

California State University, San Bernardino

CSUSB ScholarWorks

Theses Digitization Project

John M. Pfau Library

2013

Transracial adoptions: Common challenges and needed resources

Jennifer Deneen SeLegue

Stephanie Agnes Siringoringo

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



Part of the [Family, Life Course, and Society Commons](#), [Race and Ethnicity Commons](#), and the [Social Work Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

SeLegue, Jennifer Deneen and Siringoringo, Stephanie Agnes, "Transracial adoptions: Common challenges and needed resources" (2013). *Theses Digitization Project*. 3980.
<https://scholarworks.lib.csusb.edu/etd-project/3980>

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.

TRANSRACIAL ADOPTIONS: COMMON CHALLENGES
AND NEEDED RESOURCES

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
Jennifer Deneen SeLegue
Stephanie Agnes Siringoringo
June 2013


TRANSRACIAL ADOPTIONS: COMMON CHALLENGES
AND NEEDED RESOURCES

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


by
Jennifer Deneen SeLegue
Stephanie Agnes Siringoringo

June 2013

Approved by:


Dr. Ray E. Liles, Faculty Supervisor
Social Work

6/4/13
Date


Sherie Dechter, LCSW, Adoption Program
Supervisor, Kinship Center


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

ABSTRACT

The following research project sought to identify common challenges and needed resources for families who had adopted transracially. Face-to-face interviews were conducted on two separate occasions with parents who had adopted transracially utilizing Kinship Center services. Interviews were conducted with 17 parents who had adopted children of a different race than themselves.

The most commonly identified challenge identified by participants was the difference in physical appearance between the adoptee and themselves. Additional challenges included cultural challenges, differences in cultural cuisine, and challenges in identifying with their child's culture of origin.

Needed resources identified in this study were cultural classes, mentoring programs for adoptees, support groups for adoptees, and cooking classes among others. The researchers identified the need for further research as transracial adoptions are becoming more common. Specific areas of further research include: research with older adopted children, research with same-sex couples who adopt transracially, and the

differences between experienced challenges in adoptions of various parent-child racial couplings.

Systems theory and Multiculturalism theory were the guiding theory for this study as the initial goal of this project was to evaluate and explore common challenges and needed resources within the family and community systems of transracial adoptees.

The results of this study may lead to further program development in the training courses for families adopting transracially. The research data will also contribute to the social work body of research with a specified emphasis on transracial adoptions.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We would like to first acknowledge our Faculty Advisor, Dr. Ray Liles, who guided us through this research project. We would also like to acknowledge Cathy Stone and Sherie Dechter from Kinship Center for allowing us access to their monthly support meetings so that we were able to conduct our interviews. Most importantly, we would like to acknowledge the parents who participated in our study, as they provided relevant data that will assist in building the body of research in the area of transracial adoptions.

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this research project to my husband, Phillip. For all of the countless hours that you listened without complaint about this project, for all of the nights and weekends that you patiently allowed me to write and transcribe and for all of your love and support that you give me every single day. You are truly my best friend, confidant and other half. I love you.

Jennifer SeLegue

I want to dedicate this research project to my family who has supported me through this long journey. I want to especially thank my mom for believing in me, for encouraging me, for putting up with my craziness, for loving me, and accepting me the way that I am. To you, I owe everything.

Stephanie Siringoringo

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	iii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	v
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	
Problem Statement	1
Purpose of the Study	5
Significance of the Project for Social Work	8
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW	
Introduction	10
Terminology and Transracial Adoption	11
Multiethnic Placement Act (MEPA)	13
Trends	14
Transracial Adoption and Same Sex Couples	16
Social Workers' Attitudes towards Transracial Adoptions	19
Transracial Identity in Adoptive Children	20
Cultural Socialization	23
Addressing Racism	25
The Link between Religion and Transracial Adoptions	27
Needed Resources	28
Theories Guiding Conceptualization	32
Summary	35
CHAPTER THREE: METHODS	
Introduction	36

Study Design	36
Sampling	38
Data Collection and Instruments	40
Procedures	41
Protection of Human Subjects	43
Data Analysis	45
Summary	47
CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS	
Introduction	48
Demographics	48
Identified Challenges	49
Difference in Outside Appearance	49
Food	51
Language	51
Addressing Racial Differences	53
Other Identified Challenges	54
Intention to Adopt Transracially	55
Personal Gratification	57
Helpful Resources Utilized	59
Needed Resources	60
Cooking Classes Based on Various Cultures	61
Courses on Culture	61
Beauty Tips	62
Mentoring	63

Support Group for Kids	63
No Identified Needed Resources	64
Summary	65
CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION	
Introduction	67
Challenges	67
Needed Resources	69
Further Research	72
Conclusions	73
APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW GUIDE	75
APPENDIX B: INFORMED CONSENT	77
APPENDIX C: INFORMED CONSENT FORM FOR NON-MEDICAL HUMAN SUBJECTS	79
APPENDIX D: DEBRIEFING STATEMENT	81
REFERENCES	83
ASSIGNED RESPONSIBILITIES PAGE	86

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Problem Statement

Transracial adoptions in the foster care system are becoming increasingly more frequent. Foster family agencies and adoption agencies argue that adoption is the most effective plan for many foster children who otherwise would be moving through multiple foster homes in a short period of time (Videl de Haymes & Simon, 2003).

Previous research has shown that there are many professionals that support transracial adoptions as well as those who do not support matching foster children with adoptive families of a different race or ethnicity (Perry, 2011). However, children of color in the foster care system outnumber the families of color that are looking to adopt (Videl de Haymes & Simon, 2003). In their study, Videl de Haymes and Simon interviewed twenty youth who were adopted into families of a different race. They attempted to identify the primary challenges in regards to transracial adoptions, resources the family thought were beneficial, and areas child welfare workers

needed to focus on when trying to work with transracial adoption cases.

Statistics show that there are more African-American children in the foster care system than any other race or ethnicity (Quiroz, 2008). There are also more Caucasian families willing to adopt children from the foster care system than any other race or ethnicity (Quiroz, 2008). Therefore, African American children are being raised in predominantly White neighborhoods and predominantly White schools and, as a result, are having a more difficult time identifying with their own race and culture (Videl de Haymes & Simon, 2003).

The most common problem identified in transracial adoptions was visibility. The parents stated that the physical appearance difference, primarily skin color, led the public and family members asking questions out of curiosity. Other identified issues in the study included: place of residence, schools, and attempting to make sure that their children were able to identify with other people of their race (Videl de Haymes & Simon, 2003).

Transracial adoption is occurring more frequently for a number of reasons. Quiroz (2008) stated in her research that the high cost and difficulty of private

adoptions led families to consider adoption through the child welfare system.

Transracial adoption became popular in the United States during WWII when Korean and Japanese children were being adopted by Americans (Perry, 2011). However, problems began to arise when the National Association of Black Social Workers spoke out against transracial adoption in a public statement in 1972. Although the Multi-Ethnic Placement Act (MEPA), implemented in 1994, was designed to break down the common barriers preventing transracial adoptions, what MEPA failed to do was identify the challenges transracial families would encounter post adoption (Videl de Haymes & Simon, 2003).

The racial views of adoptive parents have been rarely explored (Crolley-Simic & Vonk, 2011). Although more Caucasian families adopt than any other race in the United States (Quiroz, 2008), little has been researched in regard to why they choose to adopt transracially, if the challenges were discussed with them prior to adopting, or what specific challenges they are facing due to the dynamics of their transracial family. These parents are often unaware of how to socialize their transracial children to identify with their own race

(Crolley-Simic & Vonk, 2011). It is also noted in their research that Caucasians do not identify with their race in the same way that people of color identify with theirs. Therefore, it is important that families who plan to adopt transracially receive an education on their child's heritage and learn the importance of identifying to their child's race.

Butler-Sweet (2011) discovered that many Black adoptees residing in White homes, wanted to remain close with their Black relatives. Although Black adoptees' parents were all loving in middle-upper class neighborhoods, they still wanted to remain connected to their cousins, grandparents and other relatives living in lower socioeconomic neighborhoods. Participants found that although their adoptive parents were trying to identify with Black culture they identified incorrectly with the hip hop culture instead (Butler-Sweet, 2011). This study will attempt to fill the gap where research is currently lacking so that parents are better able to identify with their adopted children's culture so that children will be better able to establish an identity with their own race and within their new family simultaneously.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to identify common challenges families encounter when adopting a child of a different race and/or ethnicity than themselves. Hughes, Peters, and Tatum (as cited in Butler-Sweet, 2011) indicate race is commonly identified as a significant factor of how a person identifies themselves in society. When children are adopted into a family where the members do not share their same race and/or ethnicity, they have a more difficult time fitting in at school and feeling like they have a secure place in society (Butler-Sweet, 2011). Transracial adoptions are estimated to be approximately 1%-4% of domestic adoptions and are rapidly increasing (Quiroz, 2008). Therefore, this project intended to research the challenges of identity as well as to discover unknown challenges that transracial adoption presents for the family and the adoptee, as the number of transracial adoptions continues to increase.

It is important to identify challenges and needed resources for transracial adoptees and their families as there is significant research indicating the imbalance of children of color available for adoption and a decreasing number of minority families willing to adopt. "National

figures indicate that approximately 59% of children awaiting adoption are of color. This number dramatically surpasses the number of available minority adoptive homes" (Vidal de Haymes & Simon, 2003, p. 253).

The findings of this study will better assist various adoption agencies to prepare families for potential issues regarding transracial adoptions. As transracial adoptions increase, social workers continue to be more interested in the topic and its effectiveness (Perry, 2011). By identifying common issues that occur when adopting transracially, social workers can be more prepared to deal with the issues as they arise. As social workers become more aware of the unique issues that arise with transracial adoption, they will be able to recommend resources to potential adoptees and potential adoptive parents. New policies may be created requiring specific training for parents who are adopting a child of a different race and/or heritage. These policies will be suggested for implementation as part of foster care adoptions orientation as well as non-profit adoptions orientation. Specialized trainings on the challenges of transracial adoptions may be created and available to

prospective adoptive families and social workers working in the foster care and adoption field.

The research design that this study utilized was a qualitative one that utilized in-depth face-to-face interviews. The researchers created a list of open ended questions that were asked to 17 different parents who have adopted children of a different race or ethnicity. The study sought to interview couples, and single parents who had adopted transracially. The parents were asked questions regarding the specific challenges and needed resources in the field of transracial adoptions.

Participants for the study were recruited from Kinship Center, a private adoption agency in Redlands, to facilitate their adoptions. The sampling method utilized was purposive sampling. Although purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling method, it was the most effective for this qualitative study as interviewees were chosen based on if they adopted transracially and if they were willing to participate in the study. This allowed the Kinship Center director to personally identify couples who wished to participate in the study. Sampling criteria was: 1). Parents who have adopted children of a different race or ethnicity.

Significance of the Project for Social Work

The need to conduct this study stemmed from the researchers' desire to identify challenges faced by parents of transracial adoption. Findings of this study may contribute to discovering additional solutions as to how these challenges can be addressed. Moreover, results of this study will potentially contribute to social work practice as it will provide social workers with a greater knowledge base of the needs and challenges of parents who adopt transracially, and in doing so, allowing them to better serve this population. This research study may also guide potential social work policies requiring specialized trainings aimed specifically at dealing with issues of transracial adoption (TRA) and providing parents with tools to navigate such challenges. These much needed tools will help TRA parents with the challenge of raising a child that shares a race different than that of their own in a society that may not be understanding. Furthermore, this study will contribute to social work by hopefully filling in any gaps in current research regarding TRA. At the very least, this study will contribute to the existing body of literature which

emphasizes the need to address the challenges of parents who participate in TRA.

This research study utilizes the assessment phase of the generalist intervention model, as it gives a close evaluation of the challenges of parents of TRA. This study is relevant to child welfare practice as the topic of TRA is common within the foster care system. becoming more knowledgeable of the potential challenges of TRA can help better assist social workers to help navigate TRA placements and increase the number of transracial adoptions through the foster care system. This study aimed to identify the challenges that adoptive parents face when adopting transracially through the foster care system.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

A review of the professional literature focusing on common trends, issues and needed services is presented in this chapter. The chapter is divided into multiple sections addressing historical context, current trends, common issues, and needed services pertaining to transracial adoptions. The subsections are: Multiethnic Placement Act (MEPA), trends, transracial, and same sex couples, social workers' attitudes towards transracial adoption, transracial identity in adoptive children, cultural socialization, addressing racism, the link between religion and transracial adoption, and needed resources. The chapter ends with the section describing the Systems Theory and Multiculturalism, which guided the conceptualization of this research project.

Several studies have documented identity issues, cultural socialization issues, visibility issues, and needed resources for families who adopt transracially. Both for the adoptees and for the adoptive parents, blending culture becomes a difficult and often undirected

task. For the purpose of this research project, identifying common challenges and needed resources for families will be the primary focus.

Terminology and Transracial Adoption

Transracial adoption has been referred to by a number of different names such as interracial adoption, multiracial adoption, transcultural adoption, and mixed-race adoption. These terms are often used interchangeably to refer to adoptions that occur between parents and adoptive children of different race or ethnic backgrounds. In the past, terms such as 'interracial' or 'mixed-race' involved negative connotations and were given new names that often provided the same meaning ('biracial'). Cross-racial adoption is now referred to as transracial adoption (Quiroz, 2008). For brevity and purposes of this research study, and in an effort related to sensitivity and consideration of what is appropriate and acceptable, we will refer to adoption between children and parents that share difference race or ethnic backgrounds as transracial adoption (TRA).

Race, culture, and ethnicity are very closely related and entangled, and are worthy of examination in

the context of transracial adoption. According to Dein (2006), "The term race generally refers to the social group a person belongs to on account of a mix of physical characteristics; whereas, ethnicity refers to the social group a person belongs to based on a shared culture" (p. 68). Nagel described culture as family roles; communication patterns; affective styles; and values regarding personal control, individualism, collectivism, and spirituality, and religiosity (as cited in Murray, Smith, & Hill, 2001, p. 912). "Culture is a way of life, it affects the way a person behaves, sees and processes things, and how they make decisions." Serrano and Hou (as cited in in Murray, Smith & Hill, 2001, p. 913). Race, culture, and ethnicity are enmeshed and often times it becomes difficult to differentiate between the three. People who share the same culture may share different race and ethnicities, and people of same race and ethnicity may share totally different cultures. In transracial adoption it is important to take these differences into consideration as it lends a hand to understanding the family dynamics through the TRA process and may contribute to addressing the challenges of these families.

Multiethnic Placement Act (MEPA)

The Multiethnic Placement Act was enacted in 1994. The goal of MEPA was to decrease the amount of time for children of color awaiting placement. The act prohibited agencies from only placing children with foster parents and adoptive parents who were the same race/culture as the children. If the agency was supported financially by the federal government they were instructed to place the child in the first available placement that met the safety and resource needs of the child, eliminating race as an issue for placement. If agencies were found to be discriminating placement opportunities based on race alone, they could be penalized financially by the federal government. Under MEPA, states were also encouraged to recruit prospective adoptive parents of various races, ethnicities and cultures (Anyon, 2010).

In 1996, MEPA was revised to eliminate the requirement that foster and adoptive parents complete cultural competency courses prior to bringing a child into their home. These revisions were called the Interethnic Adoption Provisions (IEAP). The provisions also emphasized that if a home was found to meet the needs of the child, the child would be placed in the home

regardless of race and/or ethnicity. The goal was to eliminate the bias of social workers who would avoid placing children of color with White adoptive parents and place the child in a permanent home as quickly as possible (Anyon, 2010).

Trends

Exploring the trends of transracial adoption in the United States can help shed light on this area of research. Jacobson, Nielsen, and Hardmen (2012) studied family trends among those who adopted transracially utilizing the 5% Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS) of the 2000 census and the National Survey of Adoptive Parents (NSAP). PUMS provided a sample size of 103, 827 adoptive parents and a respective 2,089 sample was obtained from the NSAP. Compared to similar studies in the past, the large sample size utilized in this study allowed for a more comprehensive investigation of social and demographic characteristics of those who adopt transracially, which served as a methodological strength.

Jacobson et al. (2012) found that parents of Asian adoptees have the highest income levels, while parents that adopted Black children have the lowest income

levels. The study also found that military service and the region of the country in which a person lived were other factors which were related to parents of TRA. Those who have military experience were 50% more likely to adopt transracially than those who did not have prior military service. A possible reason for this may be attributed to the exposure that the military provides to different cultures and people. Another finding was the considerably lower rate of transracial adoptions in the South compared to other regions of the country. It is likely that the South's conservative values, along with its strong views against interracial dating and marriage play a significant role in transracial adoption practices amongst adoptive parents (Jacobson et al., 2012).

The Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) of 1978 must be noted when discussing transracial adoption. The government enacted the act so that the culture of Native American Children would be preserved when adoption was the necessary care decision (Limb, Chance, & Brown, 2004). ICWA is important to note because it has justified the importance of culture similarities and preservation as it pertains to adoption, an ideal that has since been

abandoned by other cultures within the child welfare system.

Transracial Adoption and Same Sex Couples

Farr and Patterson (2009) studied transracial adoptions by lesbian, gay, and heterosexual couples and the outcomes of these adoptions. This study is noteworthy for the gap it fills in the lack of research addressing child development and family outcomes in transracial adoptive families that include gay, lesbian, and heterosexual parents. Participants from this study were recruited through five adoption agencies and consisted of 212 parent families and 106 children. Children's behavioral adjustment was assessed using the Child Behavior Checklist (CBCL) as well as the Teacher Report Form (TRF). Parenting stress levels were evaluated through the use of the Parenting Stress Index-Short Form (PSI/SF). The study found that there were no significant differences in adjustment between transracial and interracial adoptive families. Other findings of the study revealed that same-sex couples were more likely to be in interracial relationships, and were more likely to adopt transracially. The results of this study

demonstrated the ability for children to thrive in both transracial homes and homes parented by same-sex couples; settings, which in the past, has been argued to be harmful placements for adoptive children. Adoption agencies, as well as counties would benefit by taking note of this information to promote further transracial and same-sex parent adoptions to help mitigate the great number of children who are waiting to be placed in a home.

In today's society, falling outside of what is common, or dominant, can engender experiences of discrimination and judgment. Due to "stigmas associated with racial/ethnic minorities, sexual minorities, and adoptive families, multiracial lesbian parent families have to contend with multiple forms of stigma" (Richardson & Goldberg, 2010, p. 341). Richardson and Goldberg explored the challenges along with strengths that transracial adoptive lesbian parents had and ways in which they overcame their challenges. Richardson and Goldberg employed a qualitative study using interviews with 20 White lesbian couples (40 women) who adopted transracially. The interviews were conducted before adoptive placement and months after adoptive placements.

Richardson and Goldberg found that the women had concerns about raising their children in a White privileged society and having their family face discrimination. At the same time, many women also expressed their unique strengths in coping with stigma due to their experiences facing discrimination because of their sexual orientation. Many also found strength in their communities that embraced diversity which could benefit their children with navigating future challenges and experiences of stigma and discrimination. Many women felt that the adoption process built upon their resiliency and their understanding of diversity. A limitation of the study was the small sample size which does not allow the findings to be generalized to all White lesbian couples who adopt transracially. One of the strengths of the study is that it was conducted longitudinally which allowed for a more comprehensive view of the participants' experience before and after adoption. A notable part of the study was the examination at the intersectionality of lesbian women adopting transracially, and how the multiple forms of stigma they face may in fact serve as strength.

Social Workers' Attitudes towards Transracial Adoptions

Despite the advancements that the United States has made in its sustained struggle and fight against racism, the practice of transracial adoptions remains controversial. Fenster (2004) conducted a study in which social workers in the United States were asked about their attitudes toward transracial adoptions, which in this study is defined as African American children being adopted by White parents. The study distributed questionnaires, and 363 were received and analyzed. Overall, social workers were more optimistic than pessimistic about TRA. Fenster found that both African American and White social workers had more positive attitudes toward transracial adoption when they were more optimistic about race relations. White social workers' optimism about race relations was inversely related to their levels of conservatism. For African American social workers, less support for TRA was inversely related to their commitment to promulgate Black awareness (Fenster, 2004).

A notable finding from the study demonstrated that race relations are the key predictor of White social

worker's views toward TRA. The study also deduced that Black social workers were more likely to support TRA if "high priority is placed on insuring that African American adoptees are provided with meaningful opportunities to develop their cultural identity" (Fenster, 2004, p. 64). The strengths of this study include the use of a random national sample and the high response rate which allowed for the generalizability of the findings. A limitation is possible self-selection bias as respondents were alike in gender and geographic region, with a greater percentage of White social worker respondents. Implications of the study suggest that greater optimism regarding race relations will improve all social worker's support of TRA mandates which will hopefully lead to more placements for waiting children in the foster care system-contributing to the well-being and stability of children and families.

Transracial Identity in Adoptive Children

Butler-Sweet (2011) stated that the primary issue African American children face when being adopted by White families is that they lose their identity. She found that the racial slurs and criticism that African

American children dealt with were met with confusion. The problem furthered when White parents did not counter act the criticism with the positive racial messages that African American parents would provide. The second problem that Butler -Sweet identified was that class had not been evaluated as a challenging factor in transracial adoptions. She argued that class had an impact on children because primarily adoptive families were middle to upper class families. Lower class families were not well represented in adoptions.

In her study, Butler-Sweet (2011) wanted to find out if Black youth identity was affected when the children were adopted by White middle-class families. The goal of the study was to determine whether or not race and class overlapped when transracially adopted Black youth were placed in homes outside of their race and class. She interviewed 32 Black adults between the ages of 18-30 who grew up in transracial, monoracial, or biracial families who identified as middle-upper class families making over \$100,000 per year. The findings of her study indicated that although adoptive parents made efforts to keep Black children connected to their African American heritage,

the larger emphasis was put on remaining a part of the middle-upper class sector.

Lee (2003) found that the 244 participants, who identified themselves as transracial adoptees, also stated that they felt secure in their racial identities. However, approximately half of the same participants stated that they felt uncomfortable with their appearance in their racial community. A national survey conducted in 1994, also cited by Lee (2003), indicated that out of 289 transracial adoptees, "(41%) reported frequent feelings of racial pride, some (20%) wished they were a different race, and very few (3%) felt frequently ashamed or embarrassed of their racial backgrounds" (Lee, 2003, p. 718).

Lee (2003) suggests that racial identity in transracial adoptees may have less to do with the culture/ethnicity that they are adopted into and more to do with the age and developmental level children are at when they are adopted. To support this hypothesis, Lee references a study (McRoy & Zurcher, 1983) in which transracial adoptees who were adopted at an older age identified with their birth culture more than transracial adoptees who were adopted at a younger age.

Cultural Socialization

Previous research indicates that parents of transracial adoptees focused more on assimilating their children into the family's culture rather than point out the differences in the adoptee's culture and the family's culture (Lee, 2003). The same was indicated in terms of parenting behaviors. Parents were more likely to act as if there was no difference of culture and no unique attributes to culture within the family. Perhaps, by acting as if there were no differences between the cultures parents could pretend that the differences between themselves and their adopted children simply did not exist. However, to some professionals assimilating the adoptee's birth culture into the family's culture or majority culture is not seen as a negative ideal. In fact, as cited by Lee (2003), many transracial adoptees who have assimilated and accepted their adoptive parents cultural identities are more easily able to connect with the majority cultural.

Examination of the levels of adjustment between transracial adoptees and same-race adoptees have shown that there has not been significant differences between the two groups (Burrow & Finley, 2004). However, many

researchers still question whether adoptive parents can facilitate positive adjustment for adopted children despite racial differences. Although self-esteem and firm racial identity are essential to developmental outcomes, others argue that areas such as academic performance, familial relationships, and problem behaviors are just as vital (Courtney, 1997; Hayes, 1993)

Burrow and Finley (2004) investigated the levels of adjustment for transracial and same-race adoptees using a multi-measure approach. Four parent-child racial groupings of same-race and transracial adoptions (White adolescents adopted by White parents, Black adolescents adopted by White parents, Black adolescents adopted by Black parents, and Asian adolescents adopted by White parents) were assessed in 12 adjustment measures of academic, familial, psychological, and health outcomes. Burrow and Finley applied the Wave I in-home interview of the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health to their sample size of 609 adoptees. Findings of the study remained consistent with previous studies: transracial and same-race adoptees' measures of adjustment were comparable and void of any significant differences. An interesting finding of the study found that Black

adolescents who were adopted by same-race parents reported having the highest level of depression, although, interestingly, Black adoptees reported higher levels of self-worth than their counterparts. The multi-measure approach utilized by Burrow and Finley was a great strength for their study because it allowed for a more comprehensive analysis of adolescent adjustment in multiple parent-child racial groupings-a method that has not been employed in studies in this area. A limitation of the study was the small size of two of the parent-child racial groupings which may have lessened the statistical reliability of the study.

Addressing Racism

Transracial adoption creates a situation in which different cultures are brought into one home. A challenge that adoptive parents often have in raising their children is having the responsibility of "racial enculturation and inculcation" of their transracially adopted children (Smith, Juarez, & Jacobson, 2011, p. 1195). In a study that investigated White parents who adopted Black children, Smith, Juarez, and Jacobson (2011) examined whether these parents could teach Black

children how to understand and cope with racism. The study utilized interviews with White adoptive parents and their Black adoptive children and consisted of questions regarding experiences and perspectives regarding race, racism, and racial identity (Smith, Juarez, & Jacobson, 2011).

Three themes of cultural socialization practices emerged which Smith et al. categorized as: celebrating diversity, caretaking Whites, and getting along with Whites. Celebrating diversity referred to feeling positively about racial differences. Caretaking Whites was the idea of suppressing ones needs in response to racial discrimination and instead, serving the needs of Whites to help them learn about race and racism. Getting along with Whites promoted a peaceful heart and the avoidance of hostility or anger towards Whites when experiencing racial maltreatment. A notable finding in the study by Smith et al. was despite the goodwill of these White parents, they unknowingly propagated the structures of racial discrimination. They were teaching about a race that they were not familiar with, and through a lens and perspective of White privilege. Smith et al. argued that White parents are not equipped with

the knowledge, experience, or perspective to provide their Black children with the tools to support them in their struggle over racism.

The Link between Religion and Transracial Adoptions

Although the present study on transracial adoptions will focus on transracial adoption through the foster care system, the challenges that persist with international transracial adoption are often similar. Crolley-Simic and Vonk (2010) conducted research on the attitudes about race from parents who adopted transracially and internationally. What made their study unique was that during the interview process with eight adoptive mothers, the researchers paid special attention to the mothers' use of the reference to religion. Questions were asked in regards to culture and religion and what amount the mother's felt that culture and religion had on their own parenting styles. Although it appears that parents who adopt transracially do not see race as a defining identity for their adoptive children, it may be having an adverse effect on the adoptive children. These children often lose their racial identity

and have difficulty connecting to their culture of origin and their adoptive culture.

Perry (2011) examined the idea that those who were religious were more likely to tolerate and/or participate in transracial adoptions. Perry used a survey method administered by the Gallop Organization. The questions asked for personal opinions of issues pertaining to transracial marriage and transracial adoption and 1,721 surveys were completed. The results matched Perry's initial hypothesis that churches with a higher mixed race population were more likely to approve of transracial adoptions than those with a higher same race population. The final conclusions of Perry's study in regard to interracial families, marriages and adoptions found that "Whites who are younger, more educated, female, more committed to their religious faith (opposed to the nominally religious), do not live in the South, and who already express trust in other races tend to be more supportive of TRA" (Perry, 2011, p. 864).

Needed Resources

Social work literature suggest the need for adoptive parents to attend classes that specialize in

transracial adoptions and cultural competence, although, there is very little documentation of these trainings for adoptive parents (Vonk & Angaran, 2003). A study employed by Vonk and Angaran (2003) evaluated the trainings provided by private and public adoptions agencies in the United States. The study revealed that about half of public and private adoption agencies who facilitated transracial adoptions offered cultural competency classes. Surveys were sent out to private and public adoption agencies across the United States pertaining to the agency's offered services and classes which aim to prepare parents in transracial adoptions. The surveys yielded a sample of 196 qualified agencies for the study. Most of the trainings consisted of lectures, discussions, group exercises, curriculum packages, state mandated content areas, and trainers' personal experiences. A notable finding of the study revealed the overall advantage of adopting transracially through private adoption agencies versus public adoption agencies. These benefits included greater likelihood of offered trainings, trainings specifically dedicated to transracial adoptive parents, trainings and support post adoption, and more highly educated trainers. A great

strength of the study is the gap it fills in the lack of existing research regarding classes specialized in transracial adoptions. A limitation of the study is the low response rate received which prevents the conclusions of this study to be generalized.

Critics of TRA have argued that White parents who adopt transracially are not equipped to offer sufficient contact and connection to their birth culture or do not understand the racism their children will face (Diller & Moule, 2005). It is argued that transracial adoptions by White parents result in a number of harmful emotional, developmental, and/or sociocultural outcomes, especially low self-esteem and inadequate racial identity (Brodzinky, Smith, & Brodzinky, 1998). In evaluating studies and literature regarding adoption, Dwyer and Gidluck (2012) consider the need for multicultural counselors when working with transracial families. Multiculturalism defined by Harling and Whitehead (as cited by in Dwyer & Gidluck), embraces a wide range of differences which includes race, culture, ethnicity, and gender.

In looking at the experiences of parents of TRA who participated in either -pre or -post adoption services,

Dwyer and Gidluck found that parents expressed that they were not able to handle issues of racism with their children. The research employed by Dwyer and Gidluck involved White parents in Canada who adopted from Asia and their thoughts regarding race, racism, and racial identity. Six focus groups were utilized and conducted with a total of 32 parents. Hermeneutic phenomenology thematic analysis was used to analyze findings. The study revealed that many parents were not equipped to handle issues of racism with their child, which led to a second study that explored the services that were offered to these parents -pre and -post adoption. This study found that many social workers did not understand the complexities of transracial adoptions. A limitation of this study is that it focuses on Canadian White parents of Asian children, which does not allow the findings to be generalized to all TRA experiences. A strong point of this study is the identification for the need for multicultural counseling in "helping transracial children and families navigate the issues of race and racism in their journey of negotiating identity development" (Dwyer & Gidluck, 2012, p. 63).

Theories Guiding Conceptualization

Systems Theory contributed as a guide to the conceptualization of this study. The theory posits that every element in a system works together as a functioning whole; elements are interdependent and every part takes a role in keeping the system at homeostasis (Kirst-Ashman & Hull, 2012). Systems are the larger body that makes up the compilation of smaller systems, which interact with other systems. A tenet of Systems Theory is equifinality, which refers to the fact that there are different ways of getting to the same end. Another tenet of the theory is goal attainment which refers to the ability for a system to use its resources to accomplish tasks (Hardina, 2003).

Systems theory can be applied to many disciplines and communities. In this study, a closer examination was given to the system of child welfare, specifically in the area of TRA. In the child welfare system these parts come in the form of adoptive parents, social workers, and even the governing policies and laws that facilitate TRA, together, they are working toward goal attainment which involves providing loving homes for children who do not have one. Equifinality can be applied to this system because people have different ideas on how to accomplish

the goal of providing foster children with loving homes. Some people within the system may believe this process should only be limited to same race adoptions, while others believe that transracial adoption is just as efficient of a method in accomplishing this goal. Ultimately, the system must work in a way that will reach this goal in the most effective and least damaging way. There are obvious deficits in the system such as the need to educate parents of TRA on how to navigate society with and for a child that is of a different racial background than that of themselves, and how to handle the issues that might arise regarding TRA. In attempts to mitigate these deficiencies, the system must work together to resolve such dilemmas.

Multiculturalism was another guide to the conceptualization of this study. Multiculturalism can be applied in many different contexts. "It is the body of thought in political philosophy about the proper way to respond to cultural and religious diversity" (Song, 2010, para. 1). It is used in favor of a wide range of disadvantaged groups including African American, women, gays and lesbians, and disabled people. The idea of multiculturalism is essentially protecting the culture of

a minority member when they are in a place surrounded by a majority culture or dominant group that is different than that of their own. Multiculturalism embraces diversity and does not seek to force assimilation on others; instead it sees the value in differences.

As much progress as the United States have made with trying to accept and accommodate people from all walks of life, multiculturalism does not always happen organically. It is often times fostered through the laws and policies that are created to govern our communities. Such is the case with transracial adoption which has greatly increased through acts and policies such as the Multiethnic Placement Act (MEPA) which promotes transracial adoption. This body of thought also lends hand to the process of racial inculcation and acculturation within transracial adoption. Many times, children adopted transracially loses their culture as they assimilate to the new culture of their parents, which may contribute to a loss of identity. It is important that multiculturalism is recognized by parents of TRA so that their adoptive children may recognize and value who they are and where they came from. Successfully

navigating this difficult process is something that should be given special attention.

Summary

This chapter of the research study provided a review of professional literature in the area of transracial adoption. Areas of attention included common trends, issues, and needed services. The chapter concluded with the examination of Systems Theory and Multiculturalism as guides to the conceptualization of this research study. This literature review gave specific attention on identifying the challenges experienced by parents of transracial adoption as well as needed resources for this specific population which serves as the key focus of this research study.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODS

Introduction

This section presents the methods that were utilized in conducting this study. Specification was given to the study design, sampling qualifications, data collection and instruments used, and procedures guiding the data collection and analysis of the study. This chapter concludes with a brief summary identifying possible concerns with the utilization of qualitative data analysis.

Study Design

The purpose of this study was to explore the possible challenges that transracial adoptive families and adoptees encounter in regards to racial and cultural differences. In addition, the study explored current pre-adoptive and post-adoptive resources that families identify as useful and/or needed resources in this relatively unstudied area.

The study employed a qualitative design. During the data collection phase of this study, 17 parents were interviewed. Equal consideration was given to two-parent

homes and single-parent homes, with an attempt to interview 5 parents/couples from each category. The method of this study was exploratory. As such, it was suggested to be that the most effective method in gathering information about challenges and resources as they pertain to transracial adoptions was to conduct face-to-face interviews with participants asking approximately 15 open ended questions. The open ended face-to-face questions allowed the researchers to clarify responses given and provided more accurate descriptions of the information being asked of the participants during the data collection phase. Therefore, one strength of utilizing qualitative analysis for this research was that participants were able to expand on their responses without having limitations on response categories and/or time. Due to the extent and exploratory nature of the questions being asked, this study aimed to recruit 15 parents who had adopted transracially.

This study was not designed to recruit a representative national sample of transracial adoptive families, but rather to explore potential challenges and desired resources for the previously identified population. Thus, a limitation in the study was the small

sample size being utilized and not representative of the larger population of families who have adopted transracially. It was anticipated that parents would identify further trainings and support groups needed for transracially adopted families, in addition to identifying challenges that social workers and adoption agencies can focus on during pre-adoptive training sessions.

Sampling

The sample for this study consisted of 17 parents who have adopted transracially. Purposive sampling was utilized as all participants were chosen from Kinship Center, a foster/adoption agency located in Redlands, California and Tustin, California. Kinship Center was chosen as the location of the agency and thus the participants were in close proximity to California State University, San Bernardino. The participants must have adopted a child of a different race from themselves utilizing the adoption services provided by Kinship Center. Parents may have adopted as a single parent or as a couple. Therefore, participants had to be chosen with the above specifications. Fliers were given to all

parents in attendance of the monthly support groups at the locations designated by Kinship Center, and they themselves determined if they met the above specifications and if they would like to volunteer for the research study.

Due to time constraints and consideration to convenience for participants, the study was limited to 17 participants and 20 minute face-to-face interviews. Efforts were made to contact the agency and the primary social workers who had established relationships with adoptive families. A letter of support was obtained from Kinship Center stating their support and desire for this research study. During the agency's monthly support group meetings, a brief flyer was made available to the clients outlining the purpose of the study and the desired population of study. If the clients were interested and willing to participate they volunteered for the study and subsequently signed the informed consent form. It was jointly determined by the researchers of this study and the agency that clients who have adopted transracially should be able to provide valuable insight into specific challenges and resources needed for their specific population of study.

Data Collection and Instruments

This study collected data by means of face-to-face interviews conducted with parents who have adopted transracially through the foster/adoption agency, Kinship Center. Interviews with participants helped to identify challenges encountered by these adoptive families, and identify helpful resources that may help this population navigate through such challenges. A tape recorder was utilized to record the interviews, so participants were provided with an informed audio consent form to allow the researchers to record their interview. Since this was a qualitative study, an interview guide was utilized for data collection. The interview guide consisted of 15 questions which were used in open-ended fashion, soliciting a more comprehensive response from participants. The interview guide was formulated in such a way that questions were ordered sequentially by simplicity and depth. For example, the first few questions consist of simple, closed-ended questions pertaining to demographics, such as the race and ages of the participants' adoptive child(ren). Sequencing the interview guide in this fashion allowed the participants to feel more comfortable and helped ease them into more

involved questions. Following questions of demographics, the interview guide transitions into more complex, open-ended questions that require more thought and consideration to answer. Topical areas covered by the interview guide focused on the adoption process experience, resources utilized pre and post adoption, and challenges experienced by the participants that are specific to transracial adoption. (Please refer to Appendix A, for interview guide.)

Procedures

Upon obtaining permission and a letter of support from Kinship Center to conduct this research as well as receiving Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval from the California State University, San Bernardino, the data collection phase of this study began. Researchers of the study attended Kinship Center's monthly support group on January 19th, 2013 and on March 9th, 2013 and presented the study and an informative flier to adoptive parents. Interested clients were contacted by the researchers during or following the meetings. Researchers sought participants for the study until they had obtained a minimal sample size of at least 10 parents who had

adopted transracially, which provided the researchers with enough valuable information to explore the pertinent issues in which this research sought to study.

Researchers of this study conducted interviews with participants which were held directly after or during the monthly support groups facilitated by Kinship Center at the First Presbyterian Church in Redlands, California and the Kinship Center office located in Tustin, California.

Before the interviews took place, participants were given an informed consent form (Appendix B), which they were instructed to sign with an "X" which allowed their identity to remain confidential as well as indicated their voluntary participation in this research study. Before participants signed the informed consent form, the researchers explained the purpose of the study, risks and benefits involved, confidentiality, and where the participants can find the results of the research study once the research project has concluded, as well as a contact person in the case they might have questions in regards to the study. After this was explained and the participants had made the decision to continue voluntary participation in the study, they were provided with the informed consent form to sign.

Participants were also given an audio-use consent form (Appendix C) which approved the researchers to tape record the interview with the participant. An interview guide was utilized to collect data for this study. It consisted of approximately of 15 questions, and was used during face-to-face interviews which were anticipated to last approximately 20 minutes each. Participants of this study were advised without deception, and were given a debriefing statement (Appendix D) upon completion of their interview. This statement clearly explained the study they had just participated in, contact information in the case of further questions, locations of where they can find a copy of this research study after its publication, as well as a person they can contact in the case that they felt uncomfortable with the study and may need counseling. After the researchers had completed all interviews for the study, data analysis and synthesis of the material took place, requiring approximately two weeks to complete.

Protection of Human Subjects

The protection and rights of the participants of this study was highly valued and the researchers sought

to conduct this study in a manner that protected the anonymity and confidentiality of their participants. Participants were provided an informed consent form and were given opportunities to ask any questions they may have had regarding the study or their participation in the study. Researchers informed the participants that their involvement was voluntary and at any point in which they felt uncomfortable, they may choose to stop at any time. After this process, if participants still chose to take part in the study they were provided with an informed consent form which upon signing indicated their voluntary participation in the study. An audio-tape consent section within the informed consent also provided for the participants to indicate their consent for the researcher to record their interview. After the interview had concluded, a debriefing statement was given to the participants to keep. The statement included a contact number for someone they may talk to if the participant experienced any apprehension during or as a result of the process of the interview. The interview guide did not ask for personal information such as address, phone numbers, or social security number. Each participant was assigned a serial number that matched the interviewer's notes to

the respective interview, and thereafter was identified by this serial number instead of by name. A master list was created with this information and will be kept in a secure location only accessible to the researchers of this study. This method assured that participants cannot be linked to the data recorded from the interview, thus securing their anonymity. After the data was collected, it was transcribed verbatim and stored in a password protected computer that was only accessible to the researchers of this study. After the report of this study was written, all material used in conducting the study was destroyed.

Data Analysis

Data analysis for this research study utilized qualitative analysis techniques. Data from audio-taped and written material from face-to-face interviews were transcribed verbatim and a multi-level coding method was developed to identify and organize the data by specific themes and categories. The first level coding identified meaning units and subsequently fit them into categories. Codes were assigned for each category. Meanings and categories at this coding level are usually concrete, and

clearly evident. A journal was used to define these codes, and to record where these codes appear in the data set.

Second level coding was applied to identify more abstract themes within the data, and required more abstract thinking and deeper investigation into deciphering meanings of the presenting data. In this phase, relationships in the form of similarities and differences as well as possible causal relationships among the different data sets were analyzed and were recorded in a journal.

Researchers ensured consistency through triangulation which allowed for multiple perspectives to the study, and concurrently added weight to the credibility of this study's analysis method. Researchers of the study also utilized member checking by getting feedback from research participants in cases of ambiguity or clarification. The researchers of this study made mindful efforts to remain objective, disallowing personal biases to conflict with data analysis. Researchers of this study sought to show that conclusions of the study were dictated by the data rather than by personal established beliefs or biases. After data analysis was

completed, it was amalgamated and summarized into a clear, understandable manner for the purpose of this research study. Lastly, descriptive statistics were utilized to describe characteristics of the sampled participants in this study.

Summary

This chapter provided a summary of the methodologies utilized in the study. The study purpose, design, sampling criteria and techniques, data collection, instruments and analysis, and procedures were components included in the chapter. Special attention was paid to the protection of human subjects, confidentiality, and informed consent.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

Introduction

Included in this chapter is a presentation of the data that was collected. Results are presented in the form of short narratives which give further description of the following collection categories: identified challenges, intention to adopt transracially, personal gratification in adopting transracially, helpful resources utilized, and needed resources. Also included in this chapter is a description of participant demographics as well as a brief summary of the findings.

Demographics

The researchers of this project interviewed a total of 17 parents. Based on the responses received from demographical questions, researchers found that participants of the project consisted of 16 parents who identified as Caucasian and one parent who identified as Chinese. The children they adopted were identified by race: 19 Hispanic, four Black, two Chinese, one child who was mixed with Caucasian/Hispanic and one child who was mixed with Caucasian/Asian. All the parents except one

were married and lived in a two-parent household while one participant identified as a single parent. Two couples identified themselves as same-sex couples, and the remainder of participants identified themselves as heterosexual.

Identified Challenges

The exploratory nature of this study allowed researches to conduct face-to-face interviews with parents who had adopted children of a different race than themselves. Open ended questions were utilized to elicit the fullest scope of information possible regarding common challenges faced by families who had adopted transracially utilizing Kinship Center's services. The challenges identified by the interviewees in the present study were grouped into the following categories:

differences in outside appearance, language, understanding culture, addressing racial differences, differences in food preparation/preference, and the child identifying more with the parent of their same race.

Difference in Outside Appearance

The most commonly identified challenge parents recognized was the difference in their outside appearance

from their adopted children. 8 of the 17 respondents identified this as a challenge. One parent shared,

Originally I was more hesitant about them looking different and how it was going to affect them. So that does play a part, you know they see us and we are so light skinned and they automatically know that they don't belong to us. (Participant #3, personal communication, January 2013)

A majority of the parents that identified with this same challenge shared very similar feelings as that expressed above. Transracial adoption form families that are noticeably different from the outside, making it evident that these families are not connected biologically.

Parents discussed the difficulty that their children face when having to explain to friends and other acquaintances why they look different from their parents. The children cannot pretend that they are a biological entity of the family as the difference in outside appearance prevents that.

The parents with very young children also asserted that it was difficult for them to also have to explain to other parents at the park and at the schools that their children are adopted and that they look different than

themselves because they're from a different ethnic background. These parents explained the difficulty as being manifested in dirty looks and attitudes from the public toward their situation.

Food

The differences in food became a common theme during the interviews for this study. Five of the 17 parents identified experiencing some kind of challenge in regards to food. Parents identified the correlation between food and the child's level of comfort. Participants stated that if they had known what foods made their adoptive children more comfortable and feel more at home, they would have prepared the food and shopped at culturally specified grocery stores to become more familiar with the foods their children identified with.

Language

It may be assumed by the general public that children available for adoption through the foster care system are fluent in the English language. That, however, is not the case. Four out of the 17 participants of this study identified language barriers in children as young as 3 years and as old as 11 years. In some cases,

language posed a communication barrier between the adoptive child and parent.

So that was tough because we didn't really speak much Spanish so there was a language barrier for a little while that I think was very frustrating for her. But you know because she was three she was speaking English in no time and we learned a little bit (Participant #6, personal communication, January 2013).

For some parents there was a desire to learn their child's language of origin, and unexpectedly, they were met by resistance by their adoptive children.

We planned early on that we would learn Spanish. But we were hoping it would be kind of a family bonding thing. But because our son said, 'I speak Spanish to people who speak Spanish. I speak English to people who speak English.' He wouldn't help us with the Spanish. So they tend to laugh at us more when we try speak Spanish. Or if I don't use the exact accent, they act like they don't understand what I'm saying. So they kind of hold it over our heads a little bit more. Through the natural guard, my husband has access to Rosetta Stone. So we just need

to make that one of our priorities. That is something that we need to learn to try to help them maintain (Participant #8, personal communication, January 2013).

Addressing Racial Differences

Addressing racial differences was a challenge identified by 2 of the 17 parents. For one parent, addressing racial differences was something that her adoptive children shied away from, as if speaking about the differences they shared was a topic that was taboo. This same parent spoke about an incident in which her youngest adoptive child asked her why her skin was different than hers and she explains:

And then it was when the kids were home and she brought it up again. I could hear the kids, I could hear them, 'Shh! Valerie! Shh! Shh!' Like telling her to hush! Don't talk about that. And so I had to say, 'its okay to talk about that. We have things in common and we have things that are different. Let's talk about them.' I wouldn't call that so much a challenge as maybe there's things that the kids don't talk about with me because they feel its taboo. You know what I mean? Because they may feel a

cultural difference that I just feel like we're all the same, but I think our kids don't feel that way. And there's a book out now, so I'm considering it a whole new challenge now cause there's a book called "Nurture Shock" and it talks about how white families tend to not talk about race. And we try to raise our children colorblind, but if we don't talk about it, they're not really blind to the differences of colors of skin, or different nationalities. They're not blind to that, they see difference, and so they tend to segregate themselves, based on similarities. And so then it's better to talk about it. SO I'm trying to talk about it a little bit more with the kids. And so I'm like, 'hey its not taboo to talk about it' (Participant #8, personal communication, January 2013).

Other Identified Challenges

Understanding culture was an identified challenge of five of the parents interviewed. Some parents felt that they were not knowledgeable enough about their adoptive child's culture of origin and that at times, it posed as a challenge for them. One parent identified the challenge

he experienced as his child identified more with his partner whom shared the same race as his son.

Intention to Adopt Transracially

Findings of the research concluded that 12 out of the 17, a large majority of the parents interviewed, did not have a racial preference when they began the adoption process, "We never thought about it. We just loved the babies, it was never an issue. It wouldn't have mattered if they were purple with polka dots" (Participant #1, personal communication, January 2013). Other parents expressed things similar to,

I think we were a little more narrow when we first started the process, but as we took the classes and got to interact more with other families and see a little bit more of the diversity, then we opened up a lot more to it until it just didn't matter anymore. (Participant #3, personal communication, January 2013)

Another parent described their intention to adopt transracially:

I just wanted kids that felt like the right fit for me and my family. So we were open to any race, it

didn't matter. And my husband's always felt the same thing. It didn't matter to us what race they were, and that. It was about making good humans as opposed to any particular race (Participant #5, personal communication, January 2013).

Whether it was through gaining knowledge of the kind of children in the foster care system who were waiting to be adopted, or just never paying any particular attention to possible racial differences that might be shared between the adoptive parent and child, but a large number of the parents interviewed did not have a racial preference when they made the decision to adopt. They simply wanted a child to love, and it did not matter what race they were.

Additionally, the researchers found that two parents reported that they did not intend to adopt transracially, two parents of the 17 interviewed stated that they did intend to adopt transracially, and one parent reported that he and his partner preferred a child that reflected a mixture of both their racial backgrounds, but they were still very open to any race.

Personal Gratification

One of the questions that parents in this study were asked was whether they received any personal gratification specific to adopting transracially. The responses from this question produced the following answers: normal parental gratification, no personal gratification, the formation of a blended family, and knowledge of a different culture. Almost all of the parents, 13 out of the 17, reported that their experience with adopting transracially had similar or the same personal gratification one would receive from simply becoming a parent. Parents who shared this sentiment explained that they received the same joys and satisfaction through adoption that is similar to the experience of any other parent, not necessarily specifically due to adopting transracially.

A couple who were interviewed explained that a gratification they received from adopting transracially is the formation of a blended family. They were Caucasian, and they adopted Hispanic children.

The only reward is that our family is so blended now through marriage, that it just feels very natural. It feels very natural. Especially because of the

fact that they're Hispanic, as I said, that for their benefit, growing up all their cousins will look just like them (Participant #14, personal communication, March 2013).

This particular family had many relatives who were Hispanic, so adopting transracially was a process that seemed to be seamless and very "natural."

Gaining knowledge of a different culture was a personal gratification that was shared by three of the parents in the study. One parent explained how they learned about their child's culture through the ways people reacted to their child because of their background.

And I think we learned to how other people react. Some people aren't as kind as other people are when they see you with a child of another race. For us we learned how to have a tough skin and how to show that person how much we love this child in front of them. Instead of being embarrassed about it, we embraced it (Participant #2, personal communication, January 2013).

One parent shared that cultural holidays are celebrated in honor of their child's culture of origin. Another

parent expressed giving credence to her child's culture by learning Spanish, traveling, and learning more about the culture. Lastly, one parent stated that he did not receive any personal gratification from adopting transracially.

Helpful Resources Utilized

Parents were asked whether they utilized any helpful resources that were directly related to transracial adoption. The overwhelming number of parents, 12 of the 17, stated that they did not utilize any resources that were specific to addressing challenges they have experienced specifically related to adopting transracially. Most of these parents did not utilize any resources because many of them felt that they did not need any, or they felt that their children were at such a young age that they probably wouldn't benefit from such resources.

Three parents reported that care group has been a helpful resource that they have utilized. One parent explained, "That's why care group is so important because our children can be around other kids who are in transracial adoption situations. I think that's the

biggest assistance right there. Helping them feel a normalcy, you know?" (Participant #8, personal communication, January 2013). Additionally, two parents found mentoring as a helpful resource that they have utilized to address specific challenges specific to transracial adoptions.

Needed Resources

The process of adoption is one that is undoubtedly complex. This is probably even more so for those adopting transracially-as such processes bring about unique challenges specific to adopting a child of a different race than your own. Families going through this process may certainly benefit from some kind of support that can help them navigate through their experience. As one of the main areas of exploration for this project, the researchers of this study sought out to identify the needed resources for those involved in the process of transracial adoptions. Via interviews with parents, the research concluded with the following identified needed resources: cooking classes based on various cultures, beauty tips, mentoring, support groups for the adoptive child, counseling for the adoptive child, and courses on

culture which was the most needed resources that was identified amongst parents who were interviewed.

Cooking Classes Based on Various Cultures

A theme surrounding food came up during the interview process with a number of parents. Three of the 17 parents interviewed identified cooking classes on various cultural foods would be a useful resource. Almost all parents stated that they received training or information regarding transracial adoption through Kinship Center before they entered the adoption process. One of the most useful pieces of guidance that the parents recall from their training was to expose their child to their culture or race of origin as much as they could. For most parents, this was achieved in part, through the incorporation of food. Some parents had very little knowledge of ethnic foods, and as a result, parents identified cultural cooking classes as a needed resource.

Courses on Culture

One of the most identified needed resource amongst the participants of the study was a course on culture. Four out of 17 parents identified this much needed

resource. Some parents expressed that they would like to learn more about their child's culture, and a class that taught them about such backgrounds would be especially useful. One parent expressed her desire to know the history of her child's culture so that she would be equipped with the tools to empower her and to teach her child that amazing people come from all kinds of races. Other parents expressed similar sentiments and desire to give honor and tribute to their child's culture of origin, and by being more knowledgeable about their child's culture, they can better achieve this desired task and to help their child know where they came from.

Beauty Tips

Two parents expressed the need for receiving information whether formally or informally, regarding different cultural beauty tips. This could be tied into courses about culture. This resource was identified by a white mother who had adopted black children. Hair plays a significant role in the black culture and being able to know how to "do" hair is very important to the women of the culture. So this mother expressed that tips on hair and similar beauty tips would be very helpful.

Mentoring

Three parents identified mentoring as a needed resource. One parent expressed that support groups or talking with parents who have similar experiences with TRA is helpful but not as helpful as learning from families and parents that share the same cultural or racial background as their adoptive children. This particular parent had Hispanic children, and expressed a desire to know Hispanic families with Hispanic children so that they could learn about the culture, the traditions, and everything involved with being Hispanic. He saw the benefits of being in a support group with parents who were in his same situation, but he did not feel like he could learn from them as much as he could from just submerging himself with people of the Hispanic culture. Mentorship and similar kinds of resources were also identified as a needed resource by several other parents.

Support Group for Kids

A couple of parents identified a need for a support group for older children of TRA. One parent shared that a support group for kids could be beneficial because they could meet children that are experiencing a similar

situation, and it would also help them open up with things they might not share in a one-on-one counseling session or with their parents. Kinship Center facilitates monthly support groups for parents, and although children are given opportunity to interact with each other during this time, there are no formalized support groups for them. This space would be a great opportunity to facilitate such a group. Lastly, one parent identified a needed resource for counseling by a therapist that was knowledgeable about TRA. She felt that this resource would be an especially beneficial for her adoptive children.

No Identified Needed Resources

Approximately four parents did not identify a needed resource to help mitigate challenges that was specific to their child being a different race than that of themselves. Some parents stated that they did not experience any difficulties with their children as a result of the process of TRA. Most parents who did not identify any needed resources stated that the challenges they experienced with their children were due to their child going through normal developmental stages and issues, not necessarily because they shared a different

race than their parents. A majority of the participants of the study had very young children who were probably too young to be able to identify cultural or racial differences between their parents and themselves. It is anticipated that challenges might arise as children grow older and can better identify and be cognizant of issues of racial differences and may encounter issues when they enter school and become more mature and aware of themselves.

Summary

This chapter presented the data that was collected and was presented above in the form of short narratives. Participants in this study expressed their experiences, opinions, and suggestions in regards to challenges and needed resources for parents who have adopted transracially. The information was obtained from interview transcriptions that were gathered through face-to-face interviews with parents who have adopted children of a different race from themselves utilizing Kinship Center services. Overall, the findings indicated that there are hardly any current services being offered or utilized to address specific challenges experienced by

families who have adopted transracially. Additionally, the most needed resource identified by the participants of this study is courses on the culture of origin of their adopted children.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

Introduction

Chapter five is a presentation of the major categories of this project discussed in further detail. The topics discussed in this chapter are the related to the research results, further suggested research in the field of transracial adoptions, as well as connections to systems theory and the theory of multiculturalism. The chapter concludes with the researchers' final reflections.

Challenges

As stated in Chapter 4, researchers found that the most commonly identified challenge that participants experience were related to the difference in the physical appearance between themselves and their children. Participant #4 provided an example of the challenges transracially adopted children face when their peers notice the difference in his appearance.

Our son has now started to open up about, he doesn't know sometimes how to tell people about his family and his situation and has said 'you realize I don't

look like you?' So people do ask questions you know?

So he does have a hard time like talking about that.

(Participant #4, personal communication, January

2013)

Statements such as this during the data collection phase of this project allowed researchers to understand the challenges children face at school when having to discuss transracial adoptions among their peers.

An additional challenge identified by participants was the desired knowledge that parents wish to acquire about the cultural food preferences for their children. The researchers of this study were surprised to discover the emphasis that several participants placed on their adoptive children's food preferences versus their own. Participant #8 provided an example of challenges with food,

I would say that food has been a little bit challenging. Foods that I consider comfort foods, my children consider gross or what not. And I've always loved Mexican food and I've learned to cook a lot of different actual pesole and I actually never knew existed. (Participant #8, personal communication, January 2013)

Needed Resources

Although Care Group services through Kinship Center were identified as a utilized resource, there was suggested curriculum topics identified as well. Currently the Care Group forum is open as a support group for parents who have adopted through Kinship Center social workers from the agency lead a brief discussion, followed by the open forum for participants. Participants, however, desired a more knowledge based group discussion, perhaps with an identified topic. For example,

You know I think it would be great if they had like a one day class or something on like ok, talking about the Hispanic culture, things that are, maybe to learn more about the culture, so you can better understand certain things. (Participant #11, personal communication, March 2013)

It may be that a cultural information segment during Care Group meetings may prove to be beneficial for participants.

It also may be that support groups and mentoring programs, specifically for the transracial adoptees, would be helpful in creating permanent relationships and connections with other adoptees who can identify with

them and their unique family circumstances. Participant #4 provides a direct example of such resources being helpful for transracial adoptees in their teens.

Yeah just the same as we go to a support group for the parents, it would be really helpful if they had something for older kids. Because one on one when you're asking someone to talk to your kid one on one, they don't want to open up as much. You know they're teenagers, they don't do that. But I think if they were in a wrap group type of thing then they would. (Participant #4, personal communication, January 2013)

Perhaps if these mentoring programs and support groups existed for the identified population, adoptees would be able to build relationships with other families who experience the same challenges as they do. Another benefit to this resource would be adoptees connecting with other children of the same culture as them.

As researchers reflected on the interviews conducted during the course of this study, notice was given to the participating families as a whole system. While participants were identifying challenges and needed resources, the majority of participants identified

challenges and resources needed for the entire family unit, thus linking systems theory to the identified sample population for this study. Parents need resources not only for themselves, but for extended families members, and most importantly the adopted children. This coincides with the hypothesis that classes on food, culture and beauty would create a systematic support system to help with adjustment and permanency of transracial adoptees.

The theory of Multiculturalism was apparent to researchers during this study, as the discussion of cultural differences was a primary focus during the questioning phase. Participants identified the desire to learn about their adoptive children's culture through cultural classes and cooking classes. It may be useful for agencies such as Kinship Center to address the theory of Multiculturalism during the pre-adoptive classes provided to prospective adoptive parents, therefore adoptive parents would have a better understanding about the expected challenges that may occur when adopting a child of different race than themselves.

Further Research

Due to the limitations of this project, it is proposed that further research would benefit parents and children of TRA as well as the adoption workers who aid in the process. This study was based on the needed resources and challenges of TRA as identified by the adoptive parent, although, further research in TRA based on the perspective of the adoptive child would be advantageous. Additional research exploring the specific challenges experienced by single parents of TRA or same sex couples who adopt transracially might also elicit noteworthy findings as well as serve valuable to those involved in TRA. The researchers of this study are also interested in the possible unique and or different challenges that are faced by parents and children of TRA based on various parent-child racial couplings. For example, are challenges faced by White parents who adopt black children different and/or more difficult than White parents who adopt Chinese children?

Another interesting area of TRA that can benefit from further research is an exploration of how the age of the adoptive child might play a role in the kind of challenges experienced by adoptive parents and children

of TRA. For example, how are challenges different for TRA families when a child is younger, versus the kinds of challenges that are experienced by members of the family in the adoptive child's teenage years? Further research exploring the benefits and utility of providing parents with the identified needed resources that were identified within this study would also help families of TRA. It is anticipated that the findings of this research will aid in mitigating the challenges that adoptive parents face in TRA as they will have more resources available to them. Additionally, the findings of this study may identify further areas of study that can help fill the gaps in existing research.

Conclusions

This study explored the common challenges and needed resources of families who have adopted transracially. The study found that the most common challenge facing transracial adoptive families is dealing with the palpable differences in outward appearance of their adoptive children and that of themselves.

The most common needed resource that was identified by the participants was cultural courses specific to

their child's culture of origin. This study also found that of the participants of this study, relatively few parents were participating in services directly related to transracial challenges. As all of the participants for this study were chosen from Kinship Center, the only identified service being utilized at the time of data collection was Care Group services offered and conducted by Kinship Center.

Finally, this exploratory study concluded that the need for further research on the topic of transracial adoptions, common challenges and needed resources, is ever present and important for this specified population of adoptees and their parents. As literature shows this to be an ever growing population, further research in specified arenas such as same-sex couples adopting transracially, as well as specific age groups of children being adopted transracially, may provide a more succinct exploration of needed resources and identified challenges. As further research occurs for transracial adoptees and their families, researchers will perhaps identify resources that will be easily accessible for families, and more importantly, contribute to the success of permanency in families adopting transracially.

APPENDIX A
INTERVIEW GUIDE

INTERVIEW GUIDE

What race(s) do you identify yourself as?

What race(s) do you identify your adoptive child(ren) as?

What age(s) are your adoptive child(ren)?

How long has your adoptive child(ren) lived in your home?

What family members reside in your home?

Describe the kind of neighborhood you live in? (ethnic make-up, suburban,)

How did you come to the decision to adopt?

How has your experience with adoption been thus far?

When you began the adoption process, did you intend to adopt a child of a different race than yourself?

Are there any challenges you experienced in the past or currently experience that you believe are specific to your child being a different race than you?

Are there any identifiable rewards or gratifications connected with adopting transracially?

Did you receive information about transracial adoptions during the pre-adoptive phase?

Have you utilized support resources post-adoption that are specifically related to transracial adoption issues?

What additional resources, if any, would you find useful in helping through challenges you have experienced through the process of adopting transracially?

If you were giving advice to someone who is thinking about adopting transracially, what advice would you give them?

Developed by Jennifer SeLegue & Stephanie Siringoringo

APPENDIX B

INFORMED CONSENT

INFORMED CONSENT

The study in which you are being asked to participate is designed to investigate the challenges and needed resources facing families who have adopted transracially. This study is being conducted by Jennifer SeLegue, MSW candidate and Stephanie Siringoringo, MSW candidate under the supervision of Dr. Ray E. Liles, D.S.W. Lecturer of Social Work, California State University, San Bernardino. This study has been approved by the School of Social Work Subcommittee of the Institutional Review Board, California State University, San Bernardino.

PURPOSE: The purpose of this study is to explore and identify challenges transracial adoptees and their adoptive parents encounter in terms of race and cultural differences and resources utilized and needed resources for transracially adoptive families.

DESCRIPTION: If you choose to take part in this study you will be asked of challenges, needed resources and demographics as the topics pertain to transracial adoptions.

PARTICIPATION: Participation in this study is completely voluntary, and you are free to skip any questions that you do not wish to answer. As a participant you may discontinue the interview at any time without penalty or consequence.

CONFIDENTIALITY: The information you provide will remain confidential and no record will be kept of your name or any identifying information. The information gathered from interviews will be conveyed in group form only.

DURATION: The face-to-face interviews should take no longer than 20 minutes or so.

RISKS: There are no foreseeable risks to taking part in the study.

BENEFITS: There are no personal benefits to participants. However, your input will help adoption social workers to address challenges and needed resources related to transracial adoptions in future pre-adoption trainings and post-adoption support services.

AUDIO: During the face-to-face interviews, participants will be recorded using an audio device. I understand this research will be audio recorded: Initials _____

CONTACT: If you have any questions or concerns about this study you can contact Dr. Ray Liles (909/537-5557.)

RESULTS: The results will be available at the Pfau Library at California State University, San Bernardino after December 2013.

By marking below, you agree that you have been fully informed about this survey and are volunteering to take part.

Place an X Mark

Date

APPENDIX C
INFORMED CONSENT FORM FOR NON-MEDICAL
HUMAN SUBJECTS

**AUDIO USE
INFORMED CONSENT FORM
FOR NON-MEDICAL HUMAN SUBJECTS**

As part of this research project, we will be making an audiotape recording of you during your participation in the experiment. Please indicate what uses of this audiotape you are willing to consent to by initialing below. You are free to initial any number of spaces from zero to all of the spaces, and your response will in no way affect your credit for participating. We will only use audiotape in ways that you agree to. In any use of this audiotape, your name would not be identified. If you do not initial any of the spaces below, the audiotape will be destroyed.

Please indicate the type of informed consent

☐ Photograph ☐ Videotape ☐ Audiotape

(AS APPLICABLE)

- The audiotape can be studied by the research team for use in the research project. Please initial: _____

I have read the above description and give my consent for the use of the audiotape as indicated above.

The extra copy of this consent form is for your records

SIGNATURE _____

DATE _____

APPENDIX D
DEBRIEFING STATEMENT

Transracial Adoptions: Common Challenges and Needed Resources Debriefing Statement

This study you have just completed was designed to investigate the experience of transracial adoptive families specifically in areas related to race and culture. In this study two areas were explored within transracial adoptive families: common challenges and resources needed to address such challenges. We are particularly interested in this area of study as it may provide more insight on how to better assist transracial adoptive families through experienced challenges specific to this population.

Thank you for your participation in this research study. If you have any questions about the study please feel free to contact Dr. Ray Liles at (909) 537-5557. If at any point you felt uncomfortable during this interview and would like to talk to somebody please contact Sherie Dechter, LCSW, Director of Adoptions for Kinship Center at (714) 979-2365.

At the end of the winter quarter of 2013, if you would like to obtain a copy of this research study, it will be available at John M. Pfau Library located at California State University, San Bernardino, phone number (909) 537-5091. Findings of this study will also be available at both Kinship Center offices located in Redlands and Tustin. Contact information for both offices is as follows: 414 Tennessee Street, Unit Y, Redlands, Ca. 92373, phone number (909) 798-9547 and 18302 Irvine Blvd., Suite 300 Tustin, Ca. 92780, phone number (714) 957-1004.

REFERENCES

- Anyon, Y. (2010). Reducing racial disparities and disproportionalities in the child welfare system: Policy perspectives about how to serve the best interests of African American youth. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 30, 242-253.
- Brodzinsky, D., Smith, D., & Brodzinsky, A. (1998). *Children's adjustments to adoption: Developmental and clinical issues*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Burrow, A. L., & Finley, G. E. (2004). Transracial, same-race adoptions, and the need for multiple measures of adolescent adjustment. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 74(4), 577-583.
- Butler-Sweet, C. (2011). "A healthy Black identity" Transracial adoption, middle-class families, and racial socialization. *Journal of Comparative Family Studies*, 42(2), 193-212.
- Crolley-Simic, J., & Vonk, M. (2011). White international transracial adoptive mothers' reflections on race. *Child & Family Social Work*, 16(2), 169-178. doi:10.1111/j.1365-2206.2010.00729.x
- Dein, S. (2006). Race, culture and ethnicity in minority research: A critical discussion. *Journal of Cultural Diversity*, 13(2), 68-75.
- Diller, J., & Moule, J. (2005). *Cultural competence: A primer for educators*. Toronto: Nelson
- Dwyer, S. C., & Gidluck (2012). Talking about adoption: Considerations for multicultural counselors when working with transracial families. *Asia Pacific Journal of Counseling and Psychotherapy*, 3(1), 61-71.
- Farr, R. H., & Patterson, C. J. (2009). Transracial adoption by lesbian, gay, and heterosexual couples: Who completes transracial adoptions and with what results? *Adoption Quarterly*, 12, 187-204.

- Fenster, J. (2004). The relationship between optimism about race relations, Black awareness, and attitudes toward transracial adoption. *Journal of Ethnic and Cultural Diversity in Social Work*, 13(3), 45-67.
- Hardina, D. (2003). *Analytical skills for community organization practice*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Jacobson, C. K., Nielsen, L., & Hardeman, A. (2012). Family trends and transracial adoption in the United States. *Adoption Quarterly*, 15(2), 73-87.
- Kirst-Ashman, K. K., & Hull, G. H. (2010). *Understanding generalist practice* (6th ed.). Belmont, CA: Brooks/Cole.
- Lee, R. (2003). The transracial adoption paradox: History, research, and counseling implications of cultural socialization. *The Counseling Psychologist*, 31(6), 711-744.
- Limb, G. E., Chance, T., & Brown, E. F. (2004). An empirical examination of the Indian Child Welfare Act and its impact on cultural and familial preservation for American Indian children. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 28(12), 1279-1289.
- McRoy, R. G., & Zurcher, L. A. (1983). *Transracial and interracial adoptees*. Springfield, IL: Charles Thomas.
- Murray, V. M., Smith, E. P., & Hill, N. E. (2001). Race, ethnicity, and culture in studies of families context. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 63, 911-914.
- Perry, S. (2011). Contact, congregations, and children of color: The effects of interracial contact in religious settings on Whites' attitudes towards transracial adoption. *Journal of Comparative Family Studies*, 42(6), 851.
- Quiroz, P. (2008). From race matching to transracial adoption: Race and the changing discourse of us adoption. *Critical Discourse Studies*, 5(3), 249.

- Richardson, H. B., & Goldberg, A. E. (2010). The intersection of multiple minority identities: Perspectives of White lesbian couples adopting racial/ethnic minority children. *The Australian and New Zealand Journal of Family Therapy*, 31(4), 340-353.
- Smith, D. T., Juarez, B. G., & Jacobson, C. K. (2011). White on Black: Can White parents teach Black adoptive children how to understand and cope with racism? *Journal of Black Studies*, 42(8), 1195-1230.
- Song, S. (2010). Multiculturalism. In the *Stanford encyclopedia of philosophy*. Retrieved from <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/multiculturalism/>
- Videl de Haymes, M., & Simon, S. (2003). Transracial adoption: Families identify issues and needed support services. *Child Welfare*, 82(2), 251-272.
- Vonk, M. E., & Angaran, R. (2003). Training for transracial adoptive parents by public and private adoption agencies. *Adoption Quarterly*, 6(3), 53-62.
- Wood, M. (2009). Mixed ethnicity, identity and adoption: Research, policy and practice. *Child and Family Social Work*, 14, 431-439.

ASSIGNED RESPONSIBILITIES PAGE

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:

Team Effort: Jennifer SeLeague &
Stephanie Siringoringo

2. Data Entry and Analysis:

Team Effort: Jennifer SeLeague &
Stephanie Siringoringo

3. Writing Report and Presentation of Findings:

a. Introduction and Literature

Team Effort: Jennifer SeLeague &
Stephanie Siringoringo

b. Methods

Team Effort: Jennifer SeLeague &
Stephanie Siringoringo

c. Results

Team Effort: Jennifer SeLeague &
Stephanie Siringoringo

d. Discussion

Team Effort: Jennifer SeLeague &
Stephanie Siringoringo