Social workers attitudes and perceptions toward transracial adoption

Karla Eduviges Carranza
Nicol Alejandra Stolar

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.lib.csusb.edu/etd-project

Part of the Race and Ethnicity Commons, and the Social Work Commons

Recommended Citation

This Project is brought to you for free and open access by the John M. Pfau Library at CSUSB ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses Digitization Project by an authorized administrator of CSUSB ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact scholarworks@csusb.edu.
SOCIAL WORKERS' ATTITUDES AND PERCEPTIONS TOWARDS TRANSRACIAL ADOPTION

A Project
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Social Work

by
Karla Eduviges Carranza
Nicol Alejandra Stolar
June 2003
SOCIAL WORKERS’ ATTITUDES AND PERCEPTIONS
TOWARDS TRANSRACIAL ADOPTION

A Project
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino

by
Karla Eduviges Carranza
Nicol Alejandra Stolar
June 2003

Approved by:
Dr. Tom Davis, Faculty Supervisor
Social Work

Crystal Shackleford, M.S.W., Riverside
County Child Protective

Dr. Rosemary McCaflin,
M.S.W. Research Coordinator

Date 5/27/03
ABSTRACT

The high numbers of minority children in the public child welfare system have increased dramatically over the years. However, there are not enough permanent placements to meet the growing needs of children from various ethnic backgrounds. Transracial adoption has been considered a solution to the growing need for placements for children from various ethnic backgrounds.

Transracial adoption in itself, is a controversial subject engulfed within a sensitive political climate. The differing opinions and views within society have facilitated the controversy surrounding whether or not children from differing ethnic backgrounds should be placed with adoptive parents who do not match their ethnicity and or race.

Social workers greatly impact the facilitation of placing and removing children while interpreting policy and legislation at the frontline level. This study explores the attitudes and perceptions of social workers towards transracial adoption.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We would like to acknowledge the outstanding efforts of Dr. Rosemary McCaslin, "Dr. Mac" and Dr. Tom Davis. We appreciate your faith in our ability to succeed.

We also acknowledge our cohort, thank you for all of your support throughout this journey, And don’t forget, D.S.W.Y.C.!
DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to my husband who has supported me throughout these hard years of graduate school. To my parents who have always encouraged me to further my education, and who have always given me love and support. To God for all that he has blessed me with, in life. To my research partner and friend Nicol Stolar,
We are finally done!

Karla Carranza

Thank G-D for blessing me with loving and supportive parents, friends who offer endless supplies of encouragement and help, and for sending guardian angels to watch over me through the difficult times. I am truly grateful.

Nicol Alejandra Stolar
# Table of Contents

ABSTRACT ........................................................................ iii

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS ................................................ iv

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

- Problem Statement .................................................. 1
- Purpose of the Study ............................................... 4
- Significance of the Project for Social Work ............. 7

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

- Introduction ............................................................... 9
- Perception and Attitudes towards Transracial Adoption .................................................. 9
- Outcomes of Transracial Adoption ....................... 13
- Politics Surrounding Transracial Adoption .......... 19
- Theories Guiding Conceptualization .................... 23
- Summary ................................................................. 25

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

- Study Design ............................................................ 26
- Sampling ...................................................................... 28
- Data Collection and Instruments ......................... 29
- Procedure ................................................................. 30
- Protection of Human Subject ................................. 31
- Partner Contribution ............................................... 32
- Data Analysis ........................................................... 32
- Summary ................................................................. 33
CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

Demographics and Descriptive Characteristics for Entire Sample .................................. 34
Categories of Patterns and Themes ....................... 35
  Racial Identity ......................................... 35
  Knowledge and Acceptance of Cultural Heritage .................................................. 38
  Providing a Permanent and Stable Home ............ 42
  Meeting the Child Emotional Needs ................. 43
  Potential Positive Outcomes of Multiethnic Placement Act-Interethnic Adoption Provision .................................................. 44
  Best Interests of the Child ......................... 45

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION ................................ 48
  Limitations of the Study ................................ 51
  Recommendations for Social Worker Practice Policy and Research ......................... 52
  Conclusions ........................................... 52

APPENDIX A: QUESTIONNAIRE ............................. 54
APPENDIX B: INFORMED CONSENT .......................... 56
APPENDIX C: DEBRIEFING STATEMENT ......................... 58
REFERENCES ............................................. 60
ASSIGNED RESPONSIBILITIES PAGE .......................... 61
CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

This section of the paper will be covering the problem statement and purpose of the study. In examining the area of social worker's attitudes and perceptions in regards to transracial adoption, we will explore the controversial nature of our topic and how it has affected the children in the foster care system.

Problem Statement

The debate over transracial adoption (TRA) has been stirring for almost two decades. Unfortunately, the debate seems to center on color, rather than the child. The main controversial issue is whether an African-American child should be placed with white parents. Some argue that if a parent never experienced discrimination because of their skin color, they could not possibly be able to relate to and raise the child to comprehend the prejudice that will surround him or her through life. The question is, is it possible to take the issue of "race" out of adoption? Unfortunately, more often than not, the focus of this discussion is shifted from the ultimate goal-to provide a stable, loving environment for a child legally available
for adoption-to a debate focused on racial politics
(Campbell, 2000).

President William J. Clinton signed the Multiethnic
Placement Act (MEPA) and the subsequent Interethnic
Adoption Provision (IAP), into law on October 20, 1994,
and in August 20, 1996. MEPA was enacted to redress
several social issues that had come to the attention of
the U.S. Congress. First, the number of children entering
the public child welfare system had reached record levels.
Second, black children were disproportionately represented
in out-of-home placements. Third, thousands of children
were waiting a median of three years to five years in the
case of black children-for adoptive homes. In addition,
reports indicated that white families were routinely being
denied the opportunity to become foster parents as well as
the opportunity to adopt children of color, solely on the
basis of race and ethnicity, (Campbell, 2000).

Current statistics show that 500,000 children are
currently in the nation’s foster care system and over
100,000 of those children are currently awaiting adoption
(Carter-Black, 2002). The Administration for Children and
Families (2002) reports that forty-seven percent of the
children in foster care are Caucasian, twenty-nine percent
are African-American, fifteen percent are Hispanic, three
percent are American Indian, and two percent are Asian in foster care. The enactment of MEPA and IAP refueled the longstanding and persistent controversy surrounding Transracial Adoption—more pointedly, the adoptions of black children by white parents.

One of the strongest legislative measures against Transracial Adoption involved the adoption of Native American children. In the 1960s and 1970s, nearly 30 percent of all Native American children were removed from their families and put up for adoption (Campbell, 2000). Social workers had deemed thousands of parents unfit because of poverty, alcoholism, and other problems. Some argue that one reason for the high removal rate was because state officials did not understand or accept Indian culture. The removal of these children was so devastating to the Native American culture that the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) was passed in 1978, giving tribes special preference in adopting children of Native American Heritage (Feigelman, 2000).

The Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) was passed by the federal government in order to re-establish tribal authority over adoption of Native American children, with the goal of strengthening and preserving Native American families and culture. It is clear that race is taken into
consideration when dealing with Native American children. ICWA requires that placement cases involving Indian children be heard in tribal courts if possible, and permits a child’s tribe to be involved in state court proceedings. If a child is removed and placed in foster care or adoption, they are required by law to be placed with extended family members, other tribal members, or Indian families (Feigelman, 2000). Furthermore, Transracial Adoption has remained a highly charged and conflictual issue since the 1960s. During this time, white families between 1967 and 1972 adopted more than 100,000 black children.

Purpose of the Study

The undertaking of the study of social worker’s perceptions and attitudes in regards to transracial adoption acknowledges an awareness and a need to explore the contributions of social workers within the context of social work delivery, and possible implications. This study explores social worker’s motivations, reactions, values, ethics, and possible biases in regards to transracial adoption as well as their views on the legislation supporting it.
The purpose of this study is to shed light on an area, which has not been fully explored. This is in large part due to the political climate, which surrounds the "hot topic" of transracial adoption. Due to rigid public welfare policies in regards to the studying of social worker's perceptions and attitudes, there is minimal information on social workers' perceptions and attitudes towards transracial adoption. The "liability" factor, in regards to what social workers may or may not disclose, is prominent in this milieu. However, there is a human factor that still needs to be acknowledged in order to fully understand the implications of policies and those who are expected to carry them out.

Social workers' are often expected to be immune to allowing their beliefs and values to influence their practice methods. In fact, social workers are trained to process their reactions and record their feelings when encountering different elements and dynamics within the field. This is to help them better understand their own reactions and become more self-aware. Social workers are encouraged to be aware of their own biases and attitudes in order to meet the needs of the client.

Unfortunately there is a lack of reliable evidence regarding the magnitude of any bias against TRA that might
exist with child welfare and adoption agencies (Carter-Black, 2002). Research has established that the implementation of social welfare policies and legislation is realized at the local level and through service delivery at the frontlines. Frontline workers exert considerable influence over the implementation of policies and procedures (Feigelman, 2000).

When exploring the area of social workers perceptions and attitudes, qualitative research is a viable approach to exploring the issues in depth. "Qualitative research allows for the studying of subjects that can be hard to quantify" (Grinnell, 2001, p. 106). This definition reflects the conceptualization of the study of social worker’s perceptions and attitudes. This qualitative research approach was conducted through ten open-ended, semi-structured, face-to-face interviews consisting of seven in-depth questions.

The open dialogue, which took place during the interviews, contributed to the qualitative and subjective nature of this investigative study. This study is expected to enlighten and reveal actual attitudes and perspectives, which may be indicative of actual social work practice methods. This study strives to give social worker a voice
that is often silenced by agency liability, agency policy and politics.

Significance of the Project for Social Work

The study of social worker’s perceptions and attitudes towards transracial adoption will contribute to the practice of social work by providing a platform for the awareness and understanding of what influences social worker’s decisions in the field. This research is important in recognizing that social workers’ attitudes and perceptions can affect the implementation of services. Perhaps through this study, we will be more open in exploring social workers’ beliefs and ideas. Looking at areas that are often restricted may open doors for other social workers.

This study conveys the opinions of social worker’s as well as questions what motivates social workers’ to act, remove, place, or reunify a child with a family. What impact do legislation and mandates play in the actual direct-line practice method of social workers? Do social workers allow their own beliefs to motivate and influence their decision making process, or are they immune to bias and subjectivity?
These questions were explored throughout the interview process of this study. This study will explore the concept of "in the best interests of the child" by providing social workers with an opportunity to share their perspectives. A safe forum was provided for the participants so that candid dialogue could take place. This in itself proved to be significant to the study of social workers perceptions and attitudes.

This study looks exclusively at social workers beyond policy. "What are the attitudes and perceptions of social worker's towards transracial adoption?"
CHAPTER TWO
LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This literature review will explore within an area that is seldom looked at. The issues surrounding transracial adoption, the politics motivating the legislature around it, the lack of studies exploring the attitudes and perceptions of social workers will be made evident, as well as the theories guiding conceptualization of attitudes and behaviors. The literature reviewed will demonstrate different perceptions as well as the actual outcomes of transracial adoption, in order to better help the social work community understand its role within this issue.

Perception and Attitudes towards Transracial Adoption

Carter-Black (2002) conducted a qualitative study on social workers’ perceptions and attitudes on transracial adoption and foster care. Carter-Black interviewed ten social workers and in her study. She found that there is a lack of empirical data identifying the individual views of child welfare professionals. Carter-Black recognized child welfare professionals as "street-level bureaucrats" and
acknowledged the potential for social worker's attitudes and perceptions to play a role in the delivery of services.

Through the interviews conducted, Carter-Black (2002) found that the "child's best interests" played a key role in the decision making process of social workers. As a result of public welfare agencies rigid restrictions regarding the interviewing and studying of individual social workers, there is a lack of information regarding the practice methods of social workers. As a result of federal legislation mandating compliance with MEPA-IAP, agencies require that their workers comply with the federal mandates and not to deviate from them (Carter-Black, 2000).

As a result of the strict adherence policy of public welfare agencies, there is minimal information regarding social worker's attitudes or perceptions, which may affect their delivery of services. Social workers represent a unique group of individuals working within diverse settings, with limited resources, and within a manifold of mandates and legislation. The government operates under the postulation that social workers perform without subjectivity or biases, and strictly within the guidelines, which they set forth.
Liability and accountability is at the forefront of public welfare institutions. This awareness of liability is directly related to the lack of available research depicting the individual attitudes and practices of social workers. This study done by Carter-Black (2002) reflects an innovative approach to understanding the realities of the practice of social work and how attitudes can affect delivery of services, foster care placement, and transracial adoption.

The results of the study indicate that the numbers of African American children pining away in foster care awaiting an adoptive placement are disproportionate and misrepresentative. This sheds light on the possibility that the enactment of MEPA-IAP was spurred by a misrepresentation of the numbers of African American children in the foster care system (Carter-Black, 2000).

Hollingsworth (2000) conducted a study exploring the general publics attitudes towards transracial adoption. The results of the study indicate that a majority of persons in the United States approve of transracial adoption. Findings also showed that older persons are less likely to approve of transracial adoption than younger ones. Furthermore, African-American women and Caucasian
men are less likely than African-American men to approve of transracial adoption.

Data was derived from a general telephone opinion survey conducted for CBS News. The study consisted of a sample of 916 adults age 18 years or older having telephones at home. From the sample, 86% of the sample was Caucasian, 9% were African American, and 5% members of other races or ethnic groups. Respondents were equally dispersed by residence in urban/central city, suburban, and rural areas. Eighty-nine percent were high school graduates, 62% were married and the same proportions were employed. Fifty-five percent were younger than 45 years of age. Fifty-five percent were women. Fifty-six percent had household incomes of $30,000 or more (Hollingsworth, 2000).

One limitation to Hollingsworth study should be noted. Having a telephone as a criterion for eligibility to be selected for the sample presented a potential bias against populations that traditionally have larger proportions of their members without telephones and according to the U.S. Department of Commerce, in 1990 5% of all U.S. households were without telephones. Thirteen percent were African-American households, 12% were of
Hispanic origin and 23% American Indian, Eskimo or Aleutian Islanders (Hollingsworth, 2000).

Transracial adoption still remains a controversial issue among the public at large and among social service practitioners. There is great debate over whether the transracially-adopted child ultimately loses their cultural identity.

Outcomes of Transracial Adoption

Shireman and Johnson (1986) compare three adoptive home placements of African American children. This study shows that most children grow and adjust well in all three types of placements/homes. They also explored the issue of transracially adopted children being able to identify with their cultural heritage from an intellectual perspective versus a life experience/socialization perspective (Shireman-Johnson, 1986).

The study was qualitative and was constructed through interviews. The initial interviews took place between 1970-1972. The study included 31 single, 42 transracial, and 45 traditional adoptive parents/placements. The children were all under the age of 3 at the time of the initial interviews. The interviews were performed again when the children were approximately 8 years of age.
This study looked at overall adjustment of adopted African American children and rated their overall adjustment on a scale ranging from excellent to serious difficulty. The three groups scores were significantly close together and suggest that approximately "45% of the children were considered to be making an excellent adjustment" (Shireman-Johnson, 1986, p. 172). About "22% were described as exhibiting difficulty-very close to the percentage assessed on other adoption studies" (Shireman-Johnson, 1986, p. 172). Within the three groups the majority of the children (now 8 years old) established close relationships with their parents and were interacting well with their peers.

This leads to a limitation of the study: the age of the children at which the study was conducted. In recognition of Erickson's developmental stages, pre- and post-adolescence would have been more relevant ages to look at adjustment and identity. This would have helped to identify similarities and differences between traditionally adopted children and transracially adopted children (Shireman-Johnson, 1986).

One controversial question is whether a transracially adopted child ultimately looses their cultural identity. The study conducted by William Feigelman (2000) follows a
sample of transracial and inracial children adopted in infancy to young adulthood. The original baseline survey began in 1975 with a sample size of 737 families. It included 58 African-American, 442 Korean and Vietnamese born children, 46 Colombian born children, and 96 White children born in the U.S. Families came from a variety of sources, including private agencies, regional social service departments, and independent adoptions. In 1980 and 1981 and second survey was collected from 372 families from the original sample obtained. The most recent survey of 1993, 240 families were surveyed for the third time. At the time the third survey was given 18 years after the first study, the average age of the adoptees was 23.

The author used parental judgments and reports to assess problem behavior. Two scales were used to assess problematic adjustments; the Global Assessment Scale (GAS) and an index of dysfunctional. In the second scale, parent respondents gave information on various behaviors of their children including whether their child: a) had ever ran away from home, b) had ever been expelled from school, c) had ever experienced problems with the law, d) had drug or alcohol problems, and/or e) had ever received counseling for emotional problems (Feigelman, 2000).
One of the most striking findings of the study showed that transracial adoptive parents' decisions on where to live had a substantial impact upon their children's adjustments. Transracial adoptive parents residing in predominately White communities tended to have adoptees that experienced more discomfort about their appearance than those who lived in integrated settings. These findings suggest that when transracially adoptive parents live in racially mixed neighborhoods, their children will be able to thrive better, than when parents live in more segregated settings. However, the study also found that parents of transracial adoptees reported adjustment problems among their children at approximately the same levels as were reported by the parents of inracially adopted whites (Feigelman, 2000).

Simon (1996) conducted a twenty years-study on transracial adoption, which explored what role race played, and how children took on racial identities in families in which transracial adoption occurred. She began her work in 1971 interviewing parents and children four and seven years old. The families were interviewed in their home for 60-90 minute. In total, 204 parents and 366 children were interviewed. Seven years later, they were able to locate 71 percent of the families. In 1983, the
families were contacted a third time and of the 133 who participated in 1979, 88 took part in 1983.

The most important findings that emerged from the first encounter with the families in 1971-1972 was "the absence of a white racial preference or bias on the part of the children and the nonwhite adopted children" (Simon, 1996, p. 80). The "doll tests" revealed that the children did not have a preference for white or negative reactions to the black dolls. At the same time the children identified themselves as white or black in those same tests. These results indicate that transracial adoption appeared to provide the opportunity for children to develop an awareness of race, and a respect for different physical characteristics (Simon, 1996).

The second time that the families were interviewed in 1979, there were signs of stress and tension in the families. Adoptees in their pre-adolescent years stole things from other members of their family. However, four years later, when the families were visited again for the third time, none of them reported that the stealing had continued (Simon, 1996).

In the second interview in 1983, all of the families had some changes in their live; changes were not made because they had decided to adopt a child of a different
race, but because the adoption added another child to the family. According to the author, "they worked hard at being parents, and at being parents of children of different races" (Simon, 1996, p. 80). The children were also asked to complete a self-esteem scale, which measured how much respect a person has for himself or herself. The scores showed no significant differences in the four groups of respondents, black TRAs, other TRAs, white born, and white adopted (Simon, 1996).

The last part of the study conducted in 1991 focused on adult TRAs. The focus of the interview was about feelings about TRA. Eighty percent of the TRAs and 70% of the birth children said they disagree with the National Association of Black Social Workers (NABSW) position. Only 5% of the TRAs agreed with the NABSW’s position and others were not sure how they felt about the issue (Simon, 1996).

The study was significant in that the four groups exhibited approximately the same scores on the self-esteem scale, and Transracial Adoptees reported to be in favor of Transracial Adoption during there adolescent years. They viewed the experience as positive.
Politics Surrounding Transracial Adoption

Hollingsworth's (1999) study represents a clear opposition to TRA. Hollingsworth discusses and explores the concept of the African American Community as a necessary component to the development and identity of African American children.

Hollingsworth argues that Transracial Adoption lacks the component of "symbolic internationalism in conceptuality an association between African American culture and the socialization of African American children" (1999, p. 445). Hollingsworth includes a quote from the NABSW and states "black children belong physically, psychologically and culturally in black families in order that they receive the total sense of themselves" (p. 445) when exploring the concept of "symbolic internalism" the African American experience is recognized and various fundamental features are identified (Hollingsworth, 1996).

Hollingsworth addresses the African American perception of adoption as an informal process rather than a formal legal process. Kinship is identified as a natural informal permanent placement. This formation of kinship is perceived of as a way to keep the family together vs.
formal adoption as a way to split it up and cause dissention (Hollingsworth, 1996).

The philosophy of kinship or kincare is a reflection of the African American sense of self, as a collective self, rather than an individual one. This perspective supports the idea that the African American community develops its collective identity through the development and sustaining of its members through interaction and socialization (Hollingsworth, 1996).

Simon (1999) conducted a study, which explored the impact that the Multiethnic Placement Act (MEPA) had on transracial adoption. MEPA was intended to prohibit the use of racial matching between a child who is waiting to be adopted and an available adoptive or foster family. The author sought to answer the question “Does the Law Matter?” In other words, has MEPA made a difference?

The study surveyed attorneys specializing in adoption, state officials, and public and private adoption agencies in the fifty states and the District of Columbia. She was interested to find out the number of families seeking to adopt across racial lines, the number of transracial placements, and the obstacles encountered by parties seeking to adopt across racial lines (Simon, 1999).
The author found that intercountry adoptions offer a tough competition to children available in the U.S. because families found it easier and quicker than trying to adopt in the U.S. "Over a ten-year period from 1989 to 1998, the number of intercountry adoptions increased from 7,948 to 15,774. More than two-thirds of the children are now being adopted from China and Russia" (Simon, 1999, p. 89).

Furthermore, twenty months after the passage of MEPA, Simon was looking to find out which states were in compliance with the new law and if in fact they were non compliant, what would be the financial penalties given. She found that eight states-Alabama, Georgia, Illinois, Maine, Nebraska, New Mexico, Utah, and Virginia were not in compliance with the 1996 act and therefore presumably were subject to "specific graduated financial penalties" (Simon, 1999, p. 6). However, one of the limitations to the study is that they were not able to conclude what financial penalties were given to the eight states that were noncompliant with MEPA and although the study shows that there in fact is noncompliance, the question still remains, does the Law Matter? Although eight states were found noncompliant, the penalties placed upon them are still unknown.
Courtney (1997) offers an integrated look at some of the issues surrounding transracial adoption including social service’s history of poor interactions with the African American community. Courtney focuses on the “systems” poor history of acknowledging and helping to facilitate kinship foster care in the African American community.

Courtney also explores the systems refusal to acknowledge the causation implications of the number of African American children in foster care and overall acknowledges the systems unwillingness to look at the underlying cause and source for the initial “need” for transracial adoption as a “viable” solution to the increasing numbers of African American children “languishing” in foster care. Courtney looks at the validity of kinship care placement as a solution to the high numbers of African American children “awaiting” adoptive placements.

Courtney argues that assumptions have been made in regards to children in permanent placement homes, having been included as part of the “tens of thousands of African American children languishing in the system” (Courtney, 1997). She suggests that there is an overrepresentation of children in the foster care system. Often enough, children
who continue to receive even minimal services in a permanent placement home are still considered "in the system." This can elude society/lawmakers into believing that the number of children waiting in "foster care" is higher than they actually are (Courtney, 1997).

Courtney does a good job of recognizing the importance of understanding the black community and its sense of collective-informal adoption. He identifies permanent placements as an alternative to formal adoption, which would decrease the possibility for dissention in the family. Courtney provides a credible argument against the politics, which spurred TRA legislature (Courtney, 1997).

Theories Guiding Conceptualization

Ajzen explored the conceptualization of the construct of attitudes and their possible implications. This study plunges into the functional basis of attitudes as well as their influence upon processing information consistently and inconsistently. "It is generally hypothesized that attitudes bias information processing and memory in favor of attitude-consistent material" (Ajzen, 2001, p. 41).

Planned behavior is argued to be the most relevant theory and framework in regards to its ability to be consistent with the cognitive foundations and
expectancy-value formulation. Planned behavior theory sustains that “people act in accordance with their intentions and perceptions of control over the behavior, subjective norms, and perceptions of behavioral control” (Ajzen, 2001, p. 43). This can be conceptualized into values, beliefs, and perceptions. Once triggered, values can influence evaluations of specific events and objects.

Ajzen looks at various studies evaluating attitudes, values, and behavior. One study showed that highly embedded attitudes are more directly related to behavioral intentions than low embedded attitudes.

Another study indicated the influence of subjective norms on the behavior of workers turnover rates. Japan and Britain measured differently due to the difference in culture. Japan workers were more influenced by the subjective norm due to the collectivist nature of the culture, while Britain’s worker’s were less influenced due to the individualistic nature of their culture (Abrams et al., 1998). A study on the perceptions of Americans versus Mexicans on obesity showed that Americans felt that obesity was at the fault of the individual, Mexicans disagreed. This reflects again, the impact of cultural attitudes influencing beliefs and attitudes.
Summary

Overall, attitudes, beliefs, and values have been shown to affect how individuals evaluate and process information. This knowledge is important and relevant to the practice of social work. Social workers are expected to put their attitudes, values, and perceptions aside when working with their clients. Attitudes are effecting processing and evaluation of events. Therefore, it is important to understand the possible implications of workers perceptions and attitudes. Social workers with highly embedded attitudes towards transracial adoption, will be influenced by their behavioral intentions.
CHAPTER THREE

METHODS

This section of the paper will give an overview of the methods used in this study to examine the area of social worker’s attitudes and perceptions in regards to transracial adoption. This section will include the study’s design, sampling, data collection, instruments used to collect the data, procedures, the protection of the human subjects, and the data analysis.

Study Design

The purpose of the proposed study is to examine social workers perceptions and attitudes towards transracial adoption. There is a significant gap in the social work literature in this area of study. This study employed a qualitative study design in hopes of acknowledging various themes that could be most effectively disclosed through face-to-face contact.

Liability plays a large role in the limitations of this study, as we currently live in an era of frequent litigation. Unfortunately data cannot simply be gathered, it must be filtered by bureaucratic agency policies and restrictions, before it is allowed to be gathered in the
first place. Letters must be signed, and consents must be given.

The implications of this study include the possibility that politically correct answers may not be given in the interview process. The practical implications of this may include the comprehension of what social workers really think about what it is they are practicing. This is important for the simple fact that social workers are not robots. Social workers are real people making real decisions, everyday. It is imperative that we gain an understanding of what motivates a worker and how they achieve the goal of what is in best interests of the child, as well as how they define "the best interest of the child."

For the purpose of providing an opportunity for disclosure, this study is qualitative in design. A quantitative, survey format would discourage dialogue, which is considered relevant to this subject matter. The ultimate goal of this study is to understand the perceptions and attitudes of social workers towards transracial adoption.
Sampling

The sample from which the data was collected was recruited from a select group of social workers at the Department of Child Protective Services in Riverside County. After obtaining permission from Riverside County Child Protective Services through the research review committee, we interviewed ten social workers from Riverside County Child Protective Services. The criteria used to select these individuals includes that they carry the title of social worker; that they have had a minimum of one year experience within the context of direct line practice.

The sample is diversified in age and ethnicity. This adds to the range and spectrum of the data collected. The sample size of ten and composition reflects an understanding of time restrictions as well as feasibility.

One major concern, which arose during the studying of this subject matter, is the strict adherence policies within agencies regarding the usage of human subjects as data. Often this is within the context of “vulnerable populations.” However, in this case it is in large part reflective of the political climate surrounding the subject matter. Therefore considerable consultation has taken place with advisors in order to ensure the
compliance within University and agency ethics and research policies.

Data Collection and Instruments

The demographic variables studied are age, ethnicity, department/program of practice, and the number of years employed for Riverside County Child Protective Services.

Interviews were conducted, by asking the following 5 general questions:

1. Can you describe some of your beliefs and attitudes towards the issue of transracial adoption?

2. What do you think the concerns are for those who oppose transracial adoption?

3. What do you think the concerns are for those who support transracial adoption?

4. Are you familiar with the Multiethnic Placement Act?

5. How do you think the Multiethnic Placement Act effects children of minority descent and their families?

6. How do you think transracial adoption effects the racial identity development of a child?
7. Please describe your understanding of the controversy surrounding transracial adoption?

Procedure

Ethnographic research was chosen as the method for this study. Because it facilitates and encourages in-depth discussions through individual interviews, an ethnographic research method enables workers to provide a richly textured quality of information. With the limited number of participants involved, however, the ability to generalize is diminished. Nonetheless, this methodology was most appropriate for the topic study (Grinnell, 2001).

The researchers conducted a qualitative study and obtained data through open-ended, semi-structured, face-to-face interviews, each lasting 20 to 30 minutes. The data was gathered by analyzing the information obtained from the interviews. The researchers asked individual opinions on transracial adoption, in attempt to capture specific attitudes towards adoption.

The research procedure is as followed:

1. Recruitment and gathering of 10 social workers for participation of the study through a distribution of flyers.
2. Respondents and researchers met individually at the site of their choice.

3. Respondents participated in a semi-structured 20-30 minute interview, including 7 questions on research topic.

4. The questions were recorded through researchers note taking and audio taping of the interviews.

5. Researchers analyzed the information given from each interview.

Protection of Human Subject

The names of social workers being interviewed were not revealed in this study. The researchers took measures to ensure the confidentiality of data. Although the research includes demographic information disclosed in the interview, the subjects were not identified by name. Numbers were assigned to audiotapes and notes taken by researchers. The Researchers did not include the subject’s names in the note taking processes. The notes obtained from the interviews were kept in a locked drawer only accessible to the researchers. After completion of the study, the researchers destroyed notes and audiotapes obtained from interviews.
Confidentiality was strictly adhered to by the interviewers and was ensured through the actual interview process as well as the interview location. Due to the qualitative structure of this study, proper data collection was critical.

Partner Contribution

Karla Carranza and Nicol Stolar worked collaboratively in the following section: Review of Literature, results, discussion, and typing and editing paper. Karla completed the problem statement in Chapter One; Data Collection, Procedures, Protection of Human Rights and Data Analysis in Chapter 3. Nicol Stolar completed the Purpose of the Study in Chapter One; Methodology, Study Design, and Sampling in Chapter Three.

Data Analysis

This was a qualitative study, which focused on data obtained through an interview process, in attempts of finding patterns and themes typical of ethnographic research. In each interview, researchers took notes of social worker responses to questions presented on transracial adoption. In addition, each interview was audio taped, reviewed and transcribed. The researchers analyzed each tape and found common themes that arose from
the dialogue of each interview. These themes are presented in the results of the study.

The goal of the qualitative study was to describe the major categories or themes that emerged from the study and to identify any relationship between major themes.

Summary

The ultimate goal of the study was to understand social workers attitudes and perceptions of transracial adoption. This study enabled social workers to engage in a dialogue exploring this issue.
CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

The qualitative study results are presented in the following order: a) demographics, and b) six categories of patterns and themes that emerged from the interviews.

Demographics and Descriptive Characteristics for Entire Sample

The sample for this study consisted of ten social workers from Riverside County Child Protective Services. The subjects ranged in age from 26 to 56 years old. The subjects included 4 males and 6 females. The ethnicities of the subjects were 4 Caucasian, 2 Hispanic, 3 African American, and 1 bi-racial. The social workers from Child Protective Services came from various departments and programs within the agency, including 3 from emergency response, 3 from family maintenance, and 4 from adoptions. Their years of experience working for Child Protective Services ranged from 3 to 25 years.

The six categories presented are based upon the emergence of patterns and themes derived from the interview questions, which include: 1) racial identity development, 2) knowledge and acceptance of cultural heritage, 3) providing a permanent and stable home,
4) meeting the child’s emotional needs, 5) potential positive outcomes of MEPA and IAP, and 6) best Interest of the child.

The purpose of this research was to identify the attitudes and perceptions of social workers about transracial adoption, as well as the effects of MEPA-IAP. The patterns, which emerged, reflect the social workers concerns regarding the multifaceted aspects of transracial adoption.

Categories of Patterns and Themes

One of the common patterns and themes that emerged encompassed concerns of the child’s formation of racial identity, experience of discrimination, and the implications of the child’s age at the time of the adoption. Below are exemplars of these patterns.

Racial Identity

I don’t think it’s critical that they go into great depth as long as they show the child, let the child have some sense of identity with their heritage, but that ultimately it’s going to be the child’s choice.

When a child begins to form their identity, transracial adoption could become confusing. Where their place is in society and identifying themselves in whether its skin color or ethnicity that determines part of their identity or whether it is more there culture that they grew up in?
I think it's up to the social workers to find the parents to find the cultural nuances within the culture so that the adoption can be very successful and empowering the child as he she or he is growing up. Even though as you know, when they get older there are going to be issues that they are going to have to tackle with their identity, especially in adolescence.

I think it is very crucial to address issues that arise and to make the child comfortable with who they are, for them to succeed in life. We need to prepare the potential parent so that they can have those tools and be prepared when the identity issues arise.

Discrimination.

I guess it's the same controversy that surrounded the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA). People want to be treated fairly but when they look at the high numbers of minority children in the foster care system, I would think that they would feel as if the numbers are representative of an unfair and prejudice system. As policies and legislation come true it becomes more and more apparent that societies values play a large role in the making and development of social policy. The dominant culture drives the social welfare system as well as the delivery of services and the lack there of for different groups.

People who support transracial adoption would like to have the family's to get children no matter what their views are and they would not want to see their families discriminated just because there is not an African American child or not a certain child that fits their race available that they could be parents, good parents to any child.

I think that it's a power struggle to some degree and it's an issue of equity. I think people are just really concerned that whether or not children are going to be treated fairly based on their ethnicity. I think people look at
the things that happen just in regular life to adults, being penalized because of the color of their skin or the lack there of, and that trickles down to children as well even concerning kids who have special needs who are developmentally delayed, and then there black on top of that. Is this kid going to get equity in the adoption process? So I think the struggle is, everyone wants what is best for kids and I see that happening in legislation and in different social service agencies that everybody struggles with the equity issue of how the child is going to be placed, what values system are we placing on them or not placing on this child. What economic issues is this child going to have or not going to have. A basically comes down to the hierarchy of needs. You need shelter, you need clothes you need food you need social interaction and you take a look at all that and you really have to decide is this kid going to get all that in a European family.

The major controversy is discrimination regarding minority families who would like to adopt. They probably felt that in the past they were discriminated because they wanted a child not of the same race and there are good homes and they don’t want to focus on just the race. A lot of people are afraid that just the race is being focus on and not the home. I think another controversy is whether children are better placed in, better off to be placed in a home of their ethnic background or their better off to be placed in a great home.

I feel that racism still exists even though a lot of us tend to put it aside and ignore it. Racism still exists and people may not want mixed races. I believe that as long you provide a child with love and nurturance, that’s all that should matter.

We need to ensure that children know where they come and also ensure that a child is being treated fairly and equally and that they are not looked at as a white child, a black child, a Hispanic child, but as a child.
Age of the Child.

The concern is the identification. Not only the physical, but also emotional. And it also depends too on the age of the child that is being adopted. If it’s adopted as a baby, the child will learn to identify with the caretaker. But if the child is older, maybe six or seven years when adopted, the perhaps there is going to be some emotional conflict.

An older child is probably going to feel bad being adopted by people of a different race, and probably from his peers. If the child is much younger, younger than two years of age for example, they will probably be OK. It also depends on how much love and nurturance the family gives to that child.

Knowledge and Acceptance of Cultural Heritage

Another major theme that emerged from the interviews were social workers attitudes in regards to the necessity for adoptive parents to be educated, knowledgeable, and understanding of the child’s culture or race. Below are exemplars of these patterns.

I am for and against transracial adoption. I am for it if the adoptive parents are willing to educate and expose the child to their own culture and have an awareness of their heritage.

I would want to ensure that the prospective adoptive parents respect the child or children’s inherit culture and beliefs systems, that they incorporate that into their family lifestyle, discipline, and value system. So my concern would be that the prospective family would hopefully honor the child’s culture and allow that child to flourish with his or her culture.

I think it depends on what that child is being taught by the adoptive parents, and what they’re
inoculating that child with. Enlightening the child to the fact that there are families like this that exist and that not all families are the same color. The importance of the value of a family as opposed to what color you are. It really depends on what the child is being taught.

I think that some people may be concerned, that a family of a different ethnicity than the child may not be able to provide them with information about who they are and where they came from, in terms of their ethnicity. The parents should be able to teach them of the different atrocities or even success of that particular culture has had because they are not from that culture. Some opposition may be, well they can’t relate because of their from different culture and I think that’s a stereotype in itself.

Some concern might be that the child or children in question may not be able to provide them with knowledge and care of their heritage and their own culture. Another concern is that adoptive parents may impose their own culture and not give the child the opportunity to investigate and explore their own culture, which would have different values systems than the adoptive parents.

Families that are looking at doing this are not properly prepared and or naive. Some people come in with a color-blind attitude and that is not the way to go into it because the children will end up encountering the outside world perception of them, which could be problematic. I think that children would have a hard time dealing with the other kids as they grow older in terms of not being prepared or exposed and in some ways being sheltered by their adoptive parents, and their experiences being limited. Even though their parents may love them, care for them, and give them what they need, its important that they be exposed to a lot of things in terms of their own culture and people who look like them. During the home study process it’s important for the worker to explore the cultural and
developmental issues as well as how the prospective adoptive parents will cope with identity and cultural issues that may arise.

Racial Socialization.

The children would not be able to identify with their own race and that the adoptive parents would not be able to help them in developing the identity of that background. The children would kind of feel that fit is not there and they can feel a little different that its not a normal family. If one of the adoptive parents is of the same nationality of the child that would help. Its best for the child to be able to know their background and probably to fit in, not to stick out and feel like an outsider. I think it can be confusing for a child growing up in a home where no one looks like them. When they go to school, dealing with the other kids pointing out that they don’t look like their parents. Identity will also be an issue for them in adolescence. Identity is an issue for all adolescence including those who have been adopted as well as those who have been transracially adopted. I think that their experience might be somewhat comparable to each other. But again depending on how the adoptive parents have chosen to raise their child will significantly effect their perception of themselves and will determine their experience of how society perceives them.

It just depends if the parents are of both different races and there is one person who is of the same race I think it would help. I think it influences greatly their identity and finding out where they came from. They probably could adjust, I think it’s always in the back of their mind “I don’t know who I am or where I came from I don’t know about my culture.” A better scenario would be to have a least one parent from the same race and background. I think it does probably affect their self-esteem and their identity and their relationship with their peers if they’re not around children from the same background, nationality and race.
It varies for each family and it depends on how its handled by the parent and society I think that ultimately if it is handled in a positive way and their opportunities to be involved with their birth culture and people from their background that look similar to them, they can develop a positive identity and decide for themselves who they are. Parents need to be open and if they come in with a color-blind attitude then it will be harder for the child to have a positive experience. Children will have to deal with cues from society that can be hurtful to a child’s identity and parents need to be genuinely open to hear their child’s experiences.

I think that if you have a black child in a black family, and a white family, probably the black family would be more suitable because they have the same culture and some of the same values and the same beliefs that the child would have and grow up with so I think that maintaining that is important. However if that is not available, than I think that if there are families available who want the child, then they should be able to have them, if they are able to provide a safe and loving home for these kids.

I think its much harder to identify with who you are, who your culture is, or as a person in your culture if you don’t have that in your family so I think its important for people who are not of the same race or culture are able to provide that to children of a different culture in some way, I think that overall its harder and I think its harder because they grow up maybe not quite fitting in with the people who are like them and not quite fitting in with they have grown up with and I think that that makes it much harder. That they may have a brother that’s white and they may be black, which might be awkward for them and would make it harder for them.

Their concerns are that they probably won’t fit into the culture into the type of environment or maybe if the parents are from a different racial or ethnic background. That they might not be
sensitive to their child’s special needs. Or they might loose their culture from wherever they might be from and those types of issues could be raised.

Providing a Permanent and Stable Home

The theme of providing a permanent and stable home for the child was predominant throughout each social workers interview. They shared the belief that it is in the best interest of the child to be placed in an adoptive home, regardless of the parent’s race, rather than languish in the foster care system. Below are exemplars of these patterns.

To me, if I can place a child in a same race home I am going to do that whenever possible and I always support that for children, but the reality is it is not always possible. I guess my perspective come from working with children and families and working towards permanence for children.

My thinking is that permanence is first. If we can find a permanent home within the same race, that would be ideal.

I think that those who support transracial adoption believe that a child should go to a family that best meets their needs. That race should not be a factor in of itself, if it’s a loving family, which should be the main factor.

I guess I believe that children should have a home, that’s safe and permanent regardless of the race of the child or the adoptive parents.

Prevent Children from Languishing in Foster Care.

It’s in the best interest of the child to not flounder in the foster care system. The next best thing is to place them in a permanent
loving home, like I said educating and processing with these prospective adoptive families so that they understand and explore what it means to take that on. It’s a better outcome than for kids to be sitting in foster care.

Some of these children are going to linger in foster care rather than be adopted by a couple just because they’re not of the same race.

I would imagine that MEPA-IAP has improved things; it opens up a lot more placements for the children so that they don’t languish in foster care. They can go into adoptive homes that are available and willing, that are able to care for them rather than waiting for a certain ethnicity or race to match and then have to wait around for the best placement.

I think that it allows children to be adopted by anyone. I think that it keeps the agency from having children languish in foster care. And Keeps children out of foster care.

That all children should have a home and should not be left to languish in the foster care system because we can’t find a same race family for them, those people I don’t think understand what it is to grow up in foster care and what a horrible thing it is to not have anybody and to have a permanent family no matter what color they may be is so much better.

Meeting the Child Emotional Needs

Social Workers also expressed the importance of the parents meeting the child’s emotional needs by providing nurturance and love within a stable home. Again the social workers focused on the child’s best interests and felt that regardless of the parents race or ethnicity, providing the child with a loving and nurturing home was most important.

Ultimately I’m in favor of Transracial Adoption I believe that Its also a reality and necessity and that there can be positive outcomes for
children who are adopted transracially and that if its done with care and consideration the needs of the child and their identity can be looked after and prioritized.

I think that the critical part is that the child is loved and raised with good values to help prepare the child to be successful in life and have a decent life.

What I have heard from other social workers and the media is that they children don't feel really comfortable when adopted by someone from a different race.

So if you give love and nurturance to the child it is just like preparing a soldier for the difficult things they will have to endure and the difficulties and battles of life that he will have to face.

I have always just been concerned about children having homes and children having people who love them and take care of them and that has always just been my concern, whatever the controversy is or the objection that people have had, to do it this way or that way, I never really cared about that, I just have always cared about whatever kid was on my caseload and finding them some permanence and giving them a future, that's just what I have always just looked at.

**Potential Positive Outcomes of Multiethnic Placement Act-Interethnic Adoption Provision**

Most of the social workers believed that MEPA-IAP provides more opportunities for permanent placements to children of minority decent. The social workers felt that it is a viable form of legislation with the positive outcome of opening up more homes, which are greatly needed due to the growing numbers of children in the foster care system. Below are exemplars of these patterns.
I think it affects them in a positive way. There is a great need for more adoptive parents. [Multiethnic Placement Act] It encourages them and opens up to a greater range of potential parents. For parents who are seeking to adopt children on an international level, such as China and South America we should recruit these parents and encourage them to adopt children who are of different race that live in America.

I think it opens up more doors as far as more homes that they could be placed in, especially for older children that are hard to place.

I think it affords them a larger opportunity to be placed. It is my hope their placement is expedited by the fact that we can look beyond their own cultural heritage and that we are not limiting by race and color.

It sounds like a good thing because it helps promote adoption for kids who are waiting for an ethnic adoptive match family, but they may not be available. It would be helpful.

I think that it opens up more opportunities for more placements and I think that it discourages racial matching opportunities and possibly discourages minority parents from seeking adoption. I think MEPA is a reaction to the high numbers of minority children in the foster care system. We should also be looking at why we needed this legislation in the first place. ICWA demands that the Indian community is held above all, however other minorities do not have this legislation and in fact have the opposite in MEPA. MEPA is assimilation, good and bad.

Best Interests of the Child

Each social worker depicted the significance of looking after the child’s best interests. Although their beliefs and attitudes were unique, the underlying themes were similar. Below are exemplars of these patterns.
Specifically African American social workers have a uniform recommendation or attitude that a child that is African American they should be adopted only by an African American couple and I really think that if that could be done that’s fine but that its difficult to do or can’t be done and there are children out there who don’t have adoptive parents plus they can’t find qualified African American couples then they shouldn’t hesitate to let prospective adoptive parents of other races or cultures adopt children of different ethnic backgrounds. If a child can be adopted by a parent of the same ethnicity, that would be an ideal thing.

I am against it if it forces children to be alienated and treated as the adoptive child without consideration for their needs. I think that transracial adoption opens up a lot of homes, but we just have to be careful and realistic before placing a child.

Sounds like the law makes it so that social workers are prevented from placing a child solely on the basis of their ethnicity. That would be helpful, however, some social workers being human beings take it upon themselves to not place a child with a family of a different ethnicity, and I think that would be to the detriment to the child and to the system. The child is the most important thing.

I think that a child should be placed with any family that can fulfill the child’s physical and emotional needs, regardless of the color. So in other words, I think that a Hispanic child could be adopted by a black or a white family.

Don’t necessary have any beliefs about it other than the children should go to a family that best meets their needs in every manner.

Most of the time it’s not in the best interest of the child depending on the different situations. I think that children should be, as much as possible, placed in homes with the same
ethnic backgrounds. That also helps them develop a sense of identity.

Integration and Assimilation.

I guess the controversy is around, kids not being raised or validated in their own race or culture, but that is not always possible.

They struggle with the concept of assimilation, cultural assimilation

Concerns.

Controversy stems from people feeling that children are not placed in same race homes, that the child will loose their identity. In CPS, ICWA becomes an issue with them wanting to preserve their culture and their identity. That comes with all cultures, I think all people want to preserve their cultures and that is where the controversy stems.
CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

The major purpose of our study was to explore social worker’s beliefs and attitudes in regards to transracial adoption. Three major concepts emerged from the interview data in this qualitative study: 1) Social Workers looked at transracial adoption as a viable option for children needing permanent homes; 2) The social workers shared a concern or need for the child’s own cultural identity development to be acknowledged and supported within the adoptive family; and 3) MEPA-IAP was perceived as opening more doors and providing more opportunities to minority children in need of permanent homes.

One of the social workers perception of transracial adoption as a viable option was stated in her interview. She felt that "all children should have a home and should not be left to languish in the foster care system because we can’t find a same race family for them, people I don’t think understand what it is to grow up in foster care and what a horrible thing it is to not have anybody, and to have a permanent family no matter what color they may be is so much better." All of the social workers believed that transracial adoption was more beneficial for
children, rather than languishing in the foster care system.

All of the social workers felt strongly about advocating for the child's right to develop and maintain their own racial identity. A social worker presented the importance of evaluating the potential parents ability to understand and accept the child's identity as she expressed, "during the homestudy process it's important for the worker to explore the cultural and developmental issues as well as how the perspective adoptive parents will cope with identity and cultural issues that may arise." This issue brings up the importance of evaluating and assessing the adoptive parents potential and ability to raise a child from a different ethnic background.

Overall, all of the social workers felt that MEPA-IAP provides for more permanent homes and opportunities for minority children to be adopted. Although the social workers believed that same race placement would be ideal and most beneficial to the child, more often then not, this is not feasible due to the lack of adoptive parents from minority backgrounds. One social worker felt that MEPA-IAP "opens up more doors as far as more homes that they could be placed in, especially older children that are hard to be placed."
Due to the qualitative nature of our study, we were able to successfully explore the attitudes and perceptions of social workers towards transracial adoption. Although Carter-Black's (2002) article takes a stance against transracial adoption, our study is similar to hers in that both studies found that the "child's best interest" played a key role in the decision-making process of social workers.

Feigelman's (2000) study looked at the question of whether a transracially adopted child, loses their cultural identity. His study found that the adoptive parents' decision regarding where to live substantially impacted their transracially adopted children's adjustment. Children that lived in racially mixed neighborhoods were able to thrive better. Feigelman's study supports our study in regards to the recognition of the importance of exposure and socialization for children who are transracially adopted.

Due to the qualitative nature of the study, we were able to provide a platform for social workers to express their feelings about transracial adoption and the implications of the legislation supporting it. As Feigelman (2000) suggests, frontline workers exert considerable influence over the implementation of policies
and procedures, and exploring the issues and concerns surrounding transracial adoption from the perspective of frontline workers has brought insight into what motivates social worker's service delivery.

An unanticipated result to our findings included a strong perspective that, if and when possible, social workers preferred same race adoption. However, in recognition that this is not always possible, the social workers we interviewed were in favor of transracial adoption if the family would be able to meet the child's emotional, racial and cultural needs.

Limitations of the Study

One limitation took place during the recruitment phase of this study. Some social workers were guarded when asked to participate in the study. They questioned the audiotaping as being the primary collection instrument and were concerned about confidentiality.

Another limitation we encountered was during the recruitment phase. We were confronted with a low response to our flyers asking for participants. We were able to overcome this limitation by asking face to face for participants.
Recommendations for Social Worker Practice Policy and Research

Further research in the areas of social worker’s perceptions and attitudes can play a vital role not only in the area of transracial adoption, but in other areas as well. Understanding what drives social workers’ decision making in the field is relevant when ascertaining the overall outcomes of removal and placement of children.

Understanding the implications of social workers’ beliefs and value systems, as they impact their service delivery, is crucial to the understanding of how social policy is carried out at the frontline level. In the area of transracial adoption, specifically, it is helpful and insightful to hear and understand what motivates social workers to place or not place a child as well as what they determine to be in the best interest of the child.

Conclusions

Overall, the conclusion of our study focuses on the idea of what is in the best interests of the child. The social workers interviewed stated that they understand that there is a need for more permanent homes for children due to the high numbers of children in foster care. They also stated that they understand that “matching” children to adoptive parents from their same ethnic background is
not always possible due to the low numbers of minority adoptive parents and placements. And, in recognition of the lack of placements which "match" the child's ethnic or cultural background, legislation such as MEPA-IAP provides more opportunities for children to be placed in permanent homes rather than leaving them to languish in the foster care system.

Overall, the social workers interviewed in this study, were able to share their feelings, beliefs, views, and attitudes towards transracial adoption. Each social worker recognized the need for more permanent placements for children as well as their right to develop and sustain their own cultural identity.
APPENDIX A

QUESTIONNAIRE
INTERVIEW QUESTION

1. Can you describe some of your beliefs and attitudes towards the issue of transracial adoption?

2. What do you think the concerns are for those who oppose transracial adoption?

3. What do you think the concerns are for those who support transracial adoption?

4. How do you think transracial adoption affects the racial identity development of a child?

5. Are you familiar with the Multiethnic Placement Act?

6. How do you think the Multiethnic Placement Act affects minority children and their families?

7. Please describe your understanding of the controversy surrounding transracial adoption?
APPENDIX B

INFORMED CONSENT
Informed Consent

I am asked to participate in this research study that is designed to explore the perceptions and attitudes of social workers towards transracial adoption. This study is being conducted by Karla Carranza and Nicol Stolar, graduate students of social work at California State University at San Bernardino under the direct supervision of Dr. Tom Davis, Professor at California State University at Bernardino. This study has been approved by the Department of Social Work Human Subject Review Board, California State University, San Bernardino.

In this study I will be asked about my age, ethnicity, educational background, and my duration of years employed as a social worker. I will also be asked 5 open-ended questions during the interview. The interview process will take approximately 25-30 minutes. The interview will be audio taped and the interviewer will take notes throughout the interview.

I understand my participation in this study will be totally voluntary. I can refuse to participate in, or withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. I also understand that I do not have to answer any question that I may not wish to answer. When I am done with the interview process, I will be given a debriefing statement. I will also receive $5 upon completion of the interview and the signed informed consent form.

I understand that a benefit of participating in this study include the exploration and understanding of social workers perceptions and attitudes towards transracial adoption. I also understand that a possible risk of participating in this study may include any issues I might have in regards to transference, and projection. I understand that the debriefing statement will provide a referral to a counseling agency if I feel distressed, so that I may contact them.

If I have any questions about the study, I can contact Dr. Tom Davis at California State University, San Bernardino, the Department of Social Work, 500 University Parkway, San Bernardino, California 92407 or call him at (909)550-5100.

By placing a check mark in the box below, I acknowledge that I have been informed of, and that I understand, the nature and purpose of the study, and I freely consent to participate. I also acknowledge that I am at least 18 years of age.

☐ Please place a check mark in the box

__________________________
Date
Debriefing Statement

The study you have just completed was designed to explore the perceptions and attitudes of social workers towards transracial adoption. Thank-you for participating in this exploratory study: and for not discussing the contents of the survey with other people.

If you feel uncomfortable or distressed as a result of participating in the study, you are advised to contact Riverside Crisis Counseling and Referrals 24hr Service at (909)686-4357 or http://www.co.riverside.ca.us/help.asp.

If you would like the results of this study, they will be made available at California State University San Bernardino in the Pfau Library. The university phone number is (909)880-5000.
REFERENCES


This was a two-person project where authors collaborated throughout. However, for each phase of the project, certain authors took primary responsibility. These responsibilities were assigned in the manner listed below.

1. Data Collection:
   Assigned Leader: Karla Carranza
   Assisted By: Nicol Stolar

2. Data Entry and Analysis:
   Team Effort: Karla Carranza & Nicol Stolar

3. Writing Report and Presentation of Findings:
   a. Introduction and Literature
      Assigned Leader: Karla Carranza
      Assisted By: Nicol Stolar
   b. Methods
      Assigned Leader: Nicol Stolar
      Assisted By: Karla Carranza
   c. Results
      Team Effort: Karla Carranza & Nicol Stolar
   d. Discussion
      Assigned Leader: Nicol Stolar
      Assisted By: Karla Carranza