from one home to another, to a school, or foster placement home. On the second objection, Dr. Lewis indicated that in such a setting as Mersham, the children could be observed and evaluated better in their social relationships with their peers, siblings, and those in authoritative positions. It was noted that permissive situations were arranged so that the children could display fully all their aggressions, ambivalences, etc. Despite some objections, Dr. Lewis felt that reception centres are necessary with these precautions: retain the child in the home whenever possible, if suitable tests can be administered there; psychiatric facilities at the centre must be adequate; exchange of interagency information; and nonadmission of children under 5 years unless the family situation demands otherwise and then only if adequate facilities and staff are available.

Dr. Lewis is very cautious in drawing conclusions, especially with respect to the effectiveness of the Reception Centre and the adjustment of the children, since only two to three years of a child's life were covered. It would be of interest to know whether these children become useful, productive citizens and make a satisfactory adjustment to the demands of family life and society. Whether the children placed after evaluation in the Reception Centre made a better adjustment than a comparable group not cleared through a Centre was not studied. Such a comparison would permit more definite conclusions concerning the effectiveness of the Centre.

ELISE M. HINKSON

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THE "ONLY" CHILD[1]

ACCORDING to a recent public opinion poll, 75 per cent of the general public and 60 per cent of the Onlies themselves consider "being an only child a disadvantage." The only child has been the subject of more than 200 special investigations. "Unfortunately, the overall results are not conclusive." Most of the studies are vitiated by sampling errors and the findings

[1] Cutts, Norman E. and Moseley, Nicholas: THE ONLY CHILD: A GUIDE FOR PARENTS. New York, G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1954, 245 pp. $3.50.

are conflicting. Drs. Cutts and Moseley, authors of this book, believe that they "have studied more adult Onlies than any other investigator has" and they "do not find that Onlies as a group constitute an unusual class of people." This may be termed the major finding of this "guide for parents and only children of all ages" which in general has subordinated research data and its analysis to the communicating and advice and counsel to "Onlies."

The authors assert that the great majority of only children grow up to be well adjusted adults but that they do not achieve their success without a struggle. The same thing could be said of oldest children, youngest children, and middle children. The authors agree that "the problems which an only child faces are essentially those faced by all human beings. Onliness is at most a complicating factor."

The book can be read at a single sitting. It is unburdened with tables or charts and assumes that the reader doesn't care to question the evidence behind the generalizations made. In describing the special hazards of upbringing, the authors point out that the parents of Onlies are inexperienced, having had no other children to practice on, are statistically older than parents of non-Onlies, are overconcerned with the health of the child, tend to be over-protective, and yet also tend to reject the child as unwanted. The adopted child is particularly likely to be an Only. Parents usually feel guilty over producing an Only and this may make them overindulgent and smother the child with attention. For almost none of these assertions are proportions given which would indicate how frequently these hazards of child rearing were characteristic of Onlies in the groups studied by the authors. Yet the authors had access to 258 case histories of Onlies, 127 Onlies from Mount Holyoke records, 55 Onlies from Vassar, and 34 Onlies from Yale.

Similarly, without providing proof, the authors assert that Onlies are more frequently subject to a number of problems than other children: feeding problems, negativism, temper tantrums, overdemanding-spoiled behavior, attention seeking, submissiveness, deficiency in opportunity to associate with playmates, and more difficulty in achieving autonomy and independence. Yet as adults Onlies are vocationally as success-

ful as other children. The authors state that Onlies are not as likely to marry, and if they marry they do so later and produce fewer children than non-Onlies. They are not quite as likely to be happy in marriage, particularly if they marry other Onlies, but they seem to make good parents and the majority are well adjusted citizens.

Readers of the Milbank Fund *Quarterly* may be interested in knowing that the authors are sufficiently acquainted with the Indianapolis Study to cite its findings on the incidence of unwanted Onlies and the reasons why parents of Onlies stopped with only one child.

REUBEN HILL

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OUR NEEDY AGED[1]

ONE of the interesting social phenomena of our times is the widespread concern with the plight of the aged. Legislative commissions, professional conferences, study and survey projects are everywhere in evidence. Noteworthy among these activities is the report of a recent study of California's efforts over the past several years to deal with the problem of financial dependency among its aged population. The fact that one-third of the persons in the State 65 years of age and over are in receipt of public aid at an annual cost of $218,000,000 seems reason enough for such a study.

The report OUR NEEDY AGED is based upon two years of intensive investigation. It was financed by a foundation grant and conducted under the auspices of the Social Science Research Center of Pomona College. It is a single report presented as an "experiment in cooperative research" by the six social scientists listed as authors. The research team included specialists in population and migration, social psychology and the family, public administration, politics and legislation, taxation and public regulation, and income distribution. The variety of the specialties involved gives some indication of the breadth

[1] Bond, F. A. ; Baber, R. E. ; Vieg, J. A. ; Perry, L. B. ; Scaff, A. H. ; and Lee, L. J., Jr. : OUR NEEDY AGED. New York; Henry Holt and Co., 1954, 401 pp. $6.00.