge et al., 1986) were for the most part unexplored in this study. None of the children in the sample were reported by their parents as having histories of physical abuse and only one child was reported to have had a history of sexual abuse prior to the adoption. Though the analyses did include the child with a history of sexual abuse, the findings that sexual abuse did not play a significant role in child behavior outcomes are certainly not generalizable to anyone but that child. A study of African American adopted children with histories of sexual and physical abuse would be

important to further assess the degree to which these factors influence outcomes among African American adoptive families.

One background factor was identified in the present study as quite significant in terms of child behavior problems, a child being adopted as a result of parental incarceration. There have been no empirical studies of outcomes among children entering foster care or adoption as a result of parental incarceration (Seymore 1998). However those studies of parental incarceration which are available suggest that 8 to 10% of the children of female prisoners and 1 to 2% of the children of male prisoners are in some form of out-of-home care (Beck et al. 1992; Beckerman 1994; Bloom & Steinhart 1993; Johnston 1995; Snell 1994).

In examining the outcomes among the children who had been adopted due to parental incarceration no significant family or child demographics or parent/child relationship factors were found which could explain why these children were more likely to have clinical level scores on all three measures of child behavior problems. In light of the prediction that growing numbers of African American children will be in need of adoption as a result of the combined effects of the Adoption and Safe Families Act (P.L. 105-89) and the over-representation of African American in prison systems (Seymore, 1998), further research must be done to explore what might be happening with these children.

### Study Limitations

Methodological limitations should also be considered in interpreting the findings. All research methods have limitations and survey research is no exception. As stated by Rubin and Babbie (1992), “survey research is weak on validity and strong on reliability. The limitations of the cross-sectional, self-administered survey design used in this study are discussed below.

Cautions are strongly advised in interpreting the findings of this study. A foremost thought in understanding the results is that the results may be biased due to non-response. The majority (65%) of the families, to whom surveys were sent, did not respond to the survey. The families that did not respond may be less stable (several studies were returned due to bad addresses) and may have experienced less favorable outcomes than the families that did respond. Given that one must be “approved” to adopt a child, adoptive parents may have a strong desire to look good and thus may have responded to questions in a socially desirable versus an honest way. The fact that close to 85% of the families indicated that their child was a “perfect fit” may be an indication of such positive response bias.

The use of a focus group and using survey questions and standardized instruments which have been used in previous adoption research strengthen the measurement of many variables examined in the study. Still, the validity and reliability of the African American Adoptive Family Questionnaire was not determined prior to this study. Further, though efforts to be consistent in defining key

concepts were made, operationalization of constructs such as satisfaction, adjustment to adoption, acknowledgement of difference and attitudes toward open adoption is not uniform in the adoption research.

Beyond the issue of a less than optimal response rate is the issue of the relatively small final sample size. Although differences were found in many of the analysis, in general small sample sizes limit the ability to detect within and across group differences. It is impossible to know the degree to which the combination of low response rates, positive response bias, small sample size and weaknesses in the operationalization of certain study constructs have influenced the results of the study, they have done so at all. None the less, prudence in interpretation is strongly encouraged and advised.

The following sections explore the present study's theoretical implications along with implications for adoption theory and social work research, practice and policy.

### Theoretical Implications

The research questions posed in this study center on assessing how well established theories in previous adoption research fit when applied to African American adoptive families. While some theoretical relationships previously established in the literature on White same race and transracial adoptive families were supported by the findings in the present study, others were not. The following

discussion examines attachment, attribution, acknowledgment of difference, family systems and African American family relationship theories in relation to this study's findings.

#### Attachment Theory:

As was discussed in Chapter Three, attachment theory as it has been utilized to understand adoptive families has found an established relationship between a child's ability to form attachments and their having experienced abuse, neglect or multiple pre-adoptive placements. However, in examining the relationship between a child's pre-adoption placement and abuse/neglect history and attachment, no significant relationships were found. Furthermore, neither the child's age at time of their adoption, nor the length of time they had lived in their adoptive homes was found to be related to attachment. These findings suggest that either the way in which attachment is measured by the PSI does not adequately assess parent/child attachment among African Americans (though PSI norms for African Americans and adoptive parents do exist and were used in the study) or that the factors influencing attachment differ among African American and White adoptive families.

The findings of this study support the latter conclusion. As it has been constructed by Hirschi (1969) and Kirk (1964), the quality of parent/child communication and the amount of time the parent and child spend together is related to attachment. Bowlby's (1971) attachment theory emphasizes the importance of children having a primary caregiver who becomes the primary attachment figure. His

theory suggests that when children have multiple caregivers, attachment difficulties can arise.

Rather than circumstances surrounding the child's pre-adoption history playing a role in attachment outcomes, among the African American adoptive families in this study, when the parents felt that friends and neighbors supported their adoptions, when the families had contact with previous caregivers, such as former foster parents and when they were willing to consider some type of contact with birth family members, attachment outcomes were more positive. These findings challenge previously developed theories and their goodness of fit, at least with the African American families in this study. Researchers are beginning to examine cultural differences in attachment and the findings of this study suggest that the role culture plays in attachment and the ways in which we operationalize the attachment construct is certainly worthy of further consideration.

### Attribution Theory

While the principles of attachment theory seemed to warrant further examination as it relates to African American adoptive families, the use of attribution theory was very well supported in the present study's findings. For example, the study found that a child's being aware that they were adopted was positively correlated with internalizing behavior problems (i.e. depression and anxiety). By way of contrast, while a significant relationship was also found between African American adoptive parents' satisfaction with their adoptions and the number of behavior problems their

adopted child had, this did not seem to impact the parents' attributions regarding how well a child fit in their family. This indicates that while parents may be unhappy with their adopted child's behavior, they do not necessarily see that as an indication that the child does not fit in their families.

### Kirk's Acknowledgment of Difference Theory

As was found with attribution theory, Kirk's Acknowledgment of Difference theory (1964) proved to work well when applied to the present study of African American adoptive families. However, while Kirk assesses the degree to which the adoptive parents think of the birth parents or their child's life before they were adopted, this study found the child's age at adoption to be most strongly related to the acknowledgment of difference score, with the adoptive parents of older children having higher AOD scores. While it was found that higher AOD scores were significantly related to post-adoption adjustment, it was also found that the adoptive parents of older children had significantly higher levels of satisfaction with their adoptions.

### Family Systems Theory

Family systems theory (Hepworth et al., 1997) evaluates a family's ability to "self-regulate" as the basis for determining whether the family system is functioning positively or not. In terms of the present study, the degree to which the adoptive parents felt their primary method of discipline was effective, spent enjoyable time

with the adopted child and shared a good quality of communication with the adopted child were all found to have positive correlations with post-adoption adjustment. These findings support the efficacy of family systems theory in explaining and understanding outcome of African American adoptive families in the present study.

### African American Family Theories

As was indicated in Stack's (1970) theory on African American family relationships, many African American families are defined by "folk kin" ties which establish parental rights, not only by blood ties, but also by the fulfillment of parental duties. This study found that many of the adoptive families in the study had experiences with both informal (44%) and formal (25.3%) adoption. Findings also indicated that African American adoptive parents who had, not only regular contact with their birth family, but also felt that they also had the support of their friends and neighbors in their decision to adopt adjusted better to their adoptions. These findings suggests not only that adoption continues to be a common practice among African American families (Gershenson, 1984), but also that extended family and members of the community play an important role in influencing the post-adoption adjustment of African American adoptive families. Further examination of how well current theories on adoptive families help us to understand adoptive family life is needed. This study may provide a first step in understanding the theoretical implications for practice with African American adoptive families.

## Research Implications

The limitations of previous research on African American adoptive families has already been discussed as having methodological flaws, specifically low response rates, which were also present in this study. The results of this exploratory study may however, provide a guide or direction to future research on African American adoptive families. Studies using interviews, longitudinal designs and larger samples would contribute a great deal to the development of a knowledge base for use in social work practice with African American adoptive families and children.

An important implication of the study's findings that African American private agency adoptive families differ dramatically from the population of all African American adoptive families, is the overwhelming need for research on the distinct sub-populations of African American adoptive families. Research on the population as a whole is called for as is research specific to African American families who adopt through public adoption agencies and additional research, beyond the present study on African American families who adopt through private agencies.

The results of the present research raised several questions regarding African American adoptive families. What role do histories of sexual and physical abuse have on outcomes among African American adopted children? What factors explain children of single African American adoptive mothers having significantly higher externalizing child behavior problems? What is it about being adopted as a result of parental incarceration that leads them to be more likely to have clinical levels of child

behavior problems? How can we better understand attachment as it relates to African American adoptive families? Are outcomes any different for low-income African American families or African American families who adopt through public agencies? How strongly a role do factors identified in this study as significant, such as quality of parent/child communication and amount of efficacy of discipline play in outcomes for African American adoptive families?

The large and growing number of African American children in need of adoption justifies the pursuit of answers to the questions raised as a result of the present study. Implications for future research include the need for further research or perhaps a replication of the present study with a larger sample of African American private agency adopters. A similar study looking at African American adoptive families who adopt from public adoption agencies is also indicated. Conducting further research using interview versus mailed survey methods and collecting data directly from the adopted children, versus using parent reports, would also be beneficial. The need for future inquiry into the nature and outcomes of African American adoptive family life is further supported by findings that may challenge previous conceptualizations of factors influencing adoption outcomes.

### Practice Implications

The vast majority of the study's respondents indicated that the availability of an African American adoption agency was important in their decisions to adopt. Further, it appears that the families that use the services of African American

adoption agencies may be distinct from those who adopt from public agencies. This suggests that African American adoption agencies are providing services to and meeting the needs of a population which might not otherwise be served by public and other private adoption agencies. Thus, adoption agency administrators in counties and states wishing to increase the recruitment of African American adoptive families may consider contracting with or developing new African American adoption agencies.

Though the children adopted into single-parent families in this study did have significantly more acting “acting out” behaviors than did the children adopted into two-parent families, these behaviors were not found to be outside the parameters of normal limits. This result supports the continued recruitment of single-parent adoptive families as a viable resource for African American awaiting adoption. While other studies have found that adoption practitioners often place children with more problematic behaviors with single-parent families, this was not found to be the case among the adoption practitioners at the agencies participating in this study. None the less, the fact that that children in single-parent homes did have significantly more behavior problems than did children in two-parent families, indicates that children with greater problems may best be served by being placed in two-parent families where the time and attention of two parents are available to them.

One of the most important practice implications of the study’s findings is that adoption practitioners must be cautious not to approach their work with African

American adoptive families as though they are a monolithic group. Previous studies have painted African American and other minority adoptive families as more accepting and unaffected by child behavior problems. While the majority of the African American adoptive families are doing quite well, 15-20 percent of the families do express lack of satisfaction, experience adjustment difficulties and have children with clinical levels of behavior problems. The findings which point to parent/child relationship factors rather than a child's pre-adoption history as influencing outcomes suggest that the problems African American adoptive families face may be less related to the adoption itself and more related to family system and parenting issues.

Though the reasons that the four children in the study who were adopted due to parental incarceration may have been more prone to extreme behavior problems were not examined in this research, adoption clinicians and practitioners should consider such a child as having the potential for serious behavioral problems. Preparation of adoptive parents for this possibility may in some way help prevent parental dissatisfaction and poor adjustment to the adoption. Further, adoption agencies should be sure that post-adoption therapeutic services are readily available and easily accessible to assist children who are adopted as a result of parental incarceration with issues of delinquency, aggressive behavior, anxiety and depression.

The majority (65.7%) of respondents indicated that they had discussed open adoption with their adoption social worker, however, their fear that the birth parent

would want the child back if open adoption were to occur is a strong indication that such discussions of open adoption were ineffective in dispelling the myths of open adoption. When adoptive parents did have contact with previous, non-related, caregivers, their attitudes toward open adoption was significantly more positive. This implies that it may be useful in dispelling myths surrounding open adoption for agencies to provide adoptive panels, workshops or discussions with African American adoptive parents who have experience with informal or open adoption.

Finally, the findings of this study which suggest that regardless of the adopted child's placement history, age at adoption, or history of abuse and neglect, most African American adoptive parents continue to be satisfied with and adjust positively to their adoptions may indicate that African American adoptive families' approach to adoptive family life might serve as a useful model for helping to prepare White special needs adoptive families and thereby reduce adoption disruption rates among such families.

### Implications for Policy

Close to 55% of families agreed or strongly agreed with the statement "the adoption took longer than I thought." Thirty-three percent disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement "The adoption was easier than I thought." The three primary themes of statements made by those who completed the comments section of the survey related to, 1) The excessive length of time it took to complete the survey; 2) their complaints regarding agency staffing turnover and 3) their thankfulness that

an African American adoption agency was available to them. These findings support that private African American adoption agencies should receive continued support of State agencies' as they play an important role in the recruitment of African American adoptive families who might not otherwise adopt through public agencies.

While federal funds do provide for private non-profit agencies to recruit African American adoptive families, they do not provide for funds to staff the agencies. One implication of the study is that enhancing the staffing capabilities of African American adoption agencies may be effective in increasing the number of African American adoptive families who get through the adoption process. Federal and State adoption policy makers should evaluate the degree to which understaffing and turnover due to low salaries affect the number of prospective adoptive families who "vote with their feet" and drop out of the adoption process and the number of home studies an agency completes in a given year. Such an evaluation might warrant funding for additional staffing at African American adoption agencies.

African American adoption agencies have made inroads in recruiting African American adoptive parents, yet there is a continued and growing need for African American adoptive families. While recent adoption legislation has attempted to address the need for adoptive families by streamlining the adoption process and encouraging publicly funded agencies to recruit more African American adoptive families, a problem still exists in number of African American children in need of

adoption. And while recent legislation has further decreased the barriers to transracial adoption, which has resulted in greater numbers of bi-racial African American infants being transracially adopted, the challenge of finding adoptive families for African American children who have been placed in child welfare custody is still present.

African American adoption agencies have proven to be effective in their efforts to find adoptive families for African American children who are in child welfare custody. One way to increase the numbers of African American children being adopted for child welfare custody, might be to require that publicly funded agencies make increased efforts to recruit and retain African American adoptive families through the use of private African American adoption agencies. Such agencies may be better equipped to successfully guide prospective African American adoptive parents through the adoption process.

### Conclusions

The current research explored the experiences and outcomes of a small sample of African American adoptive families who adopted children from one of two African American adoption agencies. Statistically significant differences were found among these adoptive families and African American adoptive families who adopt from public agencies in the state of California. The differences among African American private and public agency adopters are consistent with those found when comparing White private and public agency adopters. Such differences may be the result of the

population of public agency adopters including adoptions by foster-parents and relatives. Significant differences were also found when comparing children who were adopted as a result of parental incarceration and children adopted for other reasons. Because an explanation for these differences could not be found in the present data, further examination of the effects of parental incarceration is called for.

Children who had been adopted by single parent families and those who had been adopted by two-parent families also differed in terms of externalizing behaviors and further examination of this finding are also warranted. Parents who spent more enjoyable time and had better communication with their adopted children had more positive outcomes. Though a small number of the sample's adopted children had clinical level behavior problem scores, the majority had scores well within what is considered normal limits.

Many questions regarding outcomes among African American adoptive families have yet to be asked and answered. However the findings in the present study may serve as an initial step encouraging the examination of African American adoptive family life. The findings for the families participating in this study challenge not only the myth that African Americans are not interested in adoption, but the myth that the solution to the large number of African American children in need of adoption lies solely in the practice of transracial adoption. Rather, the findings indicate, at least with regard to the African American adoptive families who

participated in this study, that African Americans are interested, motivated and adjust well to adoptive family life. African American adoptive families are a valuable and important resource for the growing numbers of African American children awaiting adoption. The sample's overall positive adjustment, satisfaction with their adoptions and general lack of serious behavioral problems among the children, regardless of the child's age at adoption, number of pre-adoption placements and experiences with abuse or neglect, support the conclusion that these African American adoptive families are doing well and have a great deal of strength in meeting the needs of African American children in need of adoption.

## **APPENDICES**

## APPENDIX A

Tables 6.5a through 6.10a

Findings of Pearson  $r$  Correlation Analyses  
of Independent Variables and Dependent Variable

Table 6.5a

## Pearson's Correlations of Independent Variables and Parenting Stress Scores

Pearson's Correlations					
Dependent Variable: Parenting Stress					
Variable Type	Variables	Components	Pearson r	p	
Adoptive Parent Factors	Parents Age	Adoptive Mother's Age	.169	.152	
		Adoptive Father's Age	.256	.059	
	Parent Education	Adoptive Mother's Education	-.106	.375	
		Adoptive Father's Education	.039	.781	
	Parent Occupation	Adoptive Mother's Occupation	.319	.027*	
		Adoptive Father's Occupation	.000	.998	
	Parent Employment	Adoptive Mother's Employment	-.007	.951	
		Adoptive Father's Employment	.106	.445	
	Income	Adoptive Family Income		.202	.178
		Family Structure	Two Parent Adoptive Family	-.155	.181
	Birth Children in the Home		.187	.107	
	Contact with Relatives		.290	.015*	
	Parenting Stress	PSI Total Score		-	-
	Adoption Experience	Experience w/Formal Adoption		.091	.436
		Experience w/Informal Adoption		.121	.330
	Adjustment to Adoption	Composite Adjustment Score		.169	.152
	Attachment	Parent/Child Attachment		.443	< .001
	Adoption Services	Post Adoption Services Use		-.013	.911
Satisfaction	Satisfaction with the Adoption		.150	.202	
Acknowledgment of Difference	Discussion of Adoption		.095	.416	
	Child Awareness of Adoption		.057	.628	
	ADS Score		.220	.080	
Attitude Toward Openness	Positive Attitude Toward Openness		.172	.138	
Religion	Religious Involvement		-.179	.133	
	Protestant Faith		.030	.801	
Adopted Child Factors	Placement Age	Child's Age at Placement	-.002	.990	
		Male Child	-.018	.875	
	Pre-Adoptive Placements	Number of Pre -Adoption Placements	.064	.583	
		Sexual Abuse	-.112	.432	
	Neglect	.021	.885		
	Severity of Abuse	.009	.951		
	Length of Time in Family	.145	.211		
Child Behavior	Total Problems Score		.491	< .001	
	Externalizing Score		.462	< .001	
	Internalizing Score		.448	< .001	

Table 6.6a  
 Pearson's Correlations of Independent Variables and Acknowledgement of  
 Difference Now Scores

Pearson' Correlations					
Dependent Variable: Acknowledgement of Difference Now Score					
Variable Type	Variables	Components	Pearson r	p	
Adoptive Parent Factors	Parents Age	Adoptive Mother's Age	.193	.113	
		Adoptive Father's Age	-.150	.283	
	Parent Education	Adoptive Mother's Education	.019	.878	
		Adoptive Father's Education	-.066	.636	
	Parent Occupation	Adoptive Mother's Occupation	-.014	.924	
		Adoptive Father's Occupation	-.003	.989	
	Parent Employment	Adoptive Mother's Employment	.019	.880	
		Adoptive Father's Employment	-.012	.931	
	Income	Adoptive Family Income		-.032	.833
		Family Structure	Two Parent Adoptive Family	-.076	.527
			Birth Children in the Home	-.033	.785
			Contact with Relatives	-.313	.010**
	Parenting Stress	PSI Total Score		.220	.880
	Adoption Experience	Experience w/Formal Adoption		.107	.376
		Experience w/Informal Adoption		.260	.260
	Adjustment to Adoption	Composite Adjustment Score		.934	<.001
	Attachment	Parent/Child Attachment		.020	.878
	Adoption Services	Post Adoption Services Use		.003	.978
	Satisfaction	Satisfaction with the Adoption		-.149	.218
	Acknowledgment of Difference	Discussion of Adoption		.192	.109
Child Awareness of Adoption		.057	.628		
ADS Score		-	-		
Attitude Toward Openness	Positive Attitude Toward Openness		-.087	.471	
Religion	Religious Involvement		.162	.182	
	Protestant Faith		-.075	.541	
Adopted Child Factors	Placement Age	Child's Age at Placement	-.301	.022*	
		Male Child	-.100	.411	
	Pre-Adoptive Placements	Number of Pre -Adoption Placements	-.242	.043*	
		Sexual Abuse	-.036	.817	
	Neglect	-.083	.598		
	Severity of Abuse	.087	.593		
Length of Time in Family	.125	.298			
Child Behavior	Total Problems Score		.000	.933	
	Externalizing Score		.001	.999	
	Internalizing Score		.018	.890	

Table 6.7a  
 Pearson's Correlations of Independent Variables and Adoption Satisfaction Scores

Pearson's Correlations Outcome Variable: Satisfaction with the Adoption				
Variable Type	Variables	Components	Pearson r	p
Adoptive Parent Factors	Parents Age	Adoptive Mother's Age	-.103	.368
		Adoptive Father's Age	-.145	.269
	Parent Education	Adoptive Mother's Education	-.049	.670
		Adoptive Father's Education	-.037	.780
	Parent Occupation	Adoptive Mother's Occupation	-.053	.708
		Adoptive Father's Occupation	.058	.745
	Parent Employment	Adoptive Mother's Employment	-.017	.880
		Adoptive Father's Employment	-.111	.401
	Income	Adoptive Family Income	.209	.145
		Family Structure	Two Parent Adoptive Family	-.078
	Birth Children in the Home		.129	.251
	Parenting Stress	PSI Total Score	.150	.202
	Adoption Experience	Experience w/Formal Adoption	-.027	.810
		Experience w/Informal Adoption	-.079	.514
	Adjustment to Adoption	Composite Adjustment Score	-.204	.090
	Attachment	Parent/Child Attachment	.187	.115
	Adoption Services	Post Adoption Services Use	-.001	.993
	Satisfaction	Satisfaction with the Adoption	-	-
Acknowledgment of Difference	Discussion of Adoption Child Awareness of Adoption ADS Score	.051	.649	
		.156	.167	
		-.149	.218	
Attitude Toward Openness	Positive Attitude Toward Openness	-.020	.856	
Religion	Religious Involvement	.089	.444	
	Protestant Faith	.056	.628	
Adopted Child Factors	Placement Age Pre-Adoptive Placements	Child's Age at Placement	.249	.042*
		Male Child	.195	.084
		Number of Pre-Adoption Placements	.218	.052
		Sexual Abuse	-.087	.544
		Neglect	.108	.450
		Severity of Abuse	.011	.942
		Length of Time in Family	.104	.354
Child Behavior	Total Problems Score Externalizing Score Internalizing Score	.376	.001**	
		.396	.001**	
		.385	.001**	

\*p = < .05

\*\*p = < .01

Table 6.8a  
 Pearson's Correlations of Independent Variables and Adoptive Family Adjustment Scores

Bi-Variate Correlations Outcome Variable: Adoptive Family Adjustment				
Variable Type	Variables	Components	Pearson r	p
Adoptive Parent Factors	Parents Age	Adoptive Mother's Age	.187	.126
		Adoptive Father's Age	-.139	.325
	Parent Education	Adoptive Mother's Education	.048	.646
		Adoptive Father's Education	.091	.532
	Parent Occupation	Adoptive Mother's Occupation	-.133	.374
		Adoptive Father's Occupation	.062	.749
	Parent Employment	Adoptive Mother's Employment	.061	.662
		Adoptive Father's Employment	-.017	.906
	Income	Adoptive Family Income	-.032	.838
	Family Structure	Two Parent Adoptive Family Birth Children in the Home	-.049	.684
			.042	.729
	Parenting Stress	PSI Total Score	.240	.259
	Adoption Experience	Experience w/Formal Adoption	.167	.168
		Experience w/Informal Adoption	.239	.084
	Adjustment to Adoption	Composite Adjustment Score	-	-
	Attachment	Parent/Child Attachment	.016	.902
Adoption Services	Post Adoption Services Use	-.055	.654	
Satisfaction	Satisfaction with the Adoption	-.204	.090	
Acknowledgment of Difference	Discussion of Adoption Child Awareness of Adoption ADS Score	.134	.169	
		.085	.448	
		.934	< .001**	
Attitude Toward Openness	Positive Attitude Toward Openness	-.056	.643	
Religion	Religious Involvement	.168	.172	
	Protestant Faith	-.093		
Adopted Child Factors	Placement Age Pre-Adoptive Placements	Child's Age at Placement	-.181	.177
		Male Child	-.143	.245
		Number of Pre -Adoption Placements	-.250	.038*
		Sexual Abuse	-.013	.933
		Neglect	.019	.904
		Severity of Abuse	.004	.948
		Length of Time in Family	-.021	.864
Child Behavior	Total Problems Score Externalizing Score Internalizing Score	.004	.974	
		-.001	.995	
		-.001	.992	

\* p = < .05

\*\* p = < .01

Table 6.9a  
 Pearson's Correlations of Independent Variables and Parent/Child Attachment Scores

Pearson's Correlations Outcome Variable: Parent/Child Attachment				
Variable Type	Variables	Components	Pearson r	p
Adoptive Parent Factors	Parents Age	Adoptive Mother's Age	.187	.119
		Adoptive Father's Age	.227	.103
	Parent Education	Adoptive Mother's Education	-.169	.161
		Adoptive Father's Education	-.168	.234
	Parent Occupation	Adoptive Mother's Occupation	.254	.084
		Adoptive Father's Occupation	.102	.597
	Parent Employment	Adoptive Mother's Employment	-.116	.327
		Adoptive Father's Employment	-.029	.837
	Income	Adoptive Family Income	.212	.162
	Family Structure	Two Parent Adoptive Family	-.063	.593
		Birth Children in the Home	.024	.842
	Parenting Stress	PSI Total Score	.443	<.001
	Adoption Experience	Experience w/Formal Adoption	-.035	.772
		Experience w/Informal Adoption	-.172	.170
	Adjustment to Adoption	Composite Adjustment Score	.016	.902
	Attachment	Parent/Child Attachment	-	-
	Adoption Services	Post Adoption Services Use	-.061	.605
	Satisfaction	Satisfaction with the Adoption	.187	.115
Acknowledgment of Difference	Discussion of Adoption	.003	.978	
	Child Awareness of Adoption	-.001	.992	
	ADS Score	.020	.878	
Attitude Toward Openness	Positive Attitude Toward Openness	-.085	.470	
Religion	Religious Involvement	-.080	.513	
	Protestant Faith	.014	.908	
Adopted Child Factors	Placement Age	Child's Age at Placement	.052	.683
		Pre-Adoptive Male Child	.040	.737
	Pre-Adoptive Placements	Number of Pre -Adoption Placements	.162	.170
		Sexual Abuse	-.116	.422
		Neglect	-.056	.699
		Severity of Abuse	.103	.384
		Length of Time in Family	.218	.062
Child Behavior	Total Problems Score	.207	.091	
	Externalizing Score	.234	.055	
	Internalizing Score	.154	.210	

\* p = < .05

\*\*p = < .01

Table 6.10a

Pearson's Correlations with Attitude Toward Open Adoption Scores

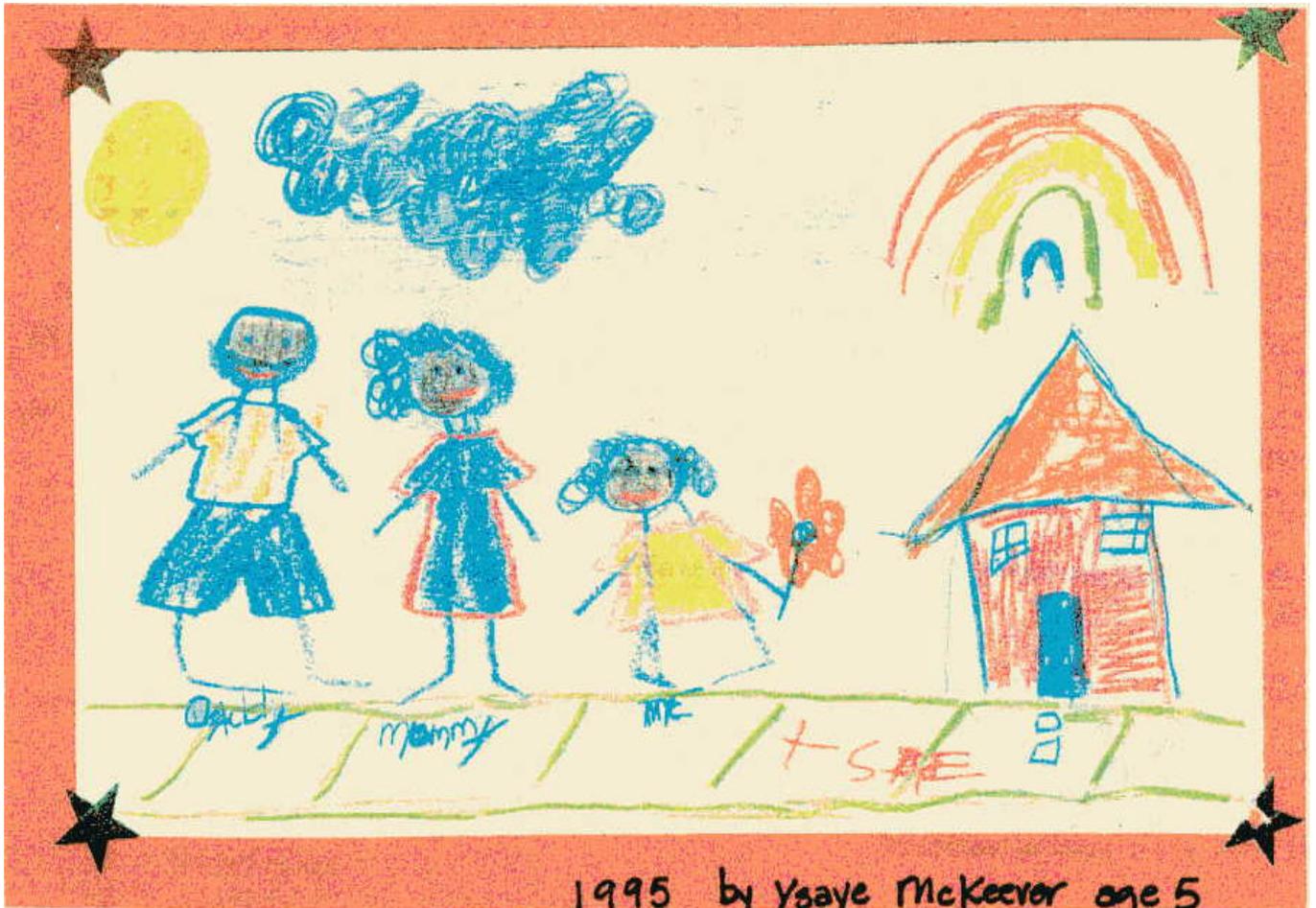
Pearson's Correlations				
Dependent Variable: Attitude Toward Open Adoption				
Variable Type	Variables	Components	Pearson r	p
Adoptive Parent Factors	Parents Age	Adoptive Mother's Age	-.145	.222
		Adoptive Father's Age	-.067	.609
	Parent Education	Adoptive Mother's Education	.085	.457
		Adoptive Father's Education	.048	.713
	Parent Occupation	Adoptive Mother's Occupation	.047	.736
		Adoptive Father's Occupation	.137	.342
	Parent Employment	Adoptive Mother's Employment	.061	.592
		Adoptive Father's Employment	-.014	.917
	Income	Adoptive Family Income	.105	.464
		Family Structure	Two Parent Adoptive Family	.961
		Birth Children in the Home	-.260	
	Parenting Stress	PSI Total Score	-.172	.587
	Adoption Experience	Experience w/Formal Adoption	.010	.927
		Experience w/Informal Adoption	.282	.015**
	Adjustment to Adoption	Composite Adjustment Score	-.056	.643
	Attachment	Parent/Child Attachment	-.085	.470
Adoption Services	Post Adoption Services Use	.056	.612	
Satisfaction	Satisfaction with the Adoption	.020	.855	
Acknowledgment of Difference	Discussion of Adoption	-.019	.863	
	Child Awareness of Adoption	-.200	.072	
	ADS Score	-.087	.471	
Attitude Toward Openness	Positive Attitude Toward Openness	-	-	
Religion	Religious Involvement	.210	.063	
	Protestant Faith	-.039	.732	
Adopted Child Factors	Placement Age Pre-Adoptive Placements	Child's Age at Placement	-.054	.657
		Male Child	-.106	.927
		Number of Pre -Adoption Placements	-.010	.927
		Sexual Abuse	.001	.997
		Neglect	-.076	.589
		Severity of Abuse	-.084	.561
		Length of Time in Family	-.090	.419
Child Behavior	Total Problems Score	-.122	.300	
	Externalizing Score	-.124	.292	
	Internalizing Score	-.073	.539	

\*p = &lt; .05

\*\*p = &lt; .01

APPENDIX B

African American Adoptive Family Questionnaire



1995 by Ysaye McKeever age 5

# African American Family Questionnaire



7) What is your ethnic background (select the single best answer)

- $\pi$  1 African American
- $\pi$  2 Mexican American/Hispanic
- $\pi$  3 Native American/American Indian
- $\pi$  4 Anglo American/Caucasian
- $\pi$  5 Asian American
- $\pi$  99 Other Ethnic Background \_\_\_\_\_

Please Specify:

8) What is your spouse/mate's ethnic background (select the single best answer)

- $\pi$  1 African American
- $\pi$  2 Mexican American/Hispanic
- $\pi$  3 Native American/American Indian
- $\pi$  4 Anglo American/Caucasian
- $\pi$  5 Asian American
- $\pi$  99 Other Ethnic Background \_\_\_\_\_

Please Specify:

9) What is the highest level of education you have completed? (select the single best answer).

- $\pi$  1 Less than High School Diploma
- $\pi$  2 Completed High School Equivalency (i.e. GED)
- $\pi$  3 Completed High School
- $\pi$  4 Some College
- $\pi$  5 Completed 2 Year College Degree (i.e. A.A.)
- $\pi$  6 Completed College (i.e. BA/BS Degree)
- $\pi$  7 Some Graduate School
- $\pi$  8 Completed Graduate School (i.e. M.A./Ph.D.)

10) What is the highest level of education your spouse/mate has completed? (select the single best answer).

- $\pi$  1 Less than High School Diploma
- $\pi$  2 Completed High School Equivalency (i.e. GED)
- $\pi$  3 Completed High School
- $\pi$  4 Some College
- $\pi$  5 Completed 2 Year College Degree (i.e. A.A.)
- $\pi$  6 Completed College (i.e. BA/BS Degree)
- $\pi$  7 Some Graduate School
- $\pi$  8 Completed Graduate School (i.e. M.A./Ph.D.)
- $\pi$  98 Not Applicable (I have no spouse/mate)

11) Are you currently employed? (check one)

- $\pi$  1 No
- $\pi$  2 Yes (Full-Time)
- $\pi$  3 Yes (Part-Time)

Position Title: \_\_\_\_\_

12) Is your spouse/mate currently employed? (check one)

- $\pi$  1 No
- $\pi$  2 Yes (Full-Time)
- $\pi$  3 Yes (Part-Time)
- $\pi$  98 Not Applicable (I have no spouse/mate)

Position Title: \_\_\_\_\_

13) What is your combined yearly gross family income (before taxes)?

\$ \_\_\_\_\_

14) What is your family's religious affiliation? (check one)

- $\pi$  1 Protestant (Baptist, AME, Episcopal etc.)
- $\pi$  2 Catholic
- $\pi$  3 Jewish
- $\pi$  4 Muslim
- $\pi$  5 Other: \_\_\_\_\_ (Please Specify)
- $\pi$  98 Not Applicable

15) How active are you in your religious practice? (check one)

- $\pi$  1 Very Active
- $\pi$  2 Moderately Active
- $\pi$  3 Active
- $\pi$  4 Slightly Active
- $\pi$  5 Not Active
- $\pi$  98 Not Applicable

16) Do you pray for your child?

- $\pi$  1 No
- $\pi$  2 Yes

If yes, how often do you pray for your child?

- $\pi$  1 Very Often
- $\pi$  2 Somewhat Often
- $\pi$  3 Not Often

17) Were you, your spouse or any member of your extended family adopted ?

- $\pi$  1 No
- $\pi$  2 Yes

If yes, please specify the family member who was adopted.

\_\_\_\_\_

**For a variety of reasons, parents are sometimes unable to parent their children. During such times a child may go to live with a relative or a family friend who cares for the child and acts as their parent.**

18) While you were a child did you ever live with relatives (other than your parents) or family friends who cared for you and acted as your parent? (check one)

- $\pi$  1 No (if no, please go to question #22)
- $\pi$  2 Yes (If you answered yes, please answer questions 18-21)

19) What were the reasons you left your birth parents' home? (check the single best answer)

- $\pi$  1 Family Financial Reasons
- $\pi$  2 Birth-Parents not able to parent
- $\pi$  3 Other relative asked
- $\pi$  4 Parent Remarried
- $\pi$  5 Parent(s) died
- $\pi$  6 I asked to go live with someone else
- $\pi$  7 Other Reason: \_\_\_\_\_ (Please Specify)

20) How long did you live away from your birth parents? (check one)

- $\pi$  1 Days
- $\pi$  2 Weeks
- $\pi$  3 Months
- $\pi$  4 Years

21) While you were living away from your birth parents, how often did you have contact with your them? (check one)

- $\pi$  1 Less than Once a Month
- $\pi$  2 One to Two Times a Month
- $\pi$  3 Three to Four Times a Month
- $\pi$  4 More than Four Times a Month

22) When you stopped living with the other family, where did you go to live? (check one)

- $\pi$  1 Back with Birth Parents
- $\pi$  2 Another Relative
- $\pi$  3 Family Friend
- $\pi$  4 Foster Home
- $\pi$  5 Moved on my own
- $\pi$  6 Other: \_\_\_\_\_ (Please Specify)

23) While you were a child did your parents ever care for the child of a relative or a family friend and act as his or her parent?

- $\pi$  1 No (if no, please go to question #27)
- $\pi$  2 Yes (If yes, please answer questions 23-26)

24) What were the reasons the child came to live with you? (check one)

- $\pi$  1 Family Financial Problems
- $\pi$  2 Birth-Parents Not Able To Parent
- $\pi$  3 Other Relative Asked
- $\pi$  4 Parent Remarried
- $\pi$  5 Parent(s) Died
- $\pi$  6 I Asked To Go Live With Someone Else
- $\pi$  7 Other Reason: \_\_\_\_\_ Please Specify

25) How long did the child live with your family ? (check one)

- $\pi$  1 Days
- $\pi$  2 Weeks
- $\pi$  3 Months
- $\pi$  4 Years

26) While the child was living away from his or her birth parents, how often they have contact with them? (check one)

- $\pi$  1 Less than Once a Month
- $\pi$  2 One to Two Times A Month
- $\pi$  3 Three to Four Times A Month
- $\pi$  4 More than Four Times A Month

27) When the child stopped living with your family, where did he or she go to live? (check one)

- $\pi$  1 Back with Birth Parents
- $\pi$  2 Another Relative
- $\pi$  3 Family Friend
- $\pi$  4 Foster Home
- $\pi$  5 Moved out on their own
- $\pi$  6 Other: \_\_\_\_\_ (Please Specify)
- $\pi$

28) How Many Children has your family adopted?  
\_\_\_\_\_ Number of Adopted Children

28) Do you have any biological/birth children?

- $\pi$  1 No
  - $\pi$  2 Yes
- If Yes, how many? \_\_\_\_\_



32) To the best of your knowledge how severe was the abuse or neglect your child experienced prior to being adopted? (check one)

- $\pi$  1 Very Severe
- $\pi$  2 Somewhat Severe
- $\pi$  3 Not Severe

33) Please indicate how certain you are about your child's history of abuse or neglect.(check one)

- $\pi$  1 Very certain
- $\pi$  2 Somewhat Certain
- $\pi$  3 Uncertain

34) How many foster or other homes (including those of birth family members) did your child live in prior to coming to live with you? (check one)

- $\pi$  1 0 to 1
- $\pi$  2 2 to 3
- $\pi$  3 4 to 5
- $\pi$  4 6 or more

35) How would you describe the current health of your child? (check one)

- $\pi$  1 Very Healthy
- $\pi$  2 Somewhat Healthy
- $\pi$  3 Not Healthy

36) Before being placed in your home, did your child ever live with members of his or her extended birth family (birth parents, aunts, uncles, grandparents etc.)?

- $\pi$  1 No
- $\pi$  2 Yes

37) What is your child's ethnicity? (check one)

- $\pi$  1 African American
- $\pi$  2 Bi-racial (African American/Hispanic)
- $\pi$  3 Bi-racial (African American/white)
- $\pi$  4 Bi-racial (African American/Asian)
- $\pi$  5 Other

38) Is there any on-going contact between your family and members of your child's birth-family members?

- $\pi$  1 No
- $\pi$  2 Yes

39) Does your child have any on going contact with previous caregivers such as foster-parents?

- $\pi$  1 No
- $\pi$  2 Yes

- $\pi$  98 Not Applicable
- 40) How often do you visit relatives or do relatives visit you? (check one)
- $\pi$  1 Less than Once a Month
  - $\pi$  2 One to Two Times A Month
  - $\pi$  3 Three to Four Times A Month
  - $\pi$  4 More than Four Times A Month
- 41) Does your child know that he or she is adopted?
- $\pi$  1 No If your child does not know he or she is adopted, do you plan to tell him or her?
    - $\pi$  1 No
    - $\pi$  2 Yes
  - $\pi$  2 Yes If you child knows he or she is adopted, how old was your child when you told?  
Age \_\_\_\_\_ Years
- 42) In general, how satisfied are you with the adoption? (check one)
- $\pi$  1 Extremely Satisfied
  - $\pi$  2 Satisfied
  - $\pi$  3 Somewhat Satisfied
  - $\pi$  4 Not Satisfied
- 43) How often is the topic of adoption discussed in your family? (check one)
- $\pi$  1 Never
  - $\pi$  2 Rarely
  - $\pi$  3 Sometimes
  - $\pi$  4 Often
  - $\pi$  5 Very Often
- 44) How comfortable is your child with talking about his or her adoption? (check one)
- $\pi$  1 Very Uncomfortable
  - $\pi$  2 Uncomfortable
  - $\pi$  3 Somewhat Comfortable
  - $\pi$  4 Comfortable
  - $\pi$  5 Very Comfortable
  - $\pi$  98 Not Applicable (my child does not know he/she is adopted)
- 45) How would you rate the communication between you and your child? (check one)
- $\pi$  1 Very good
  - $\pi$  2 Good
  - $\pi$  3 Not Very Good
  - $\pi$  4 Poor
  - $\pi$  5 Very Poor

- 46) How often do you and your child spend time together that you both enjoy? (check one)
- $\pi$  1 Very Often
  - $\pi$  2 Often
  - $\pi$  3 Sometimes
  - $\pi$  4 Rarely
  - $\pi$  5 Never
- 47) How often do you think of your child when you are separated? (check one)
- $\pi$  1 Very Often
  - $\pi$  2 Often
  - $\pi$  3 Sometimes
  - $\pi$  4 Rarely
  - $\pi$  5 Never
- 48) When disciplining your child, which method of discipline are you most likely to use? (check one)
- $\pi$  1 Time Outs/Being sent to his or her room
  - $\pi$  2 Loss of Privileges (watching TV, using phone etc)
  - $\pi$  3 Restriction from activities (having to stay home).
  - $\pi$  4 Giving Extra Chores
  - $\pi$  5 Spanking
- 49) How effective is the method of discipline you use? (check one)
- $\pi$  1 Very Effective
  - $\pi$  2 Effective
  - $\pi$  3 Sometimes Effective
  - $\pi$  4 Not very Effective
  - $\pi$  5 Ineffective
- 50) How well has your family adjusted to the adoption (check one)
- $\pi$  1 Extremely Well
  - $\pi$  2 Adjusted Well
  - $\pi$  3 Somewhat Adjusted
  - $\pi$  4 Not Adjusted
- 51) On a scale of 1-10, with 1 meaning a 'very poor fit,' 5 meaning a 'medium fit' and 10 meaning a 'perfect fit,' how would you rate the degree to which your child fits in your family at the present time. (check one)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
$\pi$	$\pi$	$\pi$	$\pi$	$\pi$	$\pi$	$\pi$	$\pi$	$\pi$	$\pi$
very poor fit				medium fit				perfect fit	

**In some instances, adopted children have some sort of contact with birth family members after the adoption. The level of contact or openness in the adoption can vary. The following questions ask about your attitudes toward on-going contact between adopted children and birth family members.**

52) If you had the option of having some type of contact with your child's birth parents, would you choose to do so?

- 1 No
- 2 Yes

53) If you were to choose, which type(s) of contact would you be willing to have with your child's birth family? (check all that apply)

- 1 No contact
- 2 Contact through sharing letters
- 3 Contact through sharing of photographs
- 4 Contact through telephone calls
- 5 Contact through face-to-face meetings

54) How concerned would you be about the birth family trying to take your child away? (check one)

- 1 Very concerned
- 2 Moderately concerned
- 3 Concerned
- 4 Slightly Concerned s
- 5 Unconcerned

55) How concerned would you be that contact with birth family members may be confusing to your child? (check one)

- 1 Very concerned
- 2 Moderately concerned
- 3 Concerned
- 4 Slightly Concerned
- 5 Unconcerned

56) If your child, as a teenager, wanted to initiate a search for his or her birth parents, would you be supportive of the search?

- 1 No
- 2 Yes
- 99 Don't Know

57) If your child, as an adult, wanted to initiate a search for his or her birth parents, would you be supportive of the search?

- 1 No
- 2 Yes
- 99 Don't Know

58) During the adoption process did your social worker or another agency representative discuss having contact with the birth family with you?

- 1 No
- 2 Yes

### Experiences With Adoption Agencies

**This section of the survey asks about your experiences with the adoption agency and the adoption process itself.**

59) Below are statements regarding adoption and the adoption process. Please express your opinion about these statements by marking whether you Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) or Strongly Disagree (SD) with each one.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
	[SA]	[A]	[D]	[SD]
The adoption took longer than I thought .....				
I received adequate Information about the adoption process...				
The fee for the adoption was about right .....				
Our friends and Neighbors supported the adoption .....				
It was easier to adopt than I expected .....				
	[SA]	[A]	[D]	[SD]
Co-workers supported the adoption .....				
I would recommend adoption to other families .....				
Our relatives supported the adoption .....				
I would adopt again .....				
Raising an adopted child is more difficult than I thought .....				

60) Prior to adopting through he Black Adoption, Placement & Research Center did you ever attempt to adopt through another agency?

- $\pi$  1 No
- $\pi$  2 Yes

61) What was the outcome of your previous attempts to adopt? (check all that apply)

- $\pi$  1 I/We adopted a child through the agency
- $\pi$  2 My/Our homestudy was approved but I/We did not adopt a child through the agency
- $\pi$  3 I/We withdrew our application to adopt through the agency
- $\pi$  4 My/Our application to adopt was not approved

- 99 N/A (never tried to adopt through another agency)
- 62) At which type(s) of agencies had you previously attempted to adopt (check all that apply)
- 1 Public Adoption Agency
  - 2 Private Adoption Agency
  - 3 Private Attorney
  - 4 Other \_\_\_\_\_(please specify)
  - 99 N/A (never tried to adopt through another agency)
- 63) If you have ever applied to adopt at an agency and later decided not to complete the adoption process, what were your reasons for not completing the process? (check all that apply)
- 1 Agency requirements seemed unreasonable
  - 2 I/We were unhappy with our worker at the agency
  - 3 The agency took too long to respond to my inquiry
  - 4 The type of child I/we wanted was not available
  - 5 Agency fees were too high
  - 6 Personal Reasons (changed mind, finances etc.)
  - 99 N/A (never withdrew an application to adopt)
- 64) What was the primary reason you decided to adopt? (check one)
- 1 Infertility/Unable to have children
  - 2 Wanted to add to the family I/We already had
  - 3 Wanted a child of a particular gender
  - 4 Wanted to provide a home for an African American child
  - 5 Wanted to share my/our blessings with another
  - 98 Other \_\_\_\_\_(please specify)
- 65) What was the fee you paid for your child's adoption?
- \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- 66) Do you have a problem with African American adoptive parents having to pay adoption fees?
- 1 No
  - 2 Yes
- 67) Do you receive adoption assistance funds?
- 1 No
  - 2 Yes
- 68) How important was the availability of adoption Assistance Funds in enabling you to adopt? (check one)
- 1 Very Important
  - 2 Somewhat Important
  - 3 Not Important
  - 98 Not Applicable (no funds received)
- 69) How important was the availability of an African American adoption agency in your decision to adopt? (check one)

- π 1 Very Important
- π 2 Somewhat Important
- π 3 Not Important

70) Since your adoption have you received services from any source for any of the following reasons?  
 (Please indicate whether or not you have received each service by marking the appropriate circle)

Types of Services	In the last year		Since the adoption of the target child		If yes, were you satisfied with the services?	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Family Counseling	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Couples Counseling	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Counseling for adopted child	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Assistance with adopted child's school related problems	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Referrals	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Workshops or classes	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Adoptive Parent Support Group	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Gatherings or Socials	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Search Assistance	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Search Registry	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Transmission of correspondence to or from the birthmother	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Contacting the birthmother for you	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Search records for additional social or medical history on the adopted child	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Help in getting Adoption Assistance Program funds for the adopted child	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other (please explain):						

71) If you indicated that you have received services in the past, from what source did you obtain the services? (check all that apply)

- π 1 Public Social Service agency (i.e. Family Service Association)
- π 2 The agency through which I adopted
- π 3 Another adoption agency
- π 4 My child's school
- π 5 My church
- π 6 Family members
- π 7 Private Service Provider (i.e. Psychologist, Family Therapist)
- π 8 My Pediatrician

### Adoptive Family Life

**In this section of the survey, I am interested in learning about your perceptions and experiences of adoptive family life.**

- 72) When you were younger, did you anticipate that you might build your family through adoption?  
 $\pi$  1 No  
 $\pi$  2 Yes
- 73) Do you feel that your family is different from non-adoptive families?  
 $\pi$  1 No  
 $\pi$  2 Yes
- 74) If yes, how different do you feel adoptive families and non-adoptive families are? (check one)  
 $\pi$  1 Very Different  
 $\pi$  2 Somewhat Different  
 $\pi$  3 Not Different
- 75) Do you believe that adoptive parents need to have some abilities in addition to those needed by good parents generally?  
 $\pi$  1 No  
 $\pi$  2 Yes
- 76) Do you think of yourselves as an adoptive family or just a family?  
 $\pi$  1 Just a family  
 $\pi$  2 As an Adoptive Family
- 77) Do you generally share with others that your child is adopted?  
 $\pi$  1 No  
 $\pi$  2 Yes
- 78) How has the experience of adoption affected your sense of yourself as an individual? (check one)  
 $\pi$  1 Very Positively  
 $\pi$  2 Positively  
 $\pi$  3 Somewhat Positively  
 $\pi$  4 Negatively  
 $\pi$  5 Very Negatively
- 79) It has been said that adoptive families face different challenges in the community and society than families not built through adoption. What is your opinion about this statement. (check one)  
 $\pi$  1 Strongly Agree  
 $\pi$  2 Agree  
 $\pi$  3 Disagree  
 $\pi$  4 Strongly Disagree
- 80) In the future would you be interested in participating in a follow-up study of African American adoptive families?  
 $\pi$  1 No  
 $\pi$  2 Yes

**Additional Comments: I'm interested in what you have to say. If there are additional comments you'd like to make regarding your adoption experiences, please feel free to do so on the back of this page.**





## Agreement & Contact Information Form

I am interested in participating in participating in follow-up studies of African American adoptive family life. I understand that this is not a commitment to participate in further studies. My contact information is as follows (please print):

Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Street address

\_\_\_\_\_  
City, State Zip Code

Telephone: Home: \_\_\_\_\_

Work: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail address: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Preferences: Please mark the boxes below to indicate how you do and do not wish to be contacted.

I prefer to be contacted:

-  By telephone at work
-  By telephone at home
-  By mail
-  By E-mail

I do not wish to be contacted:

-  By telephone at work
-  By telephone at home
-  By mail
-  By E-mail

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

APPENDIX C

Child Behavior Checklist/4-18

# CHILD BEHAVIOR CHECKLIST FOR AGES 4-18

For office use only  
ID # 226

*Please Print*

CHILD'S FULL NAME FIRST MIDDLE LAST			PARENTS' USUAL TYPE OF WORK, even if not working now. (Please be specific—for example, auto mechanic, high school teacher, homemaker, laborer, lathe operator, shoe salesman, army sergeant.)
SEX <input type="checkbox"/> Boy <input type="checkbox"/> Girl	AGE	ETHNIC GROUP OR RACE	
TODAY'S DATE Mo. _____ Day _____ Yr. _____		CHILD'S BIRTHDATE Mo. _____ Day _____ Yr. _____	FATHER'S TYPE OF WORK: _____
GRADE IN SCHOOL _____	Please fill out this form to reflect your view of the child's behavior even if other people might not agree. Feel free to print additional comments beside each item and in the spaces provided on page 2.		MOTHER'S TYPE OF WORK: _____
NOT ATTENDING SCHOOL <input type="checkbox"/>			THIS FORM FILLED OUT BY: <input type="checkbox"/> Mother (full name) _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Father (full name) _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Other—name & relationship to child: _____

<p><b>I. Please list the sports your child most likes to take part in.</b> For example: swimming, baseball, skating, skate boarding, bike riding, fishing, etc.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> None</p> <p>a. _____</p> <p>b. _____</p> <p>c. _____</p>	<p>Compared to others of the same age, about how much time does he/she spend in each?</p> <p>Don't Know    Less Than Average    Average    More Than Average</p>	<p>Compared to others of the same age, how well does he/she do each one?</p> <p>Don't Know    Below Average    Average    Above Average</p>
<p>a. <input type="checkbox"/>    <input type="checkbox"/>    <input type="checkbox"/>    <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>b. <input type="checkbox"/>    <input type="checkbox"/>    <input type="checkbox"/>    <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>c. <input type="checkbox"/>    <input type="checkbox"/>    <input type="checkbox"/>    <input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>a. <input type="checkbox"/>    <input type="checkbox"/>    <input type="checkbox"/>    <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>b. <input type="checkbox"/>    <input type="checkbox"/>    <input type="checkbox"/>    <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>c. <input type="checkbox"/>    <input type="checkbox"/>    <input type="checkbox"/>    <input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>a. <input type="checkbox"/>    <input type="checkbox"/>    <input type="checkbox"/>    <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>b. <input type="checkbox"/>    <input type="checkbox"/>    <input type="checkbox"/>    <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>c. <input type="checkbox"/>    <input type="checkbox"/>    <input type="checkbox"/>    <input type="checkbox"/></p>
<p><b>II. Please list your child's favorite hobbies, activities, and games, other than sports.</b> For example: stamps, dolls, books, piano, crafts, cars, singing, etc. (Do not include listening to radio or TV.)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> None</p> <p>a. _____</p> <p>b. _____</p> <p>c. _____</p>	<p>Compared to others of the same age, about how much time does he/she spend in each?</p> <p>Don't Know    Less Than Average    Average    More Than Average</p>	<p>Compared to others of the same age, how well does he/she do each one?</p> <p>Don't Know    Below Average    Average    Above Average</p>
<p>a. <input type="checkbox"/>    <input type="checkbox"/>    <input type="checkbox"/>    <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>b. <input type="checkbox"/>    <input type="checkbox"/>    <input type="checkbox"/>    <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>c. <input type="checkbox"/>    <input type="checkbox"/>    <input type="checkbox"/>    <input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>a. <input type="checkbox"/>    <input type="checkbox"/>    <input type="checkbox"/>    <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>b. <input type="checkbox"/>    <input type="checkbox"/>    <input type="checkbox"/>    <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>c. <input type="checkbox"/>    <input type="checkbox"/>    <input type="checkbox"/>    <input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>a. <input type="checkbox"/>    <input type="checkbox"/>    <input type="checkbox"/>    <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>b. <input type="checkbox"/>    <input type="checkbox"/>    <input type="checkbox"/>    <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>c. <input type="checkbox"/>    <input type="checkbox"/>    <input type="checkbox"/>    <input type="checkbox"/></p>
<p><b>III. Please list any organizations, clubs, teams, or groups your child belongs to.</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> None</p> <p>a. _____</p> <p>b. _____</p> <p>c. _____</p>	<p>Compared to others of the same age, how active is he/she in each?</p> <p>Don't Know    Less Active    Average    More Active</p>	<p>a. <input type="checkbox"/>    <input type="checkbox"/>    <input type="checkbox"/>    <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>b. <input type="checkbox"/>    <input type="checkbox"/>    <input type="checkbox"/>    <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>c. <input type="checkbox"/>    <input type="checkbox"/>    <input type="checkbox"/>    <input type="checkbox"/></p>
<p>a. <input type="checkbox"/>    <input type="checkbox"/>    <input type="checkbox"/>    <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>b. <input type="checkbox"/>    <input type="checkbox"/>    <input type="checkbox"/>    <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>c. <input type="checkbox"/>    <input type="checkbox"/>    <input type="checkbox"/>    <input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>a. <input type="checkbox"/>    <input type="checkbox"/>    <input type="checkbox"/>    <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>b. <input type="checkbox"/>    <input type="checkbox"/>    <input type="checkbox"/>    <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>c. <input type="checkbox"/>    <input type="checkbox"/>    <input type="checkbox"/>    <input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>a. <input type="checkbox"/>    <input type="checkbox"/>    <input type="checkbox"/>    <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>b. <input type="checkbox"/>    <input type="checkbox"/>    <input type="checkbox"/>    <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>c. <input type="checkbox"/>    <input type="checkbox"/>    <input type="checkbox"/>    <input type="checkbox"/></p>
<p><b>IV. Please list any jobs or chores your child has.</b> For example: paper route, babysitting, making bed, working in store, etc. (Include both paid and unpaid jobs and chores.)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> None</p> <p>a. _____</p> <p>b. _____</p> <p>c. _____</p>	<p>Compared to others of the same age, how well does he/she carry them out?</p> <p>Don't Know    Below Average    Average    Above Average</p>	<p>a. <input type="checkbox"/>    <input type="checkbox"/>    <input type="checkbox"/>    <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>b. <input type="checkbox"/>    <input type="checkbox"/>    <input type="checkbox"/>    <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>c. <input type="checkbox"/>    <input type="checkbox"/>    <input type="checkbox"/>    <input type="checkbox"/></p>
<p>a. <input type="checkbox"/>    <input type="checkbox"/>    <input type="checkbox"/>    <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>b. <input type="checkbox"/>    <input type="checkbox"/>    <input type="checkbox"/>    <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>c. <input type="checkbox"/>    <input type="checkbox"/>    <input type="checkbox"/>    <input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>a. <input type="checkbox"/>    <input type="checkbox"/>    <input type="checkbox"/>    <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>b. <input type="checkbox"/>    <input type="checkbox"/>    <input type="checkbox"/>    <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>c. <input type="checkbox"/>    <input type="checkbox"/>    <input type="checkbox"/>    <input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>a. <input type="checkbox"/>    <input type="checkbox"/>    <input type="checkbox"/>    <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>b. <input type="checkbox"/>    <input type="checkbox"/>    <input type="checkbox"/>    <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>c. <input type="checkbox"/>    <input type="checkbox"/>    <input type="checkbox"/>    <input type="checkbox"/></p>

Please Print

- V. 1. About how many close friends does your child have?  None  1  2 or 3  4 or more  
(Do not include brothers & sisters)
2. About how many times a week does your child do things with any friends outside of regular school hours?  
(Do not include brothers & sisters)  Less than 1  1 or 2  3 or more

VI. Compared to others of his/her age, how well does your child:

- |   | Worse                    | About Average            | Better                   |   |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|---|
| a. Get along with his/her brothers & sisters? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> Has no brothers or sisters |
| b. Get along with other kids?                 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |   |
| c. Behave with his/her parents?               | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |   |
| d. Play and work alone?                       | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |   |

VII. 1. For ages 6 and older—performance in academic subjects.  Does not attend school because \_\_\_\_\_

Check a box for each subject that child takes

	Failing	Below Average	Average	Above Average
a. Reading, English, or Language Arts	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. History or Social Studies	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. Arithmetic or Math	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. Science	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other academic subjects—for example: computer courses, foreign language, business. Do not include gym, shop, driver's ed., etc.				
e. _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f. _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g. _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

2. Does your child receive special remedial services or attend a special class or special school?  No  Yes—kind of services, class, or school: \_\_\_\_\_

3. Has your child repeated any grades?  No  Yes—grades and reasons: \_\_\_\_\_

4. Has your child had any academic or other problems in school?  No  Yes—please describe: \_\_\_\_\_

When did these problems start? \_\_\_\_\_

Have these problems ended?  No  Yes—when? \_\_\_\_\_

Does your child have any illness or disability (either physical or mental)?  No  Yes—please describe: \_\_\_\_\_

What concerns you most about your child? \_\_\_\_\_

Please describe the best things about your child: \_\_\_\_\_

Below is a list of items that describe children and youth. For each item that describes your child **now or within the past 6 months**, please circle the **2** if the item is **very true or often true** of your child. Circle the **1** if the item is **somewhat or sometimes true** of your child. If the item is **not true** of your child, circle the **0**. Please answer all items as well as you can, even if some do not seem to apply to your child.

Please Print

0 = Not True (as far as you know)    1 = Somewhat or Sometimes True    2 = Very True or Often True

- |   |   |   |     |   |   |   |   |     |  |
|---|---|---|-----|---|---|---|---|-----|--|
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 1.  | Acts too young for his/her age  | 0 | 1 | 2 | 31. | Fears he/she might think or do something bad                               |
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 2.  | Allergy (describe): _____   | 0 | 1 | 2 | 32. | Feels he/she has to be perfect   |
|   |   |   |     | _____   | 0 | 1 | 2 | 33. | Feels or complains that no one loves him/her                               |
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 3.  | Argues a lot  | 0 | 1 | 2 | 34. | Feels others are out to get him/her  |
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 4.  | Asthma  | 0 | 1 | 2 | 35. | Feels worthless or inferior  |
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 5.  | Behaves like opposite sex   | 0 | 1 | 2 | 36. | Gets hurt a lot, accident-prone  |
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 6.  | Bowel movements outside toilet  | 0 | 1 | 2 | 37. | Gets in many fights  |
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 7.  | Bragging, boasting  | 0 | 1 | 2 | 38. | Gets teased a lot  |
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 8.  | Can't concentrate, can't pay attention for long   | 0 | 1 | 2 | 39. | Hangs around with others who get in trouble                                |
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 9.  | Can't get his/her mind off certain thoughts; obsessions (describe): _____               | 0 | 1 | 2 | 40. | Hears sounds or voices that aren't there (describe): _____                 |
|   |   |   |     | _____   |   |   |   |     |  |
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 10. | Can't sit still, restless, or hyperactive   | 0 | 1 | 2 | 41. | Impulsive or acts without thinking   |
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 11. | Clings to adults or too dependent   | 0 | 1 | 2 | 42. | Would rather be alone than with others                                     |
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 12. | Complains of loneliness   | 0 | 1 | 2 | 43. | Lying or cheating  |
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 13. | Confused or seems to be in a fog  | 0 | 1 | 2 | 44. | Bites fingernails  |
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 14. | Cries a lot   | 0 | 1 | 2 | 45. | Nervous, highstrung, or tense  |
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 15. | Cruel to animals  | 0 | 1 | 2 | 46. | Nervous movements or twitching (describe): _____                           |
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 16. | Cruelty, bullying, or meanness to others  |   |   |   |     | _____  |
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 17. | Day-dreams or gets lost in his/her thoughts   | 0 | 1 | 2 | 47. | Nightmares   |
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 18. | Deliberately harms self or attempts suicide   | 0 | 1 | 2 | 48. | Not liked by other kids  |
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 19. | Demands a lot of attention  | 0 | 1 | 2 | 49. | Constipated, doesn't move bowels   |
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 20. | Destroys his/her own things   | 0 | 1 | 2 | 50. | Too fearful or anxious   |
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 21. | Destroys things belonging to his/her family or others                                   | 0 | 1 | 2 | 51. | Feels dizzy  |
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 22. | Disobedient at home   | 0 | 1 | 2 | 52. | Feels too guilty   |
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 23. | Disobedient at school   | 0 | 1 | 2 | 53. | Overeating   |
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 24. | Doesn't eat well  | 0 | 1 | 2 | 54. | Overtired  |
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 25. | Doesn't get along with other kids   | 0 | 1 | 2 | 55. | Overweight   |
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 26. | Doesn't seem to feel guilty after misbehaving   |   |   |   | 56. | Physical problems <i>without known medical cause</i> :                     |
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 27. | Easily jealous  | 0 | 1 | 2 | a.  | Aches or pains ( <i>not</i> stomach or headaches)                          |
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 28. | Eats or drinks things that are not food – <b>don't</b> include sweets (describe): _____ | 0 | 1 | 2 | b.  | Headaches  |
|   |   |   |     | _____   | 0 | 1 | 2 | c.  | Nausea, feels sick   |
|   |   |   |     |   | 0 | 1 | 2 | d.  | Problems with eyes ( <i>not</i> if corrected by glasses) (describe): _____ |
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 29. | Fears certain animals, situations, or places, other than school (describe): _____       | 0 | 1 | 2 | e.  | Rashes or other skin problems  |
|   |   |   |     | _____   | 0 | 1 | 2 | f.  | Stomachaches or cramps   |
|   |   |   |     |   | 0 | 1 | 2 | g.  | Vomiting, throwing up  |
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 30. | Fears going to school   | 0 | 1 | 2 | h.  | Other (describe): _____  |

Please Print

0 = Not True (as far as you know) 1 = Somewhat or Sometimes True 2 = Very True or Often True

0	1	2	57.	Physically attacks people	0	1	2	84.	Strange behavior (describe): _____
0	1	2	58.	Picks nose, skin, or other parts of body (describe): _____					_____
				_____	0	1	2	85.	Strange ideas (describe): _____
				_____					_____
0	1	2	59.	Plays with own sex parts in public	0	1	2	86.	Stubborn, sullen, or irritable
0	1	2	60.	Plays with own sex parts too much	0	1	2	87.	Sudden changes in mood or feelings
0	1	2	61.	Poor school work	0	1	2	88.	Sulks a lot
0	1	2	62.	Poorly coordinated or clumsy	0	1	2	89.	Suspicious
0	1	2	63.	Prefers being with older kids	0	1	2	90.	Swearing or obscene language
0	1	2	64.	Prefers being with younger kids	0	1	2	91.	Talks about killing self
0	1	2	65.	Refuses to talk	0	1	2	92.	Talks or walks in sleep (describe): _____
0	1	2	66.	Repeats certain acts over and over; compulsions (describe): _____					_____
				_____	0	1	2	93.	Talks too much
0	1	2	67.	Runs away from home	0	1	2	94.	Teases a lot
0	1	2	68.	Screams a lot	0	1	2	95.	Temper tantrums or hot temper
0	1	2	69.	Secretive, keeps things to self	0	1	2	96.	Thinks about sex too much
0	1	2	70.	Sees things that aren't there (describe): _____	0	1	2	97.	Threatens people
				_____	0	1	2	98.	Thumb-sucking
				_____	0	1	2	99.	Too concerned with neatness or cleanliness
0	1	2	71.	Self-conscious or easily embarrassed	0	1	2	100.	Trouble sleeping (describe): _____
0	1	2	72.	Sets fires					_____
0	1	2	73.	Sexual problems (describe): _____	0	1	2	101.	Truancy, skips school
				_____	0	1	2	102.	Underactive, slow moving, or lacks energy
				_____	0	1	2	103.	Unhappy, sad, or depressed
0	1	2	74.	Showing off or clowning	0	1	2	104.	Unusually loud
0	1	2	75.	Shy or timid	0	1	2	105.	Uses alcohol or drugs for nonmedical purposes (describe): _____
0	1	2	76.	Sleeps less than most kids					_____
0	1	2	77.	Sleeps more than most kids during day and/or night (describe): _____	0	1	2	106.	Vandalism
				_____	0	1	2	107.	Wets self during the day
0	1	2	78.	Smears or plays with bowel movements	0	1	2	108.	Wets the bed
0	1	2	79.	Speech problem (describe): _____	0	1	2	109.	Whining
				_____	0	1	2	110.	Wishes to be of opposite sex
0	1	2	80.	Stares blankly	0	1	2	111.	Withdrawn, doesn't get involved with others
0	1	2	81.	Steals at home	0	1	2	112.	Worries
0	1	2	82.	Steals outside the home				113.	Please write in any problems your child has that were not listed above:
0	1	2	83.	Stores up things he/she doesn't need (describe): _____	0	1	2		_____
				_____	0	1	2		_____
				_____	0	1	2		_____

PLEASE BE SURE YOU HAVE ANSWERED ALL ITEMS.

PAGE 4

UNDERLINE ANY YOU ARE CONCERNED ABOUT.

APPENDIX D

Parenting Stress Index

## PSI Test Booklet for use with PSI3 Plus Software

Respondent's Name \_\_\_\_\_ ID Code 226  
Relationship of Respondent to Child:  Mother (or female caretaker)  Father (or male caretaker)  
Ethnic Group \_\_\_\_\_ Age \_\_\_\_\_  
Child's Name \_\_\_\_\_ Age \_\_\_\_\_  
Examiner's Name \_\_\_\_\_ Test Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Referral Source \_\_\_\_\_

### Instructions:

Complete the information requested above before you begin the questionnaire.

This questionnaire contains 120 statements. Read each statement carefully. For each statement, please focus on the child you are most concerned about, and circle the response which best represents your opinion.

Circle the SA if you strongly agree with the statement.

Circle the A if you agree with the statement.

Circle the NS if you are not sure.

Circle the D if you disagree with the statement.

Circle the SD if you strongly disagree with the statement.

For example, if you sometimes enjoy going to the movies, you would circle A in response to the following statement:

I enjoy going to the movies. SA **(A)** NS D SD

While you may not find a response that exactly states your feelings, please circle the response that comes closest to describing how you feel. **YOUR FIRST REACTION TO EACH QUESTION SHOULD BE YOUR ANSWER.**

Circle only one response for each statement, and respond to all statements. **DO NOT ERASE!** If you need to change an answer, make an "X" through the incorrect answer and circle the correct response. For example:

I enjoy going to the movies. SA A NS ~~(X)~~ **(SD)**

**PAR Psychological Assessment Resources, Inc./P.O. Box 998/Odessa, FL 33556/Toll-Free 1-800-331-TEST**

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SA = Strongly Agree	A = Agree	NS = Not Sure	D = Disagree	SD = Strongly Disagree
---------------------	-----------	---------------	--------------	------------------------

	1	2	3	4	5
1. When my child wants something, my child usually keeps trying to get it.	SA	A	NS	D	SD
2. My child is so active that it exhausts me.	SA	A	NS	D	SD
3. My child appears disorganized and is easily distracted.	SA	A	NS	D	SD
4. Compared to most, my child has more difficulty concentrating and paying attention.	SA	A	NS	D	SD
5. My child will often stay occupied with a toy for more than 10 minutes.	SA	A	NS	D	SD
6. My child wanders away much more than I expected.	SA	A	NS	D	SD
7. My child is much more active than I expected.	SA	A	NS	D	SD
8. My child squirms and kicks a great deal when being dressed or bathed.	SA	A	NS	D	SD
9. My child can be easily distracted from wanting something.	SA	A	NS	D	SD
10. My child rarely does things for me that make me feel good.	SA	A	NS	D	SD
11. Most times I feel that my child likes me and wants to be close to me.	SA	A	NS	D	SD
12. Sometimes I feel my child doesn't like me and doesn't want to be close to me.	SA	A	NS	D	SD
13. My child smiles at me much less than I expected.	SA	A	NS	D	SD
14. When I do things for my child, I get the feeling that my efforts are not appreciated very much.	SA	A	NS	D	SD

**For statement 15, choose a response from choices 1 to 4 below.**

	1	2	3	4
15. Which statement best describes your child?				
1. almost always likes to play with me				
2. sometimes likes to play with me				
3. usually doesn't like to play with me				
4. almost never likes to play with me				

**For statement 16, choose a response from choices 1 to 5 below.**

	1	2	3	4	5
16. My child cries and fusses:					
1. much less than I had expected					
2. less than I expected					
3. about as much as I expected					
4. much more than I expected					
5. it seems almost constant					
17. My child seems to cry or fuss more often than most children.	SA	A	NS	D	SD
18. When playing, my child doesn't often giggle or laugh.	SA	A	NS	D	SD
19. My child generally wakes up in a bad mood.	SA	A	NS	D	SD
20. I feel that my child is very moody and easily upset.	SA	A	NS	D	SD
21. My child looks a little different than I expected and it bothers me at times.	SA	A	NS	D	SD
22. In some areas, my child seems to have forgotten past learnings and has gone back to doing things characteristic of younger children.	SA	A	NS	D	SD
23. My child doesn't seem to learn as quickly as most children.	SA	A	NS	D	SD
24. My child doesn't seem to smile as much as most children.	SA	A	NS	D	SD
25. My child does a few things which bother me a great deal.	SA	A	NS	D	SD

SA = Strongly Agree	A = Agree	NS = Not Sure	D = Disagree	SD = Strongly Disagree	
					1 2 3 4 5
					SA A NS D SD
					SA A NS D SD
					SA A NS D SD
					SA A NS D SD
					SA A NS D SD
					SA A NS D SD
					SA A NS D SD
					SA A NS D SD
					SA A NS D SD
					SA A NS D SD
					SA A NS D SD
					SA A NS D SD
					SA A NS D SD
					SA A NS D SD
					SA A NS D SD
					SA A NS D SD

**For statement 40, choose from choices 1 to 4 below.**

- |  |         |
|--|---------|
| 40. When upset, my child is:           | 1 2 3 4 |
| 1. easy to calm down                   |         |
| 2. harder to calm down than I expected |         |
| 3. very difficult to calm down         |         |
| 4. nothing I do helps to calm my child |         |

**For statement 41, choose from choices 1 to 5 below.**

- |  |           |
|--|-----------|
| 41. I have found that getting my child to do something or stop doing something is: | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 1. much harder than I expected   |           |
| 2. somewhat harder than I expected   |           |
| 3. about as hard as I expected   |           |
| 4. somewhat easier than I expected   |           |
| 5. much easier than I expected   |           |

**For statement 42, choose from choices 1 to 5 below.**

- |   |           |
|---|-----------|
| 42. Think carefully and count the number of things which your child does that bothers you.<br>For example: dawdles, refuses to listen, overactive, cries, interrupts, fights, whines, etc.<br>Please circle the number which includes the number of things you counted. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 1. 1-3  |           |
| 2. 4-5  |           |
| 3. 6-7  |           |
| 4. 8-9  |           |
| 5. 10+  |           |

SA = Strongly Agree	A = Agree	NS = Not Sure	D = Disagree	SD = Strongly Disagree
---------------------	-----------	---------------	--------------	------------------------

1 2 3 4 5

**For statement 43, choose from choices 1 to 5 below.**

- |   |    |   |    |   |    |
|---|----|---|----|---|----|
| 43. When my child cries, it usually lasts:  | 1  | 2 | 3  | 4 | 5  |
| 1. less than 2 minutes  |    |   |    |   |    |
| 2. 2–5 minutes  |    |   |    |   |    |
| 3. 5–10 minutes   |    |   |    |   |    |
| 4. 10–15 minutes  |    |   |    |   |    |
| 5. more than 15 minutes   |    |   |    |   |    |
| 44. There are some things my child does that really bother me a lot.  | SA | A | NS | D | SD |
| 45. My child has had more health problems than I expected.  | SA | A | NS | D | SD |
| 46. As my child has grown older and become more independent, I find myself more worried that my child will get hurt or into trouble.                      | SA | A | NS | D | SD |
| 47. My child turned out to be more of a problem than I had expected.  | SA | A | NS | D | SD |
| 48. My child seems to be much harder to care for than most.   | SA | A | NS | D | SD |
| 49. My child is always hanging on me.   | SA | A | NS | D | SD |
| 50. My child makes more demands on me than most children.   | SA | A | NS | D | SD |
| 51. I can't make decisions without help.  | SA | A | NS | D | SD |
| 52. I have had many more problems raising children than I expected.   | SA | A | NS | D | SD |
| 53. I enjoy being a parent.   | SA | A | NS | D | SD |
| 54. I feel that I am successful most of the time when I try to get my child to do or not do something.  | SA | A | NS | D | SD |
| 55. Since I brought my last child home from the hospital, I find that I am not able to take care of this child as well as I thought I could. I need help. | SA | A | NS | D | SD |
| 56. I often have the feeling that I cannot handle things very well.   | SA | A | NS | D | SD |

**For statement 57, choose from choices 1 to 5 below.**

- |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 57. When I think about myself as a parent I believe:                                | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 1. I can handle anything that happens   |   |   |   |   |   |
| 2. I can handle most things pretty well   |   |   |   |   |   |
| 3. sometimes I have doubts, but find that I handle most things without any problems |   |   |   |   |   |
| 4. I have some doubts about being able to handle things                             |   |   |   |   |   |
| 5. I don't think I handle things very well at all                                   |   |   |   |   |   |

**For statement 58, choose from choices 1 to 5 below.**

- |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 58. I feel that I am:                           | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 1. a very good parent                           |   |   |   |   |   |
| 2. a better than average parent                 |   |   |   |   |   |
| 3. an average parent                            |   |   |   |   |   |
| 4. a person who has some trouble being a parent |   |   |   |   |   |
| 5. not very good at being a parent              |   |   |   |   |   |

SA = Strongly Agree	A = Agree	NS = Not Sure	D = Disagree	SD = Strongly Disagree
---------------------	-----------	---------------	--------------	------------------------

1 2 3 4 5

**For questions 59 and 60, choose from choices 1 to 5 below.**

59. What were the highest levels in school or college you and the child's father/mother have completed?  
 Mother: 1 2 3 4 5
1. 1st to 8th grade
  2. 9th to 12th grade
  3. vocational or some college
  4. college graduate
  5. graduate or professional school
60. Father: 1 2 3 4 5
1. 1st to 8th grade
  2. 9th to 12th grade
  3. vocational or some college
  4. college graduate
  5. graduate or professional school

**For question 61, choose from choices 1 to 5 below.**

61. How easy is it for you to understand what your child wants or needs? 1 2 3 4 5
1. very easy
  2. easy
  3. somewhat difficult
  4. it is very hard
  5. I usually can't figure out what the problem is
62. It takes a long time for parents to develop close, warm feelings for their children. SA A NS D SD
63. I expected to have closer and warmer feelings for my child than I do and this bothers me. SA A NS D SD
64. Sometimes my child does things that bother me just to be mean. SA A NS D SD
65. When I was young, I never felt comfortable holding or taking care of children. SA A NS D SD
66. My child knows I am his or her parent and wants me more than other people. SA A NS D SD
67. The number of children that I have now is too many. SA A NS D SD
68. Most of my life is spent doing things for my child. SA A NS D SD
69. I find myself giving up more of my life to meet my children's needs than I ever expected. SA A NS D SD
70. I feel trapped by my responsibilities as a parent. SA A NS D SD
71. I often feel that my child's needs control my life. SA A NS D SD
72. Since having this child, I have been unable to do new and different things. SA A NS D SD
73. Since having a child, I feel that I am almost never able to do things that I like to do. SA A NS D SD
74. It is hard to find a place in our home where I can go to be by myself. SA A NS D SD
75. When I think about the kind of parent I am, I often feel guilty or bad about myself. SA A NS D SD
76. I am unhappy with the last purchase of clothing I made for myself. SA A NS D SD
77. When my child misbehaves or fusses too much, I feel responsible, as if I didn't do something right. SA A NS D SD

5

<b>SA = Strongly Agree</b>	<b>A = Agree</b>	<b>NS = Not Sure</b>	<b>D = Disagree</b>	<b>SD = Strongly Disagree</b>
----------------------------	------------------	----------------------	---------------------	-------------------------------

	1	2	3	4	5
78. I feel every time my child does something wrong, it is really my fault.	SA	A	NS	D	SD
79. I often feel guilty about the way I feel toward my child.	SA	A	NS	D	SD
80. There are quite a few things that bother me about my life.	SA	A	NS	D	SD
81. I felt sadder and more depressed than I expected after leaving the hospital with my baby.	SA	A	NS	D	SD
82. I wind up feeling guilty when I get angry at my child and this bothers me.	SA	A	NS	D	SD
83. After my child had been home from the hospital for about a month, I noticed that I was feeling more sad and depressed than I had expected.	SA	A	NS	D	SD
84. Since having my child, my spouse (or male/female friend) has not given me as much help and support as I expected.	SA	A	NS	D	SD
85. Having a child has caused more problems than I expected in my relationship with my spouse (or male/female friend).	SA	A	NS	D	SD
86. Since having a child, my spouse (or male/female friend) and I don't do as many things together.	SA	A	NS	D	SD
87. Since having a child, my spouse (or male/female friend) and I don't spend as much time together as a family as I had expected.	SA	A	NS	D	SD
88. Since having my last child, I have had less interest in sex.	SA	A	NS	D	SD
89. Having a child seems to have increased the number of problems we have with in-laws and relatives.	SA	A	NS	D	SD
90. Having children has been much more expensive than I had expected.	SA	A	NS	D	SD
91. I feel alone and without friends.	SA	A	NS	D	SD
92. When I go to a party, I usually expect not to enjoy myself.	SA	A	NS	D	SD
93. I am not as interested in people as I used to be.	SA	A	NS	D	SD
94. I often have the feeling that other people my own age don't particularly like my company.	SA	A	NS	D	SD
95. When I run into a problem taking care of my children, I have a lot of people to whom I can talk to get help or advice.	SA	A	NS	D	SD
96. Since having children, I have a lot fewer chances to see my friends and to make new friends.	SA	A	NS	D	SD
97. During the past six months, I have been sicker than usual or have had more aches and pains than I normally do.	SA	A	NS	D	SD
98. Physically, I feel good most of the time.	SA	A	NS	D	SD
99. Having a child has caused changes in the way I sleep.	SA	A	NS	D	SD
100. I don't enjoy things as I used to.	SA	A	NS	D	SD

**For statement 101, choose from choices 1 to 4 below.**

101. Since I've had my child:	1	2	3	4
1. I have been sick a great deal				
2. I haven't felt as good				
3. I haven't noticed any change in my health				
4. I have been healthier				

**For statements 102 to 120, choose from choices Y for "Yes" and N for "No."**

During the last 12 months, have any of the following events occurred in your immediate family?

- |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| 102. Divorce                                      | Y | N |
| 103. Marital reconciliation                       | Y | N |
| 104. Marriage                                     | Y | N |
| 105. Separation                                   | Y | N |
| 106. Pregnancy                                    | Y | N |
| 107. Other relative moved into household          | Y | N |
| 108. Income increased substantially (20% or more) | Y | N |
| 109. Went deeply into debt                        | Y | N |
| 110. Moved to new location                        | Y | N |
| 111. Promotion at work                            | Y | N |
| 112. Income decreased substantially               | Y | N |
| 113. Alcohol or drug problem                      | Y | N |
| 114. Death of close family friend                 | Y | N |
| 115. Began new job                                | Y | N |
| 116. Entered new school                           | Y | N |
| 117. Trouble with superiors at work               | Y | N |
| 118. Trouble with teachers at school              | Y | N |
| 119. Legal problems                               | Y | N |
| 120. Death of immediate family member             | Y | N |

## APPENDIX E

### Kirk Acknowledgement of Difference Scale

### Adoption Questionnaire

Since the adoption became legalized, how frequently have you:

	During first 6 months after legalization					Now				
	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Can't Remember	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Can't Remember
Wondered whether the birth mother ever thinks about the child?										
Wondered whether the birth father ever thinks about the child?										
Remember child's original name?										
Recalled that at one time the child legally belonged to someone else?										
Wondered whether the birth mother worries about the child she has given up?										
You and your spouse talked together about your child's birth mother or father?										
Wondered what your words about adoption mean to the child										
Tried to imagine how the child feel (or will feel) about adoption?										
Thought that the child might someday be curious about his or her background?										
Wished that you might understand adoption from the point of view of the child?										
Told your child that he was adopted?										
Celebrated the anniversary of the day the child came or the day the adoption became legalized?										
Personally been asked by the child for the reasons why his/her birth parents did not keep him/her?										
What answer did you give or do you plan to give if asked? _____ _____										
Told your child whether his birth parents were married?										

APPENDIX F

Cover/Consent Letter

## COVER LETTER

DATE

(Participant Name)  
(Participant Address)

Dear Sir or Madame,

My name is Chedgzsey Smith-McKeever and I am a doctoral student at the University of Texas at Austin. I am sending this letter to ask for your help in an effort to better understand the experiences of African American adoptive families. There are a growing number of books, articles, and television programs that deal with the topic of adoption. In addition, there is more and more research being done which highlights the experiences of adoptive families. Unfortunately, very little of this new attention to adoption related issues has focused on or addressed the experiences and concerns of African American adoptive families. Very little is known about African American adoptive parents' concerns, challenges or strengths and what they have to offer the thousands of African American children in need of adoption.

Your family is one of a number of African American adoptive families who adopted from one of two California African American adoption programs, which are being asked to share their experiences as adoptive parents. All African American families who adopted children who are currently between the ages of four and seventeen from either the Institute for Black Parenting, the Black Adoption Placement and Research Center and Tyari, during the years 1987 and 1997 are being asked to participate in the study. That means that your family is one, of approximately 300 (agency name) families, who will be asked to participate in the study.

Your participation will consist of completing a mailed survey, which includes three instruments. It takes approximately 90 minutes to complete the survey. The mailed survey is comprised of general questions about your family, such as your age, the number of members in your family and your educational background. Other questions relate to your experiences with adoption such as your reasons for adopting, your family's experiences with the adoption process and the type of background information you received on your child at the time of the adoption. All surveys will be marked with a code number rather than your name and all completed surveys will be returned to me, rather than your agency. All correspondence will be sent from (agency name) and I will have no information regarding your identity in order to further protect your confidentiality. No information will be collected directly from your adopted child or any other children in your family

You can be assured of the complete confidentiality of your identity from the researcher and the complete confidentiality of your responses from (Agency Name) and its

staff members. The questionnaire has an identification number which will be used for mailing purposes only. The survey number will enable me to communicate with your agency, in cases where a family made require follow-up mailings. Your name will never be placed on the questionnaire itself. To further insure the confidentiality of your responses, all surveys will be returned directly to me. Your agency will receive no information regarding your survey responses. During the study, all surveys will be kept in a locked cabinet and at the end of the study, all surveys will be destroyed.

Once your questionnaire is returned, your survey number will be entered into a drawing to win one of six \$50 savings bonds. If your survey number is selected in the drawing, your agency will be notified and your savings bond will be sent to you directly from (agency name).

Participation in this study may remind you of uncomfortable events related to your family's adoption experience. You may also consider some of the questions to be of a personal nature. You may at any time choose not to answer particular questions on the survey. The purpose of the survey is to obtain information, should the completion of the survey bring difficult events to mind that you wish to discuss, please contact (name of person & Agency name) and they will be able to provide you with the appropriate services or referrals.

It is vital to prospective adoptive families, adoption professionals and others who make decisions about adoption related issues, to know about the experiences of African American adoptive families. In order that the results of the study truly represent the experiences and opinions of African American adoptive families, it is essential that each adoptive family return their questionnaire. The study's findings will be made available to your agency and may be useful to social workers and others providing services to African American adoptive families. You may also receive a summary of the study's findings by completing the request form that is attached to the questionnaire and returning it in the postage paid envelope along with your completed questionnaire.

Your participation in the study is voluntary and your decision whether or not to participate in the study will not prejudice your present or future relations with (Agency Name) or the University of Texas at Austin. If you decide to participate in the study, you are free to cease participation at any time without prejudice.

Your completion and return of the survey will be taken as evidence of your willingness to participate in the study and your consent to have the information used for the purposes of the study.

If you would like, please retain this letter which explains the nature of your participation and the handling of the information you provide. If at any time, you have

questions about the study, please feel free to contact my supervising faculty sponsor, Dr. Ruth McRoy, or me and we will be glad to answer your questions.

T. Chedgzsey Smith, MSW  
(512) 491-7727

Ruth G. McRoy, Ph.D.  
(512) 471-0551

Thank you so much for your participation!

Sincerely yours,

---

T. Chedgzsey Smith, MSW  
Doctoral Candidate

---

Date

## APPENDIX G

### Consent Letters to Survey Families from Agency Directors

B A P R C



BLACK ADOPTION PLACEMENT AND RESEARCH CENTER

January 19, 1999

Ms. T. Chedgzey Smith, MSW  
Doctoral Student  
School of Social Work  
University of Texas at Austin  
1925 San Jacinto Blvd.  
Austin, TX 78712-1203

Dear Chedgzey,

We are very pleased that you have chosen to study African American adoptive families for your dissertation research. As we have discussed, there is a dire need for research on how African American families manage after their adoptions have been finalized. We are glad that you have chosen the **Black Adoption Placement and Research Center** to participate in your dissertation research.

We will be happy to approach our families on your behalf and send the survey and other prepared mailings out to them, along with a letter, which indicates our support of your efforts. As per our agreement, families can voluntarily identify themselves to you if they choose to participate in future research or receive a synopsis of findings. However, the agency will maintain the confidentiality of all families by sending mailings directly from the agency.

We are excited about the study and we look forward to seeing you soon.

Sincerely,

Gloria King  
Executive Director

1801 Harrison Street, Second Floor • Oakland, CA 94612 • Phone: 510/839-3676 • Fax: 510/839-3765  
Training and Resource Facility: 508 Couch Street • Vallejo, CA 94590 • 707/552-3658 • Fax: 707/552-9684



Institute for  
**BLACK PARENTING**

△ CARSON  
1299 East Artesia Blvd., Suite 200  
Carson, California 90746  
(310) 900-0930 - Fax (310) 900-0954

△ INLAND EMPIRE  
3120 Chicago Ave., Suite 110  
Riverside, California 92507  
(909) 782-2800 - Fax (909) 782-2805

May 4<sup>th</sup>, 2001

Dear Adoptive Parent(s):

Thank you for taking the time to complete the African American Family survey and for responding so quickly. Chedgzsey Smith has informed us that she received the survey with your assigned number on it, but that a portion of the survey was not completed. In order to include your responses in the study, it is important that your survey be complete.

Please find enclosed, copies of the element(s) that were missing from your survey. Would you be kind enough to complete the missing section(s) and return it as soon as possible? We have also enclosed a stamped and addressed envelope in which to return the completed sections to Chedgzsey.

Again, I thank you for your participation in the survey; you are truly making a difference in the lives of African American children. Good luck in the drawing for the Savings Bond!

Sincerely,

Zena F. Oglesby, Jr., MSW  
Executive Director

APPENDIX H

Letter From Victoria Rowell



A Scholarship Fund Dedicated to Helping Foster Youth Thrive through Fine Arts, Sports and Employment Opportunities

Dear Friend,

**Founder and Chair**  
 Valerie Rowell

**Co-Founder**  
 Dr. Arthur & Merrill

**President and Counsel**  
 Thomas Sheno, Esq.

**Treasurer**  
 Susan Hill

**Executive Director**  
 Irene Fierman-Willace

**Chair**  
 John O'S. French, Emerita  
 Debra Dierks  
 Lisa Strasser

**Artistic Directors**  
 Joel Mason  
 Ballet Theater of Boston & Co.  
 Christine Hight and Linda Gibb  
 The Ballet School  
 Los Angeles

**Honorary Board of Directors**  
 Clark Van Dyke  
 Myrleen Hernandez  
 Professor David Dinkins  
 Avery Dixon  
 Sibird  
 Sheryl Lee Kelly  
 Mr. and Mrs. Shadice Stevens  
 Mr. and Mrs. Timothy Markson  
 Jo-Marie Pappas  
 Eugenia O'Brien  
 Susan Jaffe  
 Ruthie Lambert  
 Cynthia Harney  
 Eric Darden  
 Shelly Whalington  
 Dr. Akiba Frouzian  
 Kenneth Sr. John  
 Alex Anant  
 Paul Lissomoni  
 Louis Corfalo  
 Barry Savaris  
 Richard Armstrong  
 Pezalla Ruffalo  
 Jeff Casuso  
 Bernard Frank  
 Marston Danahoe  
 Laura Kelly, M.D.  
 Tami Swaine  
 Harry Horvath  
 Ken Scortchi  
 David Lindeman  
 Robert Hale  
 Mr. & Mrs. Alan Thompson  
 Mr. & Mrs. Margaret Poyer  
 Susan Pomeroy  
 Hilä Harpel  
 Ed Arnold

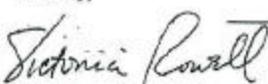
My name is Victoria Rowell; perhaps you know me best from my roles as Drucilla Winter in "The Young and the Restless" or as Dr. Amanda Bentley, in "Diagnosis Murder". What you may not know is that I spent the first 18 years of my life in foster care. Adoption was not an option for me due to the laws at that time.

I know from my childhood experiences in foster care and as the mother of two children, how vitally important it is for all children to have a sense of belonging and consistent guidance. We know that children can grow up to be troubled and isolated. Were you aware that African American children comprise the largest numbers of those living in foster care without the benefits of a permanent home, and a disproportionate number of those children are African American boys who may unfortunately end up in our prison system if there is not proper intervention. We must all do whatever we can to help ensure that as many of our foster children as possible are adopted and find the love, security and opportunity to grow and develop to their greatest potential.

There is very little information available to inform us about African American adopted children and their families. There has never been a comprehensive study of African American adoptive family life to my knowledge. Yet it is through research that we are able to better understand what we can do to reduce the numbers of African American children living in foster care and awaiting adoption.

The enclosed survey is part of a research study being conducted by Chedgzyez Smith. She is conducting the study in an effort to understand the experiences of African American adoptive families. The study explores family's needs and will document their experiences with the adoption process. The study's findings will be used to inform legislators, adoption agencies, social workers and others about the strengths and challenges of African American adoptive family life.

I would like to ask you to take the time to complete the enclosed survey and join in our work to make real the dream of adoption for the thousands of African American children in foster care today. Your participation is crucial to the endeavor of increasing the adoption of African American children. Thank you in advance for completing and returning your survey. Best wishes to you and your family.

Sincerely,  
  
 Victoria Rowell

Post Office Box 5783 • Boston, Massachusetts 02114 • telephone: 617-386-4420 • fax: 617-874-6419  
 Post Office Box 292334 • Los Angeles, California 90027 • telephone: 323-461-3094 • fax: 323-461-3386  
 www.rowellfosterchildren.org • email: rowellfosterch@dfwp.net  
 The Rowell Foster Children's Fund, Incorporated is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization.

## APPENDIX I

### Letters From Agency Directors Introducing Survey



Institute for  
**BLACK PARENTING**

△ CARSON  
1299 East Artesia Blvd., Suite 200  
Carson, California 90746  
(310) 900-0930 - Fax (310) 900-0954

△ INLAND EMPIRE  
3120 Chicago Ave., Suite 110  
Riverside, California 92507  
(909) 782-2800 - Fax (909) 782-2805

---

May 4<sup>th</sup>, 2001

Dear Adoptive Parent(s):

Thank you for taking the time to complete the African American Family survey and for responding so quickly. Chedgzsey Smith has informed us that she received the survey with your assigned number on it, but that a portion of the survey was not completed. In order to include your responses in the study, it is important that your survey be complete.

Please find enclosed, copies of the element(s) that were missing from your survey. Would you be kind enough to complete the missing section(s) and return it as soon as possible? We have also enclosed a stamped and addressed envelope in which to return the completed sections to Chedgzsey.

Again, I thank you for your participation in the survey; you are truly making a difference in the lives of African American children. Good luck in the drawing for the Savings Bond!

Sincerely,

Zena F. Oglesby, Jr., MSW  
Executive Director

BAPRC



**BLACK ADOPTION PLACEMENT AND RESEARCH CENTER**

April 10, 2001

Dear

Please find attached a request to complete a survey from Chedgzsey Smith, a doctoral student at the University of Texas at Austin. We are mailing it to you in an effort to assist Ms. Smith's endeavor to learn about the experiences of African American adoptive parents with adoption and the adoption process. In addition, this work allows Black Adoption Placement and Research Center the opportunity to gain critical feedback that will help us better serve our families.

The survey is being conducted to identify the needs families had and recommendations for what may have been helpful to your adoption process. The findings can be used to inform legislators, adoption agencies, social workers and others who make decisions related to the adoption of African American children.

Having a high rate of participation is a very effective way to ensure that the survey's findings have statistical validity; therefore your participation is very important. We would greatly appreciate your taking the time necessary to complete and return your survey.

Thank you in advance for your help.

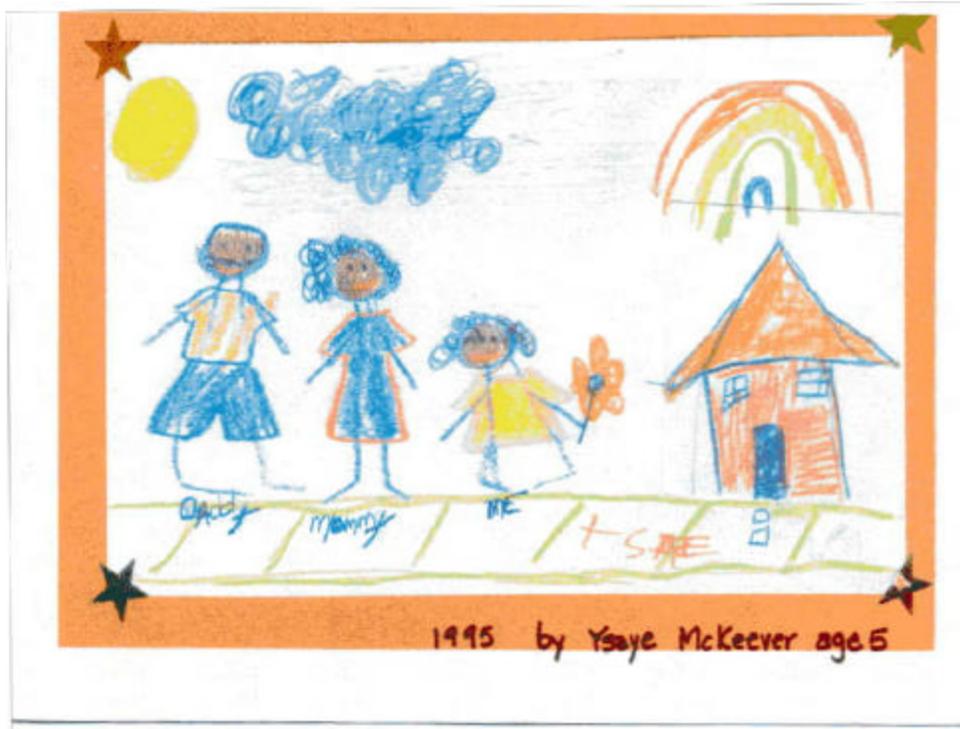
Sincerely,

Gloria King, M.S.  
Executive Director

APPENDIX J

Reminder Post Card

Post Card Front



Post Card Back

From:  
The African American Family Survey Project  
U.T. Austin School of Social Work D-3500  
1925 San Jacinto Blvd.  
Austin, Texas 78712

Just a Reminder...  
Your response is important to us  
and we haven't heard from you!  
Please send in your survey soon!

**Thank You!!!**

TO:

## APPENDIX K

### Synopsis of the Dissertation Proposal for IRB Review

## Synopsis of Proposal

1. **Sources and Characteristics of Potential Subjects:** The participants in the study will be comprised of African American adoptive parents who have adopted African American children between January 10 1988 and December of 1998. This time period was selected because the agencies participating in the study have been in operation for periods ranging from 11 to 24 years. This time period allows for the maximum number of potential participants while making sure that all participants adopted during the same time period.

The study's participants will have adopted from one of three California adoption agencies that specialize in placing African American Children in adoptive homes. The agencies include, The Institute for Black Parenting in Los Angeles California, The Black Adoption Placement and Research Center in Oakland California and Tayari, a specialized program of the San Diego County Adoption Division.

The Institute for Black Parenting has been in operation since 1988 and offers services to African American families in four Southern California counties. Since their inception, the Institute for Black Parenting has placed over 500 African American children in adoptive families. The majority of children

adopted through the Institute for Black parenting is currently between the ages of 7 and 10 years.

The Black Adoption Placement and Research Center is a sister agency to the Institute for Black Parenting. The Black Adoption Placement and Research Center was founded in 1983 and places an emphasis on finding homes for African American children with special needs. Since it's founding, the Black Adoption Placement and Research Center has placed over 200 in adoptive families. The majority of children adopted through the Black Adoption Placement and Research Center are between 10 and 12 years old.

Tyari, a program initiated by the San Diego County Adoption Division to increase the number of adoptions of African American children within the San Diego County Child Welfare system, was founded in 1976. Reports on the number of adoptions facilitated by Tyari estimate that the program has placed an average of 300 children in adoptive homes per year since its inception in 1976. Information on the total number of children placed through Tayari is not available. These adoptions include relative, foster parent and unrelated (child and adoptive parents have no previous relationship) adoptions. For the purposes of this study, only adoptive parents who had no previous relationship with the child prior to the adopted will be asked to

participate in the study. Because San Diego County does not have automated records of all the families who have adopted through Tyari since 1987, it was decided to select families who are receiving Adoption Assistance Program benefits. The Adoption Assistance Program records are automated and insure that correct addresses are available for the families who fit the study's selection criteria. The vast majority of the children adopted through The Institute for Black Parenting and the Black Adoption and Placement Center are also eligible for and receiving Adoption Assistance Program funds.

2. **Procedures for Participant Recruitment And Consent:** Participants in the study will be obtained from Adoption Assistance Program records and mailing lists available from the Institute for Black Parenting, the Black Adoption, Placement and Research Center and the San Diego County Adoption Division. Consent to survey the families will be obtained from the Executive Director and Department Heads of the agencies. All families who have adopted children who are presently between 4 and 17 years old during the period of 1988 to 1998 who's adoptions have been finalized for at least one year will be contacted regarding participation in the study. The Executive Director or Department head of each agency will send a letter to accompany the cover letter for the study. The letter from the Executive Directors and Department heads will explain to potential participants the agency's participation in the

study, encourage their participation and assure families that their survey responses will remain confidential.

The completion and return of the questionnaire will be taken as evidence of the respondents' willingness to participate in the study and an indication that they have given their consent to have the information used for the purposes of the study.

3. **Potential Risks to Participants:** The potential risks of participation in the proposed study are minimal, however such risks include: 1) The study may trigger unresolved issues regarding the adoption, infertility, or difficulties with the adopted child. The study could also bring up unresolved marital and family relationship issues that have not yet been resolved. While these risks may be potentially serious, the likelihood of the adoptive families having significant unresolved problems with the adoption is remote. Other adoption studies have noted no such problems, 2) No data will be collected from the adopted children, however their adoptive parents' participation could trigger questions about the reason for the adoption, their personal history, and/or the background and history of their adoption. This risk is greatest among older adopted children and may cause a great deal of stress if the adoptive parents have not previously discussed these issues or are unprepared to answer such questions from the adopted child. Previous investigations of adoptive family

life have not indicated a potential for this risk. It is thought unlikely that adoptive families who have not informed their child of the adoption will elect to participate in the study. In addition, all data will be collected from the adoptive parents and the investigator will have no direct contact with any of the adopted children. 3) Assuring that confidentiality of collected data is a risk common to human subject research. To insure that confidentiality of specific information obtained through the surveys is maintained, the adoption programs will have no access to survey responses and all completed surveys will be kept in a locked cabinet.

4. Consideration of Alternative Methods: Interviews with a sample of respondents was considered however, due to time and cost restrictions, interviews will not be used. A mailed survey of adoptive parents is considered the least intrusive method of data collection for these families.
5. **Confidentiality and protection against risk:** Protection against and minimizing the identified potential risks will be provided by the following procedures: 1) Though no adverse effects have been noted in previous studies of adoptive family relationships, every precaution will be taken to insure that adoptive parents will have access to professional counseling services should the need arise. The Institute for Black Parenting and the Black Adoption Placement and Research Center provide post adoption psychological

counseling services through staff social workers or psychologists. The agencies also provide outside referrals for such services as well. San Diego County Adoption Division provides referrals for such services and all families participating in the Adoption Assistance Program is eligible to receive free counseling services. 2) All families will be fully informed of the scope and nature of the study and have the opportunity to cease study participation at any time during its course. 3) Confidentiality will be safeguarded by the agency not releasing any identifying information directly to the investigator. In addition all completed surveys will be returned directly to the investigator and no information identifying specific responses by individual adoptive parents will be released. Following the completion of the study only non-identifying information will be maintained on the returned surveys.

6. **Potential Benefits:** The study offers potential benefits to adoptive parents and children, adoption agencies, adoption professionals, the social work profession and mental health professionals as well. These benefits include 1) Conducting a comprehensive survey of African American adoptive family outcomes as no such study has previously been conducted. 2) Agency services and policies may potentially be improved by providing a better understanding of the experiences, motivations and needs of African American Adoptive families. 3) As the need for African American adoptive families continues to grow, the African American community and prospective adoptive parents will

benefit from information on study participants' experiences with the adoption process. 4) Providing information of African American Adoptive families attitudes toward open adoption, disclosing the adoption, and the role a child's pre-adoption history plays in family adjustment and satisfaction will enhance adoption and mental health professionals' training and practice skills which will better meet the needs of African American adoptive families.

7. **Risks in relation to potential benefits:** The greatest potential risk of the study is that adoptive parents and/or families may have issues regarding the adoption that have not yet been resolved which study participation may accentuate. As is indicated above, previous studies of adoptive family relationships have not noted any incidences related to the risk of highlighting unresolved adoption issues. All agencies participating in the study have professional counselors or provide referrals for counseling services that are experienced in working with both personal and family issues related to adoption. Given the study's design and the precautions used for safeguarding survey responses, there is very minimal risk that participants' confidentiality will be broken. As a result, the study's potential benefits exceed its potential risks.

8. **Agencies participating in the study:**

Agency:

The Institute for Black Parenting, 9920 La Cienega Blvd., Suite 806,  
Inglewood, CA 90801.

Approval Status:

Approved participation in the study on June 20, 1999.

See attached letter.

Agency:

Black Adoption Placement and Research Center, 1801 Harrison Street,  
Second Floor, Oakland, CA 94612.

Approval Status:

Participation Approved on December 23, 1999.

See attached letter.

Agency: Tyari- San Diego County Department of Children's Services  
Adoption Division

Approval Status:

Approval Pending.

8. **Relationship of Study to Program of Work:** The proposed topic of the dissertation study is related to the investigators' program of work for the doctoral program in that the program of work has focused on African American families and children, child welfare, adoption, and research and survey methods. The focal

point of all course work has been in these areas and has provided the essential comprehension of theoretical models required to conduct research and understand issues related to African American adoptive family outcomes.

9. **Approval of supervising professor and dissertation committee:**

See attached approvals.

10. **Prior IRB review and approval:**

The IRB has conducted no prior review of this study.

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