

From the Practitioner's Desk: Attracting African-Americans to Adoption Programs

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Abstract

This paper, motivated by the request of an agency seeking to improve its recruitment of African-American adoptive parents, explores issues involved in attracting African-American couples to adopt through the domestic and international adoption programs at a faith-based organization in a mid-sized Midwestern city. It discusses several variables, both systematic and sociocultural, that appear to interfere with African-Americans' use of the services. Previous research suggests several issues: values, finances, the legacy of controversies about transracial adoption, and cultural competence. To explore those issues, statistical demographic data are presented concerning the racial makeup of the staff and clients who participate in the adoption programs at the agency. These findings are then compared to the racial breakdown of the city. In addition, some African-Americans' perspectives are explored regarding this issue: Four African-American community activists in the area were interviewed. An African-American adoption caseworker and a Caucasian caseworker were also interviewed, and their viewpoints are compared and contrasted. The information and knowledge gained from the interviews, as well as the empirical literature, are utilized to construct a recruiting strategy for adoption programs that would appeal to African-Americans.

Introduction

This research was conducted while the first author was doing her social work field placement in the adoptive services program at a faith-based social service organization in a mid-sized Midwestern city. She observed that few African-American couples participated in the domestic and international adoption programs. In collaboration with the adoption staff, who wanted to find better solutions to this problem, she decided to investigate

why African-American couples do not take part in adoption programs. The shared aim was to better fulfill the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) *Code of Ethics* (NASW, 1996) and policy statement (NASW, 2001), which stress the importance of culturally competent practice. Accordingly, the goal of the project was to construct a plan to attract more African-American clients to the domestic and international adoption programs, to educate the adoption staff at the agency, and to propose strategies that would facilitate positive change in adoption programs regarding issues of racial diversity. The guiding question was: How can adoption agencies attract more African-American adoptive couples to their domestic and international adoption programs? As part of the background research, this paper explores some of the values in the African-American community that affect use of adoptive services.

Literature Review

It is important to note, when controlling for certain socioeconomic variables, that African-American couples adopt at four times the rate of Caucasian couples (Avery, 2000). However, the literature identifies several reasons and variables that often deter African-American couples from utilizing domestic and international adoption programs: values, finances, controversy over transracial adoption, significant participation in foster care conversion adoption, lack of recruitment that targets African-American clients, and incompetent cultural practice.

Values

African-American persons face many stressors, such as high rates of unemployment, inadequate housing, and racial discrimination (Carter, 1997). Although some aspects of life

have improved for African-Americans, there is still the imprint of the history of racism and the ongoing experience of racism. As a result of years of discrimination, the African-American community has constructed a value system to adapt to ongoing racism and protect its members. According to Carter (1997), many of these values have affected how African-Americans perceive and approach the "system."

Family pride and connectedness constitute one of the core values of the African-American community; "blood ties are given primacy over other types of close relationships" (Carter, 1997, p. 532). However, kin relationships are held in high regard, and they extend beyond bloodlines. These relationships encompass relatives, in-laws, godparents, neighbors, and church members. The community is very close-knit, and the members consider it their responsibility to "take care of their own" (Carter, 1997). Grandparents often play an essential parental role in the family system, and are very accepting of children born out of wedlock: 90% of babies born out of wedlock are kept by some member of the family (Hollingsworth, 1999). This has affected domestic adoption programs because African-American birth mothers are less likely to voluntarily place their children for adoption.

Many African-Americans are uncomfortable with the idea of adoption outside of the communal network. Hollingsworth stated, "Adoption has been interpreted by African-Americans as a natural and informal process arising in response to need rather than a formal one involving legal ownership and individual rights" (1999, p. 446). They are often resistant to domestic adoption because they associate paying fees for a child with slavery. Furthermore, many African-Americans are hesitant to place any trust in the adoption system because they have witnessed many African-American children unjustly taken from their homes (Hollingsworth, 1999). Often they do not feel that the parents who had to surrender their children were unfit. As a result, they do not

want to participate in a system that removes children from their homes.

Lastly, African-Americans often fail to continue with domestic adoption when they are informed of the home study process, which includes a thorough examination of the client's history and present lifestyle. Many African-American persons consider their private lives a very personal matter; they regard the home study process as very intrusive and unnecessary (Carter, 1997).

Finances

As an effect of the stressors that the African-American community faces, many potential clients are unable to afford the extensive costs of domestic and international adoption. On the average, domestic adoption costs between \$10,000 and \$20,000, and international adoption costs approximately \$25,000 to \$35,000. Many African-American children are taken out of their biological homes and placed in the foster care system because their parents cannot financially provide for them (Hollingsworth, 1999). Hollingsworth declared, "biological parents frequently did not have the financial resources necessary to correct the circumstances that led to the child's removal" (1999, p. 445), although this statement is puzzling because it is illegal to remove a child from her or his parents' home for financial reasons alone. Smith believes that instead of implementing anti-poverty programs, children are removed from their homes and placed in wealthier homes (1996). Thirty-eight to forty percent of all children in foster care are African-American, although they represent only 15% of the population (Avery, 2000). If many African-American parents cannot afford to provide for their biological children, according to the standards of the Department of Children and Family Services, how are they going to afford domestic or international adoption fees? In the past, a policy allowed the government to pay for African-American families to adopt African-American children (Smith, 1996). However, many Caucasians felt that this was discriminatory, and the policy is no longer followed.

Transracial adoption controversy

An issue at the forefront of social work practice is the placement of African-American and biracial adoptees in Caucasian homes. In 1972, the National Association of Black Social Workers declared its opposition to transracial adoption by Caucasian families:

Black children should be placed only with Black Families[,] whether in foster care or for adoption. Black children belong physically, psychologically, and culturally in Black families in order that they receive the total sense of themselves and develop a sound projection of their future (quoted in Smith, 1996, p. 5).

After this statement was issued, many adoption agencies ceased placing African-American children in Caucasian homes, fearing disapproval and censure (Smith, 1996). In addition, the use of the NABSW statement (2003) as a policy to limit foster and adoptive placements for black children was criticized as having detrimental consequences. It resulted in black children being more likely to languish in larger group care settings, which are known to be inferior to family care. Now, carrying out foster and adoptive care practices based on racial guidelines is illegal and exposes agencies to corrective enforcement action by the Office on Civil Rights.

The ideology of the NABSW trickled into many African-American homes, but it did not have a significant impact on the number of African-American families adopting domestically. Efforts such as the One Church One Child Movement have been made to attract more African-American adoptive parents, but these have focused mainly on foster care. There are no legal barriers preventing interracial adoption, but institutional barriers still exist, and the issue of transracial placement and adoption has affected how African-Americans perceive domestic adoption. They see it as a process essentially designed for Caucasian families (Avery, 2000).

Participation in foster care adoption

Another reason why African-American couples are not very active in domestic and international adoption programs is the fact that they frequently adopt through foster care. Foster care adoptions are more likely to be kin related, and they are also free. Adoptive foster parents actually receive monthly funding for necessary child care. Forty to ninety percent of children in the foster care system are adopted by their foster parents, and a large percentage of foster parents are African-American (Administration for Children and Families [ACF], 2001). In contrast, almost all of the prospective adoptive parents involved in domestic and international adoption are Caucasian (Smith, 1996). Even though many African-Americans become foster parents, there is still a huge population of African-American children circulating in the system. "While Blacks adopt children at a higher rate than Whites do, they cannot keep up with the demand caused by more Black children placed in foster care" (Smith, 1996, p. 6).

Inadequate recruitment of African-American adoptive couples

In many cases, adoption agencies are not successful in their efforts to recruit African-American adoptive couples. Many agencies do not initially seek out extended family and community members in the African-American population (Smith, 1996). Some authors believe that there is a form of *de facto* adoptive parental screening, in that the ideal family is often perceived by adoption caseworkers as middle class and college educated with two parents, which excludes many capable parents in the African-American community (ACF, 2001). Avery believes that an increasing number of agencies settle for transracial adoptions instead of aggressively seeking out African-American adoptive parents: "Private and public agencies have been reluctant to either establish or use specialized minority adoption recruitment programs, even though studies have demonstrated that specialized programs are more likely to make successful

adoptive placements for African-American children than traditional programs” (2000, p. 402).

Recruitment efforts need to target the African-American community, or people will not respond to it. This means that agency and program philosophies and policies should be applicable to—and acceptable to—the targeted population (ACF, 2001).

Difficulties with culturally competent practice

The final barrier addressed in research has been the failure of adoption agencies to practice in culturally competent ways. The policies, procedures, and practice methods must be culturally competent if an agency wants to attract African-American clients. Often the staff are not equipped or trained to service African-American clients, and the agency has few, if any, African-American staff members onsite (ACF, 2001). However, although clients tend to identify with people of their own race, there is no empirical evidence that racial differences affect the outcome of treatment (Proctor and Davis, 1994). In fact, there is evidence that “experienced[,] sensitive, skilled practitioners can work effectively with racially dissimilar clients” (Proctor and Davis, 1994).

Nevertheless, adoption agencies may not demonstrate the sensitivity that Proctor and Davis emphasize: They do not have pictures or reading material that are geared toward African-American clients, and they do not utilize language that is characteristic of the African-American community (ACF, 2001). Another failing is that many adoption agencies do not collaborate with social organizations, churches, or committees in the African-American community. Thus, they do not build relationships or establish trust (ACF, 2001).

Some authors have charged that many domestic and international adoption programs do not adapt their practice to the unique experience of African-American clients, nor do they recognize diversity within diversity (Hollingsworth, 1999). R. J. Avery wrote that “negative attitudes

and insufficient knowledge create agency policies, practices, structures, and climates that impede African-American clients instead of attract them” (2000, p. 402). Carter believes that institutions do not seek to preserve the culture of or provide information about the history of African-Americans; therefore, there is no recognition or appreciation of their positive attributes and communal strength (Carter, 1997). According to Proctor and Davis, another flaw in practice is when agencies attempt to be “color-blind.” This approach is unrealistic and potentially destructive (Proctor and Davis, 1994). The literature consistently stresses the importance of culturally competent practice when seeking to attract an African-American clientele, especially to adoption programs.

Interviews with Community Activists and Adoption Caseworkers

Open-ended interviews were used to gather information from local African-American community activists and from caseworkers (both African-American and Caucasian) in the adoption program at the agency. The interviews were conducted in a one-on-one format in private settings by the first author, to encourage candor and openness. Seven interviews were conducted: four in the community and three through the agency, and data were manually recorded. A series of open-ended questions (included at the end of this article) were asked. The questions were piloted with the faculty advisor and a co-worker. All interviewees signed a consent form that included the purpose of the research, a statement of agency approval, a sign-off sheet, and a list of the questions to be asked. Anonymity was assured throughout the interview process, and data were reported in aggregate form. Direct quotations were attributed to “a subject.” All subjects agreed that quotes could be used.

Sample

A convenience sample of interviewees who were African-American community activists was selected based on recommendations

from the research supervisor and the adoption supervision staff at the agency. A few of the interviewees also provided contact names. From the list of potential interviewees, five were selected to maximize representativeness, and four of the five agreed to participate. All four were male.

The agency interviewees were chosen using racial demographics and job title as a sorting mechanism. African-American and Caucasian adoption workers in different positions of power were selected, resulting in three workers with varying ethnic backgrounds and job titles who were selected for the study. The caseworkers were all female. Although every interviewee had a unique perspective regarding the research topic, three themes consistently appeared and recurred throughout the course of the interview process, and are discussed later in this paper. The perceptions of a Caucasian adoption worker and an African-American adoption worker are compared later in this report.

Findings

Agency and city racial demographics

According to the 2000 U.S. Census, the population of the city is approximately 70% Caucasian and 35% African-American. The agency has no African-Americans on its board of directors, has only one African-American in its administration, and has no African-American workers in its adoption programs. Further, the agency had no African-American foster homes at the time of this study, and no African-American couples were participating in the agency's domestic and international adoption programs.

Themes

The interviewees felt that African-Americans do not participate in or use the agency's domestic and international adoption programs for the following reasons:

- *Privacy issues.* They feel that the licensing and home study process is intrusive.

- *Lack of trust in the legal system.* They do not trust the legal system because they or someone close to them has been unjustly treated previously, and they believe there is institutional discrimination.
- *Finances.* Many African-Americans cannot afford the costs of domestic (\$10,000–20,000) or international (\$25,000–35,000) adoptions at the agency. In addition, the specter of slavery arises when parents must pay money to adopt a child. In the past, the government paid for African-American couples to adopt African-American children. However, this policy no longer exists and so there is a relative shortage of funds available to potential adoptive African-American families.
- *The agency's religious title.* Very few African-Americans in this city practice the agency's religion. Many attend Pentecostal and evangelical churches and are turned off by the agency's religious title.
- *Lack of community support.* The African-American community in this city does not support domestic or international adoptions from other communities because it infringes on one of their core communal values: taking care of their own.
- *Foster care conversion adoptions.* African-Americans frequently undergo foster care conversion adoptions because they can adopt "kin," which includes both the immediate family members and also extends to family friends, godchildren, and so on.

The majority of the interviewees felt that the agency does not have culturally competent practice. Factors in this perception include:

- *Lack of diversity training.* There is no diversity education or training, even though every employee is required to

participate in systems and general-practice training.

- *Attempt to be “color blind.”* Many workers do not acknowledge diversity, but rather attempt to be “color blind.” This means that they do not address issues that pertain to the client’s unique life experience.
- *Failure to recognize diversity within diversity.* Not every African-American client has the same value system or situation. Individual circumstances must be recognized and addressed and there was a concern that another problematic attitude was stereotyping African-American clients rather than recognizing their individuality.
- *Lack of African-American workers.* African-American workers are highly underrepresented at the agency site, especially in administrative positions.
- *Inappropriate use of language.* The language used at the agency site is not culturally sensitive; ownership/superiority terminology is often used.
- *Physical environment.* Pictures, reading material, and other paraphernalia are not culturally diverse, but are mostly geared toward people from the majority cultural group and faith.

Some of the ways the interviewees thought the agency could attract more diversity to its domestic and international adoption programs included:

- *Networking*—collaborating with other service organizations in the African-American community.
- *Making allies*—forming relationships with influential African-American community activists and councils.
- *Changing marketing strategies*—adapting advertising methods to appeal to the African-American community.
- *Hiring more African-American adoption workers*—developing training programs that would facilitate employment opportunities for African-Americans. Also, the agency needs a screening process for potential employees prior to interviewing, and must have more accountability for persons with hiring power.

The caseworker perspective

The following table contrasts the statements of a Caucasian and an African-American adoption worker.

Although these two adoption workers had differing opinions regarding the majority of the interview questions, their statements

Caucasian Adoption Worker	African-American Worker
Believes that the domestic and international adoption programs at the agency are culturally competent.	Believes that the practice in the domestic and international adoption programs are culturally incompetent.
Does not feel that there is a huge problem with practice methods, but wants to improve.	Believes that every agency adoption worker must acknowledge that there is a significant problem with practice methods.
States that she does not recognize color when she interacts with clients and staff.	Embraces diversity and addresses racial issues as an essential component of practice.
Attributes lack of African-American participation in domestic and international adoption programs to financial and value-based reasons.	Credits value-based reasons and ineffective agency practice with causing lack of participation in domestic and international adoption programs.

did coincide in two areas. They both agreed that:

- The domestic and international adoption programs at the agency are geared toward Caucasian couples.
- African-American couples are more likely to adopt through kin networks.

Recommendations for Recruiting African-American Adoptive Parents

After conducting the interviews and examining the literature, a recruiting strategy was developed to assist the domestic and international adoption program coordinators at the agency in appealing to an African-American clientele. The plan includes three main parts: networking within the African-American community, altering marketing techniques, and incorporating culturally competent practice.

Networking within the African-American community

Networking is essential when appealing to any population, but especially when the African-American community is the target. The agency needs to establish relationships with churches, community leaders, and other service organizations located in the targeted community. If the agency were to collaborate with these resources, there would be a greater likelihood of attracting African-American clients, because trust would have been built and contact persons established. This would in turn lead to referral, which is one of the greatest forms of communication in the African-American community.

Churches

Carter (1997, p. 537) stated, "The African American church is often considered the heartbeat of the African American community." The church is often the best and fastest means of communication in the community. Ministers and pastors in the African-American churches in the city play a very influential role in community

life. They are trusted leaders and many are active catalysts in meeting the needs of their congregation and community members. Furthermore, the church congregation takes on many of the same characteristics as a family in the African-American community: They take care of their own. Communication is taken seriously and trusted in this environment, so it is more likely to produce results. For example, many congregations have introduced the "One Church, One Child" program, which focuses on adopting African-American children in the foster care system. This program has had great effects on the African-American community. Accordingly, it is crucial to utilize the churches as points of contact. The agency should:

- Collaborate with the churches in service projects outside of the adoption programs.
- Invite congregates, church board members, and ministers and pastors to agency events and open houses.
- Hold informational sessions in the churches, and distribute effective reading material, using appropriate language and pictures that appeal to this community.

Community leaders

Involvement of community leaders must extend beyond ministers and pastors to include influential African-American community activists. These leaders serve as gatekeepers in the community. They facilitate the agency's access to people in the community and help to shape policies and procedures that are congruent with the culture and traditions of their communities (ACF, 2001). It is crucial that agencies form relationships with persons that the African-American community looks to for leadership and guidance. These are the persons who shepherd the people and serve as their voice. They fight for the rights of the community, and they determine what services are dependable. If the agency builds trust with them, listens to them, and adheres

to their service advice, it is more likely that the agency will attract African-American adoptive couples. Agencies should:

- Contact community leaders (formal and informal) and offer services to them in any projects that they are undertaking.
- Invite them to agency events.
- Ask for their advice and suggestions about agency projects targeting the African-American community.
- Inform them about the open adoption process and answer any of their questions.

Community organizations

In addition to establishing ongoing relationships with African-American community leaders, it is also vital to form open lines of communication with service organizations in the targeted community. To effectively serve the African-American population in the city, the agency has to team up with organizations that are already meeting their needs. These organizations are located in the neighborhoods where many African-American persons live, and they have a reputation of working hand in hand with this population.

One of the interviewees had the excellent idea of organizing a committee of retired African-American persons who would be willing to volunteer their time to conduct adoption workshops within the community. The agency would have to take the initiative to seek these persons out, and offer training to equip them properly, but such a process would supply contact persons with whom members of the community could identify. These contact persons could also serve as an advisory committee that would provide the agency with valuable insight into the community. The agency should:

- Contact organizations already working in the African-American community to open the lines of communication.

- Offer to partner with these organizations on projects serving the African-American community.
- Use the human resources department to recruit a committee of retired African-American persons who would be willing to dedicate their time to this cause.
- Use community organizations as sites to conduct workshops and training sessions for potential committee members, as well as persons interested in adoption.

Marketing techniques

Appealing to a certain group requires more than just knowing the right people; it requires the ability to advertise effectively. Thorough knowledge of the audience is the key to successful advertising. Another reason it is so important to network with churches, community leaders, and African-American service organizations is that the agency can use insights gained from these sources to appeal to the community.

For example, one of the interviewees expressed the importance of appealing to the “heart of the people” by inviting African-American families who have adopted domestically or internationally to describe their experiences. This person also suggested that the agency advertise in newspapers that circulate in the African-American community instead of the predominately “White” papers. When constructing advertisements, it is crucial to use language, graphics, and pictures that are characteristic of and speak to the African-American community. Furthermore, adoption should be described in an attractive manner, and all advertisements should provide a culturally inviting message (ACF, 2001). Some marketing strategies that the Administration for Children and Families (2001) suggests include:

- Create recruitment brochures, posters, or booklets for display in community settings such as churches, day care centers, barber and beauty shops,

medical care facilities, and grocery stores.

- Have staff appear on local media shows to discuss their work.
- Feature special adoption stories in community newspapers.
- Develop a media campaign introducing the need for African-American caregivers, utilizing professionals who will work pro bono or at reduced cost.
- Participate in community fairs and other events that allow an information booth.
- Use free public service announcements.
- Collaborate with community leaders, institutions, and organizations to help “spread the word.”
- Utilize adoptive parents as informal volunteer recruiters.

Culturally competent practice

Lastly, one of the key components in attracting and maintaining an African-American clientele is instilling culturally competent practice in the agency. The agency has to practice in a way that caters to clients from many different sociocultural backgrounds. For the most part, the domestic and international adoption programs appeal only to Caucasian clients. This is ingrained in the agency system as well as the physical environment. There are three key components to instilling culturally competent practice: providing extensive diversity education, incorporating staff diversity, and creating an atmosphere that is sensitive to all cultures.

Diversity education

Diversity education should be an ongoing service provided by every agency. Although acquiring knowledge related to diverse values and beliefs is necessary, diversity training has to extend much deeper than this.

The agency currently has a linear approach to diversity, but to truly be sensitive to African-American clients, it has to take into account the unique experience of the client and be aware of specific variables affecting the African-American community. Garthwait (2005) suggested:

- “Be alert to positive experiences resulting from minority group status, not just negative implications” (p. 137).
- “Work to understand negative experiences clients have had due to minority status” (p. 137).
- “Strive to learn differences in worldview, values, and meanings” (p. 138).
- “Be alert to the fact that clients from minority groups may have had or may expect negative experiences when dealing with social workers/agencies” (p. 139).
- “Consider all clients as individuals first, members of minority status second, and members of an ethnic group third” (p. 139).

It is also important to consider perspectives that will be the most effective from clients’ points of view. African-American clients, for the most part, tend to respond better to strengths perspectives, empowerment, and cultural models during service implementation (Hollingsworth, 1999). Furthermore, it is important to establish mutual respect and strive to attain respectful relationships with African-American clients, because they are, fortunately, sensitive to whether casework relationships are empowering or corrosive of their dignity (Hollingsworth, 1999). To properly educate its workers on issues of diversity, the agency should:

- Provide thorough training on values, beliefs, traditions, and language of the African-American community.

- Apply strengths perspectives, empowerment, and cultural models to African-American client situations.
- Establish peer relationships and use mutual respect—know what is offensive.
- Learn to recognize diversity within diversity, acknowledging the individual experience of every client.

Staff diversity

Even though a person need not be of the same race to deliver culturally competent services, the race of staff does make a difference when initially attracting African-American clients. People tend to be more comfortable in an environment that includes people of their own race (a multicultural setting). For example, a couple might feel uneasy if they walked into the adoption agency site and did not see a single African-American worker. As discussed in the “Findings” section of this article, there are no African-American workers at the agency, nor are there any African-American persons in administrative positions. This complete lack of representation—far more than underrepresentation—affects the quality of practice and reflects poorly on the agency.

The agency needs to address its hiring process as well. No one prescreens qualified applicants for the interview process to enhance the diversity of agency staff. Instead, the agency supervisors select the applicants to interview, and it is ultimately the supervisors’ decision as to who receives a position. Moreover, the agency publicizes its job openings in areas that are not readily accessible to many African-Americans. To gain a more diverse staff, the agency should:

- Hire more African-American staff members, especially in administrative positions.
- Advertise job openings in areas and through channels that are accessible to African-American persons.

- Develop prescreening methods for interviewing applicants.
- Establish accountability for supervisors who do hiring.

Agency atmosphere

What clients see when they initially walk into the agency will affect their perception of the agency and its services. Therefore, it is crucial to present an environment that is appealing to persons of diverse sociocultural backgrounds. The adoption sector at the agency is greatly lacking in this regard. For example, the only paraphernalia displayed on the walls are closely tied to the agency’s religion (which is not the religion of most African-Americans in the community). To provide a physical environment conducive to African-American comfort and participation, the agency should:

- Acquire and display pictures and photographs that have African-American persons in them.
- Provide magazines, brochures, and other reading material that appeals to African-American clients.
- Use culturally sensitive language.

Conclusion

Although the lack of participation by African-American parents in domestic and international adoption may seem mysterious or irremediable, this project has identified reasons why this problem exists, and also some solutions agencies can implement. Numerous African-American children await adoption and foster care. Social workers can play a significant role in remedying this problem as they develop the cultural competence of their practice, promote a flexible transracial adoption policy, and improve their ability to recruit African-American clients who are willing to adopt. Adoption agencies can implement many strategies to recruit African-American adoptive parents (specified in detail earlier in this paper). To bring about organizational

changes, agencies might use the model developed at the Iowa School of Social Work. Raheim (2003) suggested that organizations:

- Create a structure that is responsible for planning and developing organizational capacity
- Clarify their values through participatory processes
- Develop a logical model to guide development of capacity
- Keep abreast of demographic trends in their service area
- Conduct self-assessments to guide planned change

- Create a plan to increase cultural competence
- Adopt and adapt lessons learned by other organizations
- Create a refuge or safe area for sharing and learning (2003, pp. 148, 149)

Improving the recruitment of African-American foster and adoptive parents is within the reach of adoption and foster care agencies, which can be beacons of inspiration, setting an example for caregiving environments that are richly multicultural, truly democratic, and just.

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Interview Questions

1. How do you feel about being a Black social worker in a primarily White agency (for African-American social worker)?
2. What do you think could be done to incorporate more diversity into this agency? Attract more Black workers and clients?
3. What are some reasons that you think Black clients do not utilize your agency's adoption services? Do you think it is value or culturally based?
4. Do you think your agency practices in culturally competent ways? Why or why not?
5. What is your view of formal (legal) adoption?
6. Why do you think the majority of adopting couples at your agency are White? How could this be changed?

Erin Bass, B.S.W. is a graduate of Bradley University, class of 2005. She received her Bachelor of Arts degree summa cum laude, majoring in social work and minoring in sociology and Spanish. Currently, Erin is working as the Coeducational Program Director for a nonprofit organization called Learning for Life, a character-education and career-development program for young people in the northwest suburbs of Chicago. She has been privileged to work with some of the community's most remarkable leaders, including fire chiefs, police chiefs, school board members, business owners, and, most importantly, a talented group of young people. She has received two quality district awards from the Learning for Life national office for the work she has done. She has traveled to Haiti, Brazil, and Lithuania serving people in need. In the past year, Erin has been asked to lead a partnership team that is in conjunction with four churches in the United States and two churches in Lithuania. She will be coordinating and leading annual trips to community projects in urban areas of Lithuania.

Wayne C. Evens, Ph.D. is Associate Professor and Director of the Social Work Program at Bradley University, where he joined the faculty in 2001 after teaching at the University of North Dakota, Southern Illinois University, and the University of Iowa School of Social Work. Wayne serves as U.S. director of the Russian-American Summer University, a program to educate Russian social service workers. He has practiced as a therapist and as a community organizer, and he served as director of a drug treatment and crisis line director. Since coming to Bradley, Wayne has guided the Social Work Program through accreditation and reaccreditation by the Council on Social Work Education. His research interests are in the areas of poverty, spirituality and social justice.