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An exploratory study of the cross-cultural adoption of Mexican American children by Anglo parents

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AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF THE CROSS-CULTURAL ADOPTION OF MEXICAN AMERICAN CHILDREN BY ANGLO PARENTS

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G.P.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to investigate the cross-cultural adoptions of Mexican American children by Caucasian adoptive parents and to determine if this practice can be deemed to be in the best interest of the children. In recent years, the child welfare field in attempting to locate adoptive homes for minority children have engaged in the area of transracial and cross-cultural adoptions.[1] Transracial adoptions have come to identify this practice with black children. Cross-cultural adoptions have come to identify this practice with Asian-Americans, American Indians and Vietnamese American children. The effects of this practice on Mexican American children adopted by white parents have not been subjected to systematic study. This investigation seeks to identify the motivations of these parents, their characteristics, and to arrive at an understanding of the consequences of this practice on Mexican American children reared by Caucasian families in a society

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[1] Rita James Simon and Howard Alstein, Transracial Adoption, (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1977).

which has been characterized as a racist one.

Significance of the Study

The United States is a land of many ethnic groups. It is a land which has witnessed many ethnic conflicts in majority/minority relations.

Ethnicity is an important force in American life. It refers to those characteristics which separate one group from another. Max Weber states,

> . . . human groups that entertain a subjective belief in their common descent--because of the similarities of physical type or custom or both, or because of colonization and immigration--in such a way that this belief is important for the continuation of non-kinship communal relationships, we shall call "ethnic group" regardless of whether an objective blood relationship exists or not.[2]

Ethnicity forms a part of one's identity. If a child is placed with a family in which his culture is not encouraged, and yet by his identity he retains the characteristics of the ethnic group of which he is a member, then it may be suggested that this child at some stage of his life is going to encounter identity problems. This seems especially true since the Mexican American has been subjected to discrimination and rejection by the majority group. Therefore, this problem appears significant in several areas:

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[2]Max Weber, "Ethnic Groups," Theories of Society, Talcott Parsons et al., (eds.), (New York: The Free Press, 1961), p. 307.

1) Why would Anglo-Americans adopt Mexican children?

2) Why would child welfare agencies engage in such a practice?

3) Can Anglo-Americans rear a Mexican American child and at the same time encourage the strengthening of his identity?

4) If this practice is discovered to have negative consequences for the child and the family, what alternatives can be suggested?

The findings of this investigation may provide data by which these questions can be answered.

Research Methodology

This investigation is an exploratory study of the motivations of Anglo-American parents who adopt Mexican American children. It seeks to identify the characteristics of these parents as well as their motivations. It also seeks to identify the attitudes of these parents toward Mexican Americans. Alfred Kahn states that an exloratory study has as its objectives, "the selection of preliminary hypotheses."[3] Sellitz et al. state that the purpose of exploratory research is "to gain familiarity with a phenomenon or to achieve new insights into it, often in order to

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[3]Quoted in H. Carl Henley, "Research in Social Work," The Field of Social Work, Arthur E. Fink, ed., (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1974), p. 366.

formulate a more precise research problem or to develop hypotheses."[4] Henley states, "an exploratory study is called for when a researcher wants to 'explore' a problem area in which there has been little or no research performed and consequently there are no hypotheses to be tested."[5] Inasmuch as this area has not been studied in the literature, it appears suited to exploratory research in that it seeks to study and describe an existing phenomenon and to generate hypotheses for further study.

The research design constitutes the blueprint for the collection, organizing and analysis of data. Henley states that the exploratory method uses several methods of collecting data for analysis. They are: 1) review of the pertinent literature; 2) consulting experts in the problem area; and 3) studying of selected examples of the phenomenon in which one is interested.[6] The investigator of a necessity had to select number three as her method of collecting data inasmuch as the subject had not been covered with this population, Anglo parents adopting Mexican American children in the literature, and no known experts were available for consultation in this area.

The research instrument was a structured question-

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[4] Ibid.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Ibid.

naire which was administered to a selected sample of Anglo parents who had adopted Mexican American childre, or who were in the process of adopting Mexican American children. The questionnaire was administered in their homes.* The sample was selected by requesting of social workers in the Department of Social Services, Santa Clara County to provide all of the names of Anglo couples who had adopted Mexican American children within the last ten years. The social workers who were requested to provide this information worked in the Children's Bureau in Santa Clara County where the investigator was serving an internship. Although this practice was not pronounced at the agency, statistics revealed that a sufficient sample of these parents existed. A home interview was selected as opposed to a mailed questionnaire for several reasons: 1) face to face contact would provide for the development of a permissive atmosphere so that the respondant might be motivated to reflect on answers and provide as accurate and complete answers as possible; 2) the home interview provides the opportunity to probe for details; 3) a mailed questionnaire may not have been returned; and 4) the home interview permits the interviewer to "survey" the environment and observe family dynamics which may lead to further insight and perceptions of the inter-

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*It should be mentioned that the sample also included a single parent.

viewee's responses. The interviewer has the opportunity to probe. This method allowed the respondents the opportunity to ask questions about the questionnaire, the purposes of the study. Fears can be lessened by the interviewer's behavior in answering questions and in administering the questionnaire.

Initially, the plan was to collect data from the agency's closed files, but this was not possible as the ethnic background of the child was not on file. Thus, the only other alternative, the one selected, was to inquire from agency workers the names of white couples who had adopted Mexican American children.* Permission was secured from the Department of Social Services to conduct the study. No resistance was revealed in securing the permission from the appropriate parties. However, the appropriate parties clearly defined their expectations in regard to the clients' confidentiality. Following agency permission, all adoption workers were given a memorandum briefly describing the study and requesting their assistance in the collection of a sample. The workers were requested to leave the names of such couples with the investigator's supervisor or in her mailbox. Immediate responses were varied. Some workers responded immediately; others could not think of names but

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*In this study, Anglo and white are used interchangeably.

stated they would give the matter some thought; others had no such couples in their workloads, and some found the memorandum vague and asked specific questions relative to the specific purposes of the study and its objectives. They expressed some concern over what would be asked of their former clients.

The concept of confidentiality appears to be gathering renewed concern, and some workers were of the opinion that this research "entailed a breach of confidentiality."[7] The faculty at a school of social work was forced to discontinue their practice oriented research because of a widespread resistance by students and agency's participants who perceived the study as a violation of clients' rights. Anonymity of names and information was assured to the students. Yet in a probe of students' concept of confidentiality, the students expressed concern that any discussion of a case was "ipso facto" a violation of clients' rights.[8] The idea of contacting clients aroused more resistance than did any other phase of the research, and eventually caused it to be abandoned."[9] In order to secure the workers' cooperation, the investigator clarified with them the areas

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[7]David Macarov and Beulah Rothman, "Confidentiality: a Constraint on Research?" Social Work Research and Abstracts, (New York: National Association of Social Workers), Vol.13, No. 3, Fall 1977.

[8]Ibid., p. 13

[9]Ibid.

which she would explore. These areas were: racial attitudes, general characteristics, and their reasons for adopting cross-culturally. Once the investigator had contacted the workers personally, explaining the investigation, a relationship was built which resulted in a medium size sample being made available.

The investigator could not learn the names of the couples until they had agreed to participate in the study. A letter describing the purposes of the study and my request for their participation was mailed to the couples involved in the sample. This letter was accompanied by a letter from the Adoption Bureau's Chief which explained the confidentiality involved and the backing of the agency for the study. (See Appendices 1 and 2.)

Initially the sample was composed of twenty-three (23) couples. However, three of the families had moved to other states and were not used. Three letters returned with the notation "change of address and we are unable to locate them." Only five families responded to the intial request. In late January, 1978, another letter was mailed requesting reconsideration of participation in the study since the first letter was mailed during the Christmas holidays which upon reflection was viewed as a bad time. Two of the five couples who responded to my second letter called their former adoption workers to inquire about the study. They were

interested in knowing about the investigator and other details relating to the questionnaire. One of the women, Mrs. Jones* (a vignette of the interview is presented in the Appendices) shared with the investigator during the interview that she was not enthusiastic about participating in the study for two reasons. She was a bright, independent professional woman. She questioned whether the study would be of educational interest to herself, or if it was non-professional. She had also been "subjected to a tedious and long interview" by another student which had made her prejudiced against student research. Mrs. Brown, who had also ignored the first letter, and had in addition telephoned her former social worker following the second letter, contacted the investigator personally to "feel me out" and to discuss in detail the content of the questionnaire.

The final sample for the study was nine (9) and arrangements were made with the couples for dates of visits so that the questionnaire could be administered.

Cross-Cultural Adoptions: A Definition

Cross-cultural adoption may be viewed as the practice where a child of a particular culture is adopted by parents of another culture. The emphasis appears to be on

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*Mrs. Jones and Mrs. Brown are fictitious names.

cultural differentiation. This cultural differentiation has been a source of conflict in the United States when one group has looked down on another group as signified in such terms as "we and they" or "them versus us." It is difficult to see how a member of the majority group can transcend these cultureal differences and provide the Mexican American child with positive experiences. It is the investigator's belief based on an understanding of majority/minority conflicts in the United States, that a white parent will be unable to provide her Mexican American child with a positive environment which will help him to develop the ego strengths required in dealing with the frustrations and discriminating personal attacks which will be inflicted as a result of his minority status in a racist society. It is equally my belief that the white parent has internalized to some degree the prejudices of the majority group toward Mexican Americans. Although the degree of prejudice between Mexican Americans and the Anglo is less than that between the black and the the Anglo, this degree of prejudice , which is expressed in social distance, still maintains degrees of isolation which result in a lack of understanding of Mexican culture, life-styles, values. This suggests that white parents may lack sensitivity toward their child's ethnicity. They may rear their child as a white one, but in the wider culture he will still be viewed as a Mexican American. This undoubtedly will

create conflict in him, especially in terms of his reference group. This conflict with reference group will result if the Mexican American child is reared in a predominantly white neighborhood; he will be exposed only to white values and will lack suitable adult role models and friends of his own ethnic group with whom he may identify.

Thi history of the United States reveals tremendous racial and ethnic conflicts. Thus, it would appear that white adoptive parents and their Mexican American children will experience problems. Problems may appear within the immediate family circle and the society at large. Such parents will require tremendous strengths in dealing with some of the conflicts which they and their children will face in a racist society. One may ask: how will they deal with these conflicts? How realistic are their attitudes towards them? Do they perceive problems for their child in his search for his identity? Do they believe that identifying with one's cultural background is important? Will they be comfortable in allowing their child to identify with his ethnic group? Will they encourage such an identification? Did these parents originally want to adopt a Mexican American child, or did they adopt because the Mexican American child was the only one available to them? Certainly, these questions are valid and deserve some answers.

It appears that child welfare agencies often act from

expediency, and that the importance of ethnicity is disregarded. A large population of Mexican American children of adoptive status exists. Unfortunatly, parents of these children's ethnic background have not come forward to adopt them. Available statistics from the Santa Clara Department of Social Services reveal that at least one half of the Mexican American children placed into adoptive care are placed with white parents. The 1978 statistics from the Department of Social Services in Santa Clara County revealed that only 13 Mexican American were placed in adoption. Of these, one-half went into white homes. However, the majority of the children placed are white, and adoption agencies have a practice of only placing white children in white homes. This practice suggests racist overtones inasmuch as Mexican American children can be placed in white adoptive homes, but it is highly unlikely that white children will be placed in Mexican American homes. The question may be asked: are Mexican American children placements in white adoptive homes a racist practice? In attempting to shed some light on this question, a review of the literature was undertaken.

Chapter 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This chapter is divided into two primary sections. They are a discussion of adoptions in the United States and a review of the literature. The discussion of adoption is important since adoption is society's institutionalized way of planning for children who are without legal guardians as established by the court.

History of Adoptions in the United States

In recent years, the practice of adoption has emerged as one of the most controversial subjects in the field of social work. While societies have created child welfare agencies for purposes of planning for children in need of care, in the final analysis it is the social workers and their various colleagues involved in this process, doctors, legal systems, who decide what is in the best interests of the child. Therefore, the importance of the role of the social worker in the adoption process must be emphasized. It certainly should not be understated. Essential systems in the adoption process are 1) a child who is legally free for adoption, 2) parents who want to adopt a child, and 3) the social worker acting in the interest of society who

determines the outcome of this process.

The practice of adoption is as old as time immemorial. It was the ancient and remains the modern method of establishing, by law, the relationships of parent and child between individuals who are not related.[1] The first record of adoption dates back to the 28th century B.C.. Although the emphasis in adoption today is on the consideration of the welfare of the child, this was not always the situation. This emphasis was started during the 1300's with the creation of the "great code" that defined adoption and gave to the child some protection.[2] Ancient cultures were primarily concerned with the adoptive parents' wishes who, for economic, political, or religious reasons, needed to adopt a male heir, if unavailable by natural means.

The origin of modern adoption dates from 1869 with the establishment of the National Childrens Home and Orphanage of England as voluntary organizations were forced to take liability for the children of poor parents. This responsibility resulted from the introduction of social legislation regulating the education and labor of children.[3] In the 1900's, adoption served as a means of evading suc-

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[1]Michael Shapiro, "A Study of Adoption Practices," World Welfare League of America, April 1956, Vol. 1.

[2]Ibid., p. 13.

[3]Ibid., p. 14

cession laws and acknowledging an illegitimate child. Adoption appears to gain an interest after wars since a similar upsurge in interest occurred following the Second World War, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War.

In the United States, 1851 marks the inception of modern adoption practices. This year ushered in for the first time in history the belief that the interests of the child had to be protected. Child care agencies placed emphasis on enabling the abandoned and parentless child to have the permanent emotional, social and personal security of family life. It was not until 1938 that the Child Welfare League of America, the accrediting agency for child welfare agencies in this country, approved a set of minimum safeguards for adoption. These minimum safeguards related to 1) selection and study of the adoptive parents, 2) the role of the natural parents, and 3) the child, his placement, supervision and the eventual goal of security.[4]

A practice which developed in adoption and which now has been downgraded was that of matching. Attempts were made to match the adopted child to the adoptive parents as closely as possible. Physical characteristics and intellectual endowments were considered very important criteria in selecting adoptive parents and religious backgrounds of the

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[4]Ibid., p. 19.

child and parents being matched were sometimes mandated by law. By 1964, a change had occured in the adoption field and matching no longer carried the weight which it once had. Experience had shown that adoptive parents could identify with children who did not resemble them. Parents' styles of living, their personalities, and their values, together with the estimated potentialities of the children were the traits used in matching the child with the adoptive parents. Race remained an important variable, but coloring, per se, was no longer viewed as an important criterion. In lieu of coloring, the physical resemblances in matching parent and child were stressed.

Specific Adoption Practices in the United States in Regards to Minority Children: Cross-Cultural and Transracial

Adoption agencies in the United States have placed their primary resources in the placement of white children in white families. Limited responsibility has been accepted by child welfare agencies for the placement of minority children into adoption. The greatest impetus has come from specific practices. The first move was in the direction of cross-cultural adoptions. This practice started on a fairly wide scale in the 1950's following the Korean War. Asian children were brought to the United States from Korea through the efforts of the Seventh Day Adventists Church.

This effort was soon supplanted by the activities of Harry Holt, a farmer, who also brought Korean children to the United States. Since 1956, abandoned and orphaned children have been brought to this country from Hong Kong, South Vietnam, Japan, Taiwan and Thailand for the purpose of adoption. By 1969, Holt's organization had placed 704 children with American families.

In 1958, there occurred an event of another kind of cross-cultural adoption--the placement of Indian children in white families. The Bureau of Indian Affairs and the Child Welfare League of America started a project which led to a permanent interstate plan for needy American Indian children who were available for adoption. By 1961, thirty (30) Indian children had been placed with non-Indian families. This practice of cross-cultural adoption has been a constant one. The Vietnamese children were the most recent example. This practice accelerated following the end of the Vietnam War. It should be noted that the majority, if not all, of the cross-cultural adoptions have been the placement of Asian children with white families. The literature does not contain information on the cross-cultural adoption of Mexican American children by white families.

In contrast to the acceptance given to cross-cultural adoption by white families, the opposite appears true in the case of Mexican American adoption of white children. The

investigator's knowledge, no case exists of this practice--Mexicans adopting whites--in the literature. As a matter of fact, the opposite is true. White society had historically rejectes the placements of white children with any family that is not white. A historical incident illustrates the hostility engendered against the minority group when such a practice was attempted. This is an example of oppressor-oppressed relations, when a group with power does one thing with minority children which it would not allow to be done with its own children. An attempt of a foundling hospital in New York to settle 40 Anglo children within Mexican American homes in Arizona, in the fall of 1904, met with tremendous dissent by townspeople, who took it upon themselves to select a vigilante committee to "rescue the children" from these awful homes.[5] A parish priest had applied initially to the hospital, requesting the placement of 40 Anglo children into the homes of 40 Spanish families in his parish. After the children were swept from their new homes by the vigilante team, those hundreds responsible again gathered around the New York hospital agent, who had arranged the initial placements, hurling threats of "kill

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[5] Raymond A. Mulligan, "New York Founderization Clifton-Morence: Social justice in Arizona Territory 1904-1905," in The Mexican Americans: An Awakening Minority, Manuel P. Servin, (ed.), (Beverley Hills: Glencoe Press, 1970, p. 60.

him," while nuns at the hospital had been threatened to be shot for placing children in the Mexican-American homes. The townspeople, in the meantime, had informally selected Anglo homes for the children, and were then requesting guardianship, as Arizona attorneys were of the opinion that the hospital no longer had legal charge of the children, having placed them with "incompetent and unworthy people."[6] The court ignored the illegal and forcible removal of the children from the homes, referring to the mob as "committee meetings," and "volunteer" action was the label given to the surrendering of the children to armed troops, as the court granted the Anglo parents guardianship of the children, with a prompt adotion procedure thereafter.[7] Could such injustice not recur in contemporary times?

Transracial Adoptions

Cross-cultural adoptions have not brought forth the negative reaction that surrounded transracial adoptions. This adoption practice accelerated during the sixties. This practice centered on the placement of black children with white families and was termed transracial adoptions. The guiding force behind this practice was a group of parents in Montreal, Canada. In 1960, this group of parents founded an organization called The Open Door Society. This group gained

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[6] Ibid., p. 62.

[7] Ibid., p. 67.

some success in the implementation of this practice. Similar to other practices started abroad, it soon found its way to the United States. In the United States, the placement of black children in white homes for adoptive purposes started in 1961, through an organization called Parents to Adopt Minority Children. Between 1962-64, this group placed twenty (20) black children with white families in Minnesota. The acceptance of transracial adoption as a viable means of placing black children into white homes gradually met with resistance. This practice was reaching epidemic proportions. A survey by Opportunity, a program to encourage the adoption of black and racially mixed children revealed in 1969 that 1,447 black children were placed with white families.

Undoubtedly, social trends contributed to the development of this practice. Legalized abortions, the use of contraception, the tendency of unmarried mothers to keep their children, and the desire of couples not to add to the population boom contributed to the decrease in the number of babies available for adoption. However, a significant number of black children remained available. White parents began to seek the adoption of these children. Credence was given to this practice due to the number of black children legally available for adoption and the limited number of black parents applying for adoption. This practice continued unabated until black leaders and organizations started to

question it. The sixties were a time when blacks were reaffirming their ethnic identity. This practice became viewed as a form of racist genocide. Black leaders and the National Association of Black Social Workers challenged this practice. These leaders stated their belief that only in a black home could a black child develop a total sense of self, including the knowledge of his cultural heritage as well as the necessary tools by which to live and deal with problems in a racist society such as our own. These attacks subseqently led to some decrease in this practice.

As we view child welfare practices in adoptions as these practices relate to minority children, it is revealed that two major kinds of practices have developed--cross-cultural and transracial. Transracial adoption viewed as a form of racist genocide for the blacks, appears to be on the downgrade. It is deemed not in the best interest of black children. Cross-cultural adoptions continue to be practiced in public agencies and private agencies such as the Holt Organization. These placements involve essentially Asian and some American Indian children. However, increasinly questions are being raised about such practices; the practice of placing minority group children with minority group families. This does appear to be a racist problem.

As the blacks have viewed this practice in a negative sense, the same view is being expressed toward cross-

cultural practices by Mexican Americans. They too express the view that the American society is a racist one, and the Mexican American child must develop in order to maintain ego-integrity. Thus, Mexican America leaders and social workers have joined with black leaders and social workers in opposing the practice of cross-cultural adoptions in adoption agencies. Leon Chestang asks a question about the practice of transracial adoptions which can also be asked of cross-cultural adoptions. He asks: "Can white families assure black children an environment in which there is optimal opportunity for growth, development and identification?" Although blacks have faced the greatest amount of prejudice and discrimination, Mexican Americans have not been far behind. Chestang has suspicions about the motivations of such parents who adopt black children, "given the low status and endemic attitude toward blacks." Certainly since Mexican Americans do not occupy high status positions in the United States, a similar suspicion may be attributed to the motivations of whites who adopt Mexican American children.

Literature Findings Relative to Transracial and Cross-Cultural Adoptions

In this section, the investigator will briefly discuss the literature as it pertains to transracial and cross-cultural adoption. Some of the sources identified have pre-

viously been discussed in the history of adoptions. While a review of the literature reveals information on transracial and cross-cultural adoptions, no literature is available on the adoptions of Mexican American children by white families,

Literature on transracial adoptions began to appear in the years 1960-1970. Articles were written by a number of people, identifying the philosophy of this practice[8] as well as opposition to it.[9] This practice became a popular one primarily due to the shortage of white children and an abundant supply of black children available for adoption. As mentioned previously, this practice reached epidemic proportions in 1969, when 1,447 black children were placed in adoption. In the sixties, when social upheaval occurred, and minorities were pressing to gain entrance into the mainstream of American life, the practice of placing black children in white families assumed racial overtones and pressure was brought for its termination. This practice has now decreased, and research is being conducted to determine

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[8]Marion Mitchell, "Transracial Adoption: Philosophy and Practice," Child Welfare, December, 1969; Martha G. Sellers, "Transracial Adoptions," Child Welfare, June, 1969.

[9]Lawrence L. Falk, "A Comparative Study of Transracial Adoptions," Child Welfare, Feb. 1970; Edmund Jones, "On the Transracial Adoption of Black Children," Child Welfare, March 1972.

the effects of this practice, if any, on black children placed in white homes.

Identity-Practitioner's and Investigator's Perceptions

The two major opposing views in relation to the acceptability of transracial adoption are: 1) those people (blacks and whites) who contend that if a black child is adopted by white parents is provided with love and security, the child can work out his/her identity satisfactorily, and will be stable enough to deal with the social realities of blackness,[10] and 2) those people who feel that a white family cannot equip a child with the psychosocial tools to develop an appropriate identity, nor can it prepare the child for dealing with an oppressive, racist society.[11]

Edmund Jones, Assistant Director of Family and Children's Services in Baltimore, Maryland, in his message to the Open Door Society at Montreal, May 1971 (Open Door Society condones transracial adoptions), defined his major concerns underlying his objection to the placement of black children in white homes. He emphasized that there exists no evidence regarding adjustment over time for black young-

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[10]"Transracial Adoption," Children, Jan-Feb, Vol. 18, p. 35.

[11]Trudy Bradley, DSW, "An Exploration of Case-worker's Perceptions of Adoptive Applicants," Child Welfare League of America, (New York, 1967), p. 19.

sters thus placed in white homes, and questions the possibilities of mental health disorders for these children.[12] Jones asks, "what is the reaction of grandparents . . . and what are the professional and social consequences for the adopting white family in these circumstances?"[13] Is this not basically "a switch to focusing on the needs of adoptive parents?" asks Jones, when "The central party in any adoptive placement is and must continue to be the child."[14]

The views of Edmund Jones are shared by another practitioner and author, Leon Chestang, MSW, and Assistant Professor at the School of Social Services Administration, University of Chicago. Chestang convincingly argues that a black child must be raised in a black home if he or she is to develop a total sense of self, without unnecessary frustration in personality development and identity formation.[15] Chestang depicts some of the feelings in black communities about transracial adoptions, who question the motives of Anglo adoptive parents for wanting a black child, "given the low status and endemic attitude towards blacks."[16]

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[12] Ibid., p. 19.

[13] Ibid., p. 159.

[14] Ibid.

[15] Leon Chestang, "The Dilemma of Biracial Adoption," Social Work, Vol. 17, No. 3, May 1972, p. 103.

[16] Ibid., p. 103.

Chestang explains that the suspicion underlying the questions stems from the fears of cultural "genocide" on the one hand and concern for the child's identity on the other.[17] The same questions that Chestang asks may also be asked relative to Anglo parents adopting Mexican American children, for although blacks have faced the greatest amount of prejudice and discrimination, Mexican Americans have not been far behind!

In further view of public attitudes toward trans-racial adoption, Ebony magazine kept the issue open consistently during the 70's, as many of their featured articles centered around transracial adoptions. The following response is representative of the tone of many of the readers' letters to Ebony:

> This is a white racist society caused by whites and whites alone, and their act of adopting blacks is insulting and psychologically damaging and dangerous . . . it's ironic, once whites enslaved us because they considered themselves superior, and still do, and now they want to "reach out and love us." Why?[18]

It is reasonable, given that if children get their psychological and social characteristics mainly from their families and the communities in which they live, a society integrated with prejudices against ethnic minorities, to really question if a child of minority background, i.e.,

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[17] Ibid., p. 103.

[18] Simon, p. 45.

Mexican American, could develop anti-Mexican American feelings?! "As children develop, they identify with both the appearance and surface behavior of family members and more subtly felt values and attitudes."[19] Not only children, but all human beings, need to feel a sense of belonging. It is also necessary that we feel good about our "roots," for if we do not, it is indeed difficult to like ourselves; and so it is that adoptive parents must show their child that they accept his original culture!

The concerns of Leon Chestang and Edmund Jones come to light in a white adoptive mother's personal biography, which exposes the difficulties her two adopted black children have experienced in the development of their social and personal identities.[20] Phyllis, the older girl is described as light-skinned and only identifiable as black by blacks. While very young, she attempted to identify as white, but as an adolescent, she now defines herself as "tan" or mixed. She and her brother, who is very dark-skinned, both attend a multi-racial school, which one may assume would help Phyllis accept her ethnicity--it did not. Her white adoptive

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[19]Florence Rondell and Anne Marie Murray, "New Dimensions in Adoption," (New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1974), p. 70.

[20]Rita J. Morin, "Black Child, White Parents: A Beginning Biography," Child Welfare, Vol. LVI, No. 9, Nov. 1977, CWLA, N.Y.

parents were very involved in organizations committed to racial equality and attempted to reinforce pride in their heritage as well, but she and her brother still lived with confusion and fear.

Bill showed discomfort with white adults and when a white couple came to their home for dinner one evening, Bill ran to his room telling his mother, "They are white and might not like me because I am black."[21] Does Bill shed doubt about his white parents' sincerity? Although this mother of these children had some negative remarks, another mother, who had read Chestang's article in Social Work, wrote back, exclaiming, "I have adopted three beige-colored children and they have felt no condemnation or rejection by friends and neighbors."[22] She added that her children found it "laughable that Chestang should question whether they will survive and labels us 'ruiners of the community.'"[23]

This last comment is certainly not an uncommon sentiment, in that researcher Trudy Bradley, DSW, in her major study done through the research center of the Child Welfare League of America, which explores the views of adoptive parents and social workers, revealed the following findings:

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[21] Ibid., p. 581.

[22] "Letters Section," Social Work, Vol. 17, No. 5, Sept. 1972, p. 109.

[23] Ibid.

eighty-seven percent of the 38 couples sampled disagreed in the statement that "White families cannot prepare black children to cope with the problems of living in our racially-divided society,"[24] and 79% agreed that the "possible confusion of the black child in a white home about his racial identity is strongly outweighed by the values of having a family."[25] These same issues are addressed in my exploratory study of white adoptive parents and their Mexican-American children.

Another major study of 125 white couples who had adopted black children disclosed the following: one-third of the parents envisioned no problems for their children concerning their adoptive child's adjustment after adolescence and in adulthood, and the children's ties with them.[26] Eighteen percent perceived no problems at all.[27]

Harriet Frick, in her discussion of white families who had adopted black children in Minnesota, claimed that "To date these couples have ably handled these types of problems that followed the placement: 'discrimination,' . . . conflicts on the part of their children about racial differences; and over attention,"[28] She adds a comment reflective of many of the couples,

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[24]Bradley, p. 50.

[25]Ibid.

[26]Simon, p. 38.

[27]Ibid.

[28]Ibid.

> We are getting along fine now; we expect to have many satisfactions in the future. At the same time, we know that our son may meet prejudice, particularly when he reaches adolescence. But should that happen, he will have two things in his favor. He will have had his mother and me during all the years before adolescence. And he will have us then.[29]

It is difficult, when one hears such commitment and love from a parent, to doubt sometimes that it is not adequate for a child to develop a secure sense of self, an able body ready to shield one's self from future discrimination. Yet, no matter how accepting one's family is, society acts differently, believes differently, and can be overwhelming.

Asian-Americans and Indians (Cross-Cultural)

Even though Asian Americans and Indians were discussed briefly in the section on Specific Practices in Adoption, these groups will be discussed in this section. The amount of literature on them is brief.

Indians. Although programs developed to find homes for older children, handicapped children and children of other racial groups both in the 1940's and 50's, the Indian child requiring adoption services was the "forgotten child."[30] "Although illegitimacy among Indian people is

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[29]Harriet Frick, "Interracial Adoption: The Little Revolution," Social Work, Vol. 10, No. 3, July 1965, National Association of Social Workers, p. 96.

[30]David Fanshel, Far From the Reservation, (New Jersey: Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1972), p. 37.

frequently accepted without punitiveness, and the extended family is by no means extinct,"[31] there are still cases when the child is left uncared-for. Social services accessible to non-white mothers is generally not available to the Indian mother on the reservation.

With increasing inquries by the American public as to the adoption of Indian children as a result of a study conde by the National Council of Protestant Churches in 1957, together with the joint concern of the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the Child Welfare League of America, the Indian Adoption Project developed in order to stimulate the adoption of American Indian children. 395 Indian children were placed for adoption as of December 1967.

Asian Americans

Intercountry adoption, which is inclusive of Asian Children, had its roots following World War Two, with Europe and Asia as major sources of children overseas.[32] 772 immigrant children, of whom 206 were either Asian (from Japan or Korea), were adopted by American families in the period between 1948-1957, when visas were granted to children adopted by proxy.[33]

Korean children were initially placed in American

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[31] Ibid.

[32] Simon, p. 2

[33] Ibid.

families by the Seventh Day Adventists in 1953, soon to be followed by Harry Holt, and also the Catholic Relief Service. "The year 1953 predates by several years the transracial adoption of native-born nonwhite children in meaningful numbers."[34] By 1969, Harry Holt's organization had placed 704 children with American families.[35] Holt, an Oregon farmer, held a strong personal conviction that every child deserves a home, and through primarily his own religious motivation, he arranged the adoptions of thousands of Korean orphans by white adoptive families in America. Holt, through proxy and an unorthodox manner of selecting families solely on the basis of their belief in Christian dogma, found half-American orphans throughout his wanderings of Korea. As illegitimacy was catastrophic for both child and parent in Korea, Holt contended that Americans held responsibility for these children, many of whom were fathered by American servicemen. Holt chartered airplanes for years, carrying children across the Pacific to their waiting families. His organization remains vital, as Korean children remain a major source of intercountry adoptions.

Pearl S. Buck, the first woman to receive the Nobel

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[34] Ibid.

35 "Transracial Adoption," Children, Vol. 18, March-April, No. 2

prize for literature, also established an adoption agency, Welcome House, Inc., to find permanent homes for children of mixed Asian-American heritage.[36] Pearl Buck was the daughter of missionary parents, having been raised in the historic city of Chinkiang, China. She herself raised nine adoptive children, many of mixed racial background. Welcome House, Catholic Relief, Holt and other agencies were actively involved in the location of American families for Vietnamese children also. "During the period 1964-1973, approximately 1130 Vietnamese children were adopted by American families."[37] Vietnamese and Cambodian children were airlifted to the U.S., in order to be adopted, following the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong military offensive of 1975, and the collapse of the Cambodian government.[38]

Since 1956, there have been abandoned and orphaned children brought from Hong Kong, Korea, South Vietnam, Japan, Taiwan, and Thailand.[39] Between June 1961 and June 1974, 33,237 immigrant children were admitted into the United States, of whome 21,635 (65%) were defined as non-white (Asian, South American or African).[40] It is assumed

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[36]Pearl S. Buck, Children for Adoption, (New York: Random House, 1964), p. 76.

[37]Simon, p. 63.

[38]Ibid., p. 62.

[39]"Transracial Adoption," Children, p. 50.

[40]Simon, p. 12.

these children arrived primarily for reasons of transracial adoption, although existing data does not specifically indicate this.[41]

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[41] Ibid.

Chapter 3

CASE STUDIES

This section insludes case studies of two (2) of the couples interviewed by the investigator, in addition to the single parent interviewed. The investigator felt these case studies would lend to further understanding of parents who have adopted cross-culturally.

The Jones

Fortunately, I sent out a second letter requesting reconsideration of participation in my study, because a most fascinating couple emerged and consented. The Jones reside on the eastside of San Jose in a largely integrated neighborhood, composed of 70% Mexican American people.

Interestingly, both Mr. and Mrs. Jones were born and raised in Texas, where segregation and prejudice against minorities is an understatement. They did not hide their prejudice nor distrust of blacks, but have evidently formed a very close relationship with their black neighbors. Mrs. Jones did not express much praise for the children of their black neighbors. She described a party their friends' children had. She explained that when her anxiety got too great, because of the many black kids who had arrived, she

felt "compelled" to call the police for protection. I doubt that a large crowd of white kide would have provoked such defensiveness.

Mr. Jones was uncomfortably blatant, suggesting several racial slurs and comments, not against any one particular group, but against any, and every, minority group. Often, when a human being holds a set of beliefs, he or she assumes others are not so different in their own convictions and openly conveys his/her own.

A common trait which has always intrigued me is how parents, with all types of predelictions and stereotypes about groups of people (i.e., blacks, handicapped) either forget, or just disassociate their child from the group to which she/he respectively belongs, for somehow their child is "different." For example, Mr. Jones expressed some difficulty in his acceptance of Indians, yet his daughter married an Indian and has had two children with her Indian husband. These children's dark-skin color seems unresognizable to the Jones' while these children are their greatest pleasure.

Inquiring as to the ethnic background of their adopted daughter, Mrs. Jones readily replied "Mexican American." This created quite an argument with Mr. Jones, who astutely explained shw was "not Mexican American, but Spanish." Their arguing was interrupted when Mr. Jones began

tenuously explaining for me, "there was some misunderstanding on the adoption certificates, and their daughter was actually of Spanish descent." He further stated, "There are many differences between Mexicans and Spaniards, you know," and I failed to inquire about the differences. Mr. Jones mentioned in a later part of my interview that younger Mexican Americans are "more wild, irresponsible and have no courtesy," as opposed to the Mexican American adults with whom he has worked. Yet, again, Mr. Jones appeared to be very accepting of his adopted daughter's group of peers, who are solely Mexican Americans and Mrs. Jones feels Teri's identification with the Mexican American community is essential to Ter's mental well-being.

Not unlike many adoptions, unexpected problems and/or unforeseeable difficulties have emerged. The Jones' story is somewhat unique though. This couple adopted Teri without the knowledge that some of her immediate family members resided in their same neighborhood, in fact, within blocks of their home. Teri had not seen her natural family in several years. Problems permeated this early home life so that Teri was placed in foster care at an early age. Perhaps Teri would not have ever knowingly encountered her natural family again, except for the "charitable" efforts of a teacher, who had put the puzzle together and united brothers and sister Teri on the playground without discussing

it with anybody. To know one's origins is sometimes both necessary and beneficial, but when one has been separated because of a series of severe problems, and has found a secure resting place, this "joining together" can be a tender, but also damaging, occurrence. So it was that Teri's brothers began harassing her, labeling her a "sell-out" for having taken another family name. Jealousy and resentment harbored towards Teri, who had found a good home, separated the children further. Teri was emotionally torn, for although she was committed to her new family, her familial ties caused her to internalize these incidents. Even though Mrs. Jones hid her "great fears" of losing Teri, neither of the couple could handle this anymore, and so took Teri to the home where her brothers resided. I received no explanation of that day's occurrences, but Teri and her brothers no visit and limits have been set.

Teri is now moving into adolescence and the Jones' see, confident it will not be a difficult period, for they accept Teri where she is. Teri knows she is in a home that loves her at any cost, and perhaps she is better off in terms of achieving a stable identity that many of the other children whose parents I interviewed. Teri is in a Mexican American neighborhood, she has many Mexican American friends, she can speak some Spanish, and there is tremendous identification with the Mexican American culture and community at

her school. Teri knows she is Mexican American and she is proud of this and is involved in maintaining her identity.

The Oakes

I would be doing my reading audience a great disfavor if I did not express a somewhat vivid account of this very fascinating family, the Oakes. Tucked away on a small hill, encapsulated by unusal foliage and 2½ acres of open land, their old Victorian home welcomed the unlimited energies of children, and children is what this family is all about. This young couple, who have grown up in this artsy, white upper-middle class community, while he teaches in an eastside San Jose High School, have comfortably opened their home to five children and their two natural children.

I thought I had arrived at the wrong home when, moving up the rather long stone walkway, there stood two young black faces eagerly observing me. Mr. and Mrs. Oakes greeted me warmly, and as if to make sense immediately of their unusual family constellation, proceeded to introduce their seven children to me. As the children dispersed, the Oakes then shared an account of each child's stormy past, which brought them to the Oakes. The Oakes explained that after having two children of their own, they felt ready to adopt, having decided before their marriage that they would have two children together but then did not want to add to the population explosion. They had developed an empathy for

"hard-to-place" children, and feeling confident and comfortable in their motives, they adopted a Japanese/Black child and a Mexican American child. They also have three very disturbed foster children to whom they feel equally committed and would love to adopt all three of their foster children.

Their first adopted son is of Black and Japanese heritage, a little boy whose early abuse and neglect resulted in his emotional disturbance. This son, James, has come a long way in terms of adjustment and ability to display emotion. Mr. and Mrs. Oakes chose to adopt another "dark-skinned" child so that their adopted son would have another sibling with whom he could more readily identify, helping him to feel less different. This second adopted child was labeled Mexican American, but she appears very black. This unexpected skin coloring created no excitement or hesitancy for the Oakes, although it is doubtful other families in my study would have been so indifferent.

One of their three foster children is a Chilean-Indian boy, who is permanently placed in long-term foster care. His background is a horrendous history of parental abandonment, abusive foster care and three adoptive failures, so that this little boy has had no early nurturance or security, only rejection and self-guilt, which has lead to severe emotional and learning problems. The Oakes have apparently given this child the ingredients missing in his

life, and are even holding together in this child's battle for identity and purpose. His anger and confusion surmount as he is continually mistaken as black by his peers, but two years ago he could not express such feelings, any feelings. He never knew his mother and father, which may always remain his greatest question mark.

Dan, 16 years of age, has been in their home under foster care for five years. His dad is unable to parent him, and Dan's behavior reflects a history of neglect and negative strokes, for Dan came into their home a very introverted, self-hating young boy. The Oakes are strong, positibe reinforcers with unending patience. They focus in on a child's strengths and interests and encourage the development of both. Dan is the finest gardner in the family, is a leader at family discussions, and repairs any and every mechanical failure in the home at this point. It seems only the sky is the limit for this young man. A valuable insight into the character of the Oakes is expressed by the fact that Dan is still very close to his father, sees him every weekend, and hopes to live with his father on a permanent basis someday. The Oakes neither resent nor fear this, but readily encourage the relationship and continue to give this child their devoted love and encouragement, with the knowledge that he will return to his father one day. Another admirable element of this couple is their ability not to person-

alize the anger and frustrations their children project upon them, as they understand that they are not necessarily deliberated at them. Their children are allowed to focus their anger toward the Oakes, who recognize this as healthy.

The newest child to move into this family, Andy, follows the Oakes around wherever they go, being extremely insecure and needy. I would tend to say few people could deal with this on a daily basis, but they willingly are doing so, and intend to help this child overcome her fears of abandonment and insecurity.

The Oakes have two very beautiful natural children who are extremely bright, well-adjusted children. These children are seemingly not jealous of their parents' involvement with the other children. The Oakes somehow are able to divide their time and attention so that though the children may not have their parents' attention all the time, when they do it is both undivided and sincere.

The Oakes are unique to my sample also in that they are the one family who were members of FAIR (Families Adopting Inter-Racially). This organization was developed by parents who wanted to promote the adoption of minority children. This couple organized the FAIR chapter in Santa Clara County, but since then have left FAIR. Although they still actively promote such adoptions, and serve on various committees respectively, they explained that FAIR had

changed its emphasis and issued toward the adoption almost solely of Korean children. FAIR's underlying value base now reflects more of a religious motivation for adopting. This is explained by the fact the Harry Holt, the U.S. businessman and farmer who initially arranged the adoption of Korean children by U.S. familied in the 1960's, had been religious in his motivations and efforts.

FAIR had brought the Oakes into close contact with other families who share their ideals, values and lifestyle. Their children are able to socialize and identify with families of multi-racial backgrounds, so that the children did not feel so different, as if no other families lived as they did. The Oakes, to date, have maintained relationships with six other former FAIR families and continue to see them socially, both for themselves and their children.

With a family so complex as the Oakes, there is little outside socializing, aside from the FAIR families and immediate relatives who live close by. Mr. and Mrs. Oakes view very seriously their role as parents, providers, role models, educators, and are committed to their children's growth and eventual independence, so that they spend their time primarily with their children. They must run a "tight ship," necessitating structure and control in degrees. Responsibilities are shared. Gardening is a joint family effort and everyone seems to love this part of the week.

The children are active with school activities, and do visit with friends, but they are also at home quite a bit. Every Sunday includes an outing, and going out to dinner is solved as follows: Mom and Dad take a different child once every few weeks to a fancy dining place, and the whole family frequents little places, like Sizzler's or McDonald's. Mrs. Oakes said that these restaurant visits are accompanied by lots of staring, which the whole family can find amusing.

Nightime comes early, and in my late night tour of the home, I found a fascinating array of bunkbeds and crazy colors--a home that caters to the whims and fantasies of children.

A Single Parent

It is not uncommon for single parents to be asked to adopt an older child, or a child labeled with "special needs," as married couples are always given an infant or young child before a single parent would be considered, and this is magnified when there are few white children available for adoption. My sole single parent is still visiting with her prospective adoptive daughter, a fourteen year old Mexican American girl. Being an older child, the crux of concern in this long placement is the extensive, traumatic history of Lisa. Lisa's history unveils a suicidal mother who in turn transmitted messages to Lisa to kill herself as well. Lisa was suicidal, and her mother would leave large quantities of

pills all over the house, of which Lisa ogliged herself a couple of times. Lisa was raised in a traditionally Mexican home, and spoke no English until she was six years of age. Also, being a very bright, manipulative young girl, the combination of all these elements would steer a Mexican American social worker to place Lisa in a Mexican American home, which has not been the case. Given identity is important, an additional problem of being raised in a white home, having been first raised in a traditional Mexican home, would appear undesirable. It was decided that Lisa's needs were both unique and very intense, and that Lisa's adoptive parents would have to be acutely aware of the complexities in raising such a disturbed child. Diane was viewed as appropriate, having been a social worker for ten years, primarily having worked successfully with emotionally disturbed children.

Diane takes nothing lightly, especially this decision to adopt a child so very different from herself. Fortunately she is very conscientious about the possible issues that may arise. It is, of course, to her and Lisa's advantage that she has available not only her own knowledge and skills, but also those of the people with whom she works. Diane wonders if Lisa will be able to identify with and care for a "white" mother. She is also fearful that Lisa may exclude her from her personal life and choose to identify strictly with

Chicanos, perhaps to the extreme of taking a militant stance. Diane also expressed anxiety as to her ability to successfully assist Lisa in the maintenance and further development of her ethnic identity. Diane is reasonable enough to admit that, in fact, this may not be possible, or will, at least, be a difficult task. Perhaps because Diane and Lisa are wantingly and willingly working hard at their relationship, they may meet the afore-mentioned problems with a fortitude and realistic approach that will help them retain what they have developed together, while still allowing for Lisa's growth and identification with her culture.

Chapter 4

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

As mentioned in the section on research methodology, the original sample was 23 but only 9 elected to participate in the study. There is no way of determining why some couples elected not to participate. One woman whose husband did not wish to participate expressed the following in reply to the second letter:

> We adopted out boy because we loved him very much and wanted him to be an important part of our family. We didn't care about his heritage when we adopted him and we still don't. I only hope you can understand our feelings in this area.

This response suggests a blindness to the reality of American society. While the couple may not care about his heritage, they are overlooking the fact that their son might. In his daily encounters in society, he will be reminded constantly of the fact that he is a Mexican American. While the couple may not have to deal with the problem of his heritage in his infancy, one day they will have to face this fact. Love may not be enough to prepare him to deal with the majority group and its attitude toward him. He will need some eithnic affirmation of his identity if he is to develop a sense of confidence in himself and his identity.

This couple may be denying the fact of differences between themselves and their child. Other reasons for non-participation in the study may have been the desire of the adoptive parents to terminate contacts with the agency as quickly as possible so that they would not be reminded that their child is an adopted one. The fact that each of the original social workers had not contacted the families and requested their participation may also have prevented some from participation. They might have developed confidence in their worker and would have participated if he had encouraged it. The worker's motivation in not contacting the couples and requesting their participation also raises questions. Were the workers comfortable in this area of cross-cultural adoptions? Were the discussions in the adoptive interviews realistic, preparing the parents for some of the problems they might encounter? Was the importance of the child having contacts with his cultural group stressed?

Each interview was a unique experience. The first was the most difficult one. The respondent was a professional woman. During the early part of the interview, she appeared ill at ease and threatened. However, once the interview was initiated, it went well. In a number of instances, it was important to focus on the purpose of the interview. The respondents enjoyed talking about themselves

and their adopted children. The investigator did not know if this desire to focus on the children and the family resulted from a feeling of proudness, or nervousness, or internalized anger and hostility due to the adoption. It was almost as if to emphasize the meaning the child had come to represent in their lives. If their conversation appeared relevant and insightful, it was allowed to continue; however, it was frequently necessary to interrupt and to re-direct attention to the purpose of the interview.

In some instances, children were available during the interview. Some parents stated that they had nothing to hide from their children. The investigator sometimes held discussions with the children while the parents prepared themselves for the interview. In some instances, some mates did most of the talking. One respondent appeared uncomfortable in responding with any answer which was different from that of her husband.

The average duration of the interview was one hour. While the respondents were from varying educational levels, none had any trouble understanding the questions. On occasion, it was necessary to qualify the meaning of the question.

Question #1: Findings and Analysis

This question attempted to identify the sources by

which the couples had been referred to the agency. The following information was obtained:

Sources of Referral

	Self Referral (Telephone Book	Family	Friend	Doctor	Priest	Social Agency	Other
Adoptive Couples	3	1	1	-	-	-	4

Total = 9

The information revealed that the majority of referrals had been either of a self-referral nature or the couples had learned about adoptions from their place of employment. This finding suggested that the couples had awareness of adoptions and were able to identify sources on their own which would provide them with more information. A surprising finding is that no couple had learned about adoptions through publicity from social services agencies. This data resulted in two conclusions: 1) The couples who adopted Mexican American children had knowledge about adoptions and knew how to proceed. This suggests that they possess a certain amount of intelligence and possibly a high degree of self-sufficiency; and 2) Social services agencies are not reaching people through publicity campaigns. This appears strange inasmuch as they have children available for adoptions. Publicity campaigns directed toward ethnic groups may result

in favorable responses.

Question #2: Findings and Analysis

This question sought information on the ages of the adoptive parents at the time they applied for adoption. The following findings resulted:

Ages of Adoptive Couples

Age	Husband	Wife
20-24	2	
25-29		
30-34		3
35-39	3	
40-44	3	
45-49		
50-54		

This data revealed that the adoptive parents were not young. The majority of them were in the age ranges of 30-34. This suggested that the couples had life experiences and had established their living situations. Some of them already had either natural or adopted children. The desire to adopt may heavily have been a factor of age. Consequently, since infants are only given to younger couples, these couples were probably more receptive to adopting a child of another cultural group. The adopted children would probably fall in the hard-to-place category due to the ages of these couples. If they did not adopt a hard-to-place*

*The hard-to-place-child is usually older, has a

child, then adoption may not have been a possibility for them. This finding suggests that the Mexican American child will usually be placed with an older couple, who may or may not have children, and whose lifestyle has become somewhat established.

Question #3:

This question sought information on whether this was the parents' first attempt at adoption.

First Attempt at Adoption

	Yes	No	
Adoptive Parents	7	2	(N = 9)

This information revealed that the Mexican American child was usually placed with those couples who had applied for adoption for the first time. If we remembered the ages of the adoptive parents (Question #1) and the fact that seven (7) of the nine (9) couples had applied for adoption only once, it appears that the Mexican American child was placed with older couples and the likelihood was great that a younger Anglo child would not have been placed with them. Two of the children had been placed in foster homes as

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physical or mental impairment and is usually a member of a minority or racial group. He is hard to place because he is usually not the first choice of couples who are applying for adoption.

infants and these placements ended in adoption. One couple attempted to adopt unsuccessfully back east. They were an older couple and the wife was almost blind. Thus, Mexican American children were placed with these Anglo couples due to extenuating circumstances: age, foster home adoptions, and the physical impairment of the spouses of one of the couples (blindness).

Question #4:

This question was a most important one. It attempted to identify if a Mexican American child had been the couple's intitial preference.

Couple's Preference for Child

	Anglo	Mexican American	Other
Adoptive Parents	0	0	0

This question is a difficult one for analysis. None of the couples had specified their desires for a white child only. Many of them were aware that a great number of white children were not available for adoption. None of them wanted a black child. Even though this apparently was not verbalized to the adoption worker, it existed in their minds and thus black children had been excluded. With the limited number of white children available and the exclusion of black children, the only alternative appeared to be Mexican

American children. Thus, all of the couples responded that they were open to the adoption of a Mexican American child. The single adoptive parent stated she was informed that she would receive a hard-to-place child. Also some of the couples were aware that they would receive a child more quickly if he was a minority one. Five of the families already had children and were open to the adoption of a Mexican American child.

This information suggests that the placement of the Mexican American child was essentially a second choice with these families. They were aware of their limitations in successfully adopting an Anglo child and thus the Mexican American child became their preference.

Question #5: Findings and Analysis

This question centered on the number of children in the adoptive families.

Number of Adoptive Couples with Children

	Yes	No	
Adoptive Couples	x		1.
	x		2.
	x		3.
	x		4.
	x		5.
		x	6.
		x	7.
		x	8.
		x	9.

Five of the couples had children of their own. This

is an interesting finding. One of the philosophies of trans-racial adoptions as expressed by Sellers[1] is that is should not be the sole means of achieving parenthood, that parents should be able to have natural children of their own if they are to be allowed to adopt a racially mixed child. In view of the fact that five of these couples had children of their own, such thinking be also be applicable to the Mexican American child. In this aspect cross-cultural adoptions may be viewed as a supplemental wasy of gaining children. The child becomes a commodity. He is placed with those families who request a child, but have children of their own. This raises the question of the stringency which is applied to the adoptive study, which ends in the placement of a Mexican American child in an Anglo home. It equally raises the question of the motivation of these parents in brining a Mexican American child into their families. The overriding concern seems to be that of receiving a child without realistic explorations of future consequences of such placements.

Question #6:

In attempting to gain a profile on these parents, this question sought information on their places of birth. It may be speculated that people born in an urban environment may

[1]Martha G. Sellers, "Transracial Adoptions," Child Welfare, June, 1969.

exhibit more liberal attitudes and tolerance toward cultural differences than those from small town communities.

Birthplace of Adoptive Parents

	Adoptive Couples
Large City or Urban Area	8
Suburb	
Rural or Small Town	1
Foreign Born: Urban	
Foreign Born: Rural and Small Town	

Seven couples including the single adoptive parent had grown up in a large city. One couple from Texas clearly stated their negative feelings toward blacks. A man from Georgia had spent considerable time in the military and stated his traveling around had resulted in his changing some of his ideas somewhat. A woman from Massachussetts presented a racist attitude, but stated they were not uptight about the adoption of the child. They had had the child with them since foster care. She stated they might have had some reservations about adopting a Mexican American child if they had applied for adoption instead of adopting the child from foster care.

This information revealed that the couples were primarily from large cities, but had varying degrees of negative feelings toward minorities, especially the blacks. Once couple adopted the Mexican American child through

foster care and would have had second thoughts about adopting one if they had not gone through this experience. The urban couples thus revealed vestiges of prejudice but these had been tempered through various experiences. However, the question must be raised if these couples had racist attitudes, especially toward blacks, how would they rear their Mexican American child, and would these attitudes, possibly, at some stage, affect their handling of him. It certainly raises the importance of a thorough discussion of racist attitudes in placing minority children with Anglo couples.

Questions #7 and #8: Findings and Analysis

These questions focused on the educational attainment of the parents:

Highest Educational Level Attained

	M	F
Grade school not completed		
Grade school graduate		
High school not completed		
High school completed	2	
College not completed		2
College graduate	2	2
Graduate training, no degree	4	2
Graduate degree		1
Vocational training after high school	1	1

Educational levels of these couples varied. At least fourteen (14) of them had completed some college courses. Eight (8) of the men who had gone to college were trained in

the helping professions. Seven (7) of the women had some college and five (5) of them were professionals. One was a social worker, two were nurses, one a teacher and one a physical therapist. The information suggests that the parents who adopted Mexican American children were better average educated and were involved in professional occupations. These couples, because of their educational levels, may have more knowledge of children, problems confronting minority members and their attitudes may be more liberal. This is an area in which further research should be conducted. A hypothesis might be: the greater the level of education, the more willing are Anglo parents to adopt cross-culturally. Two Mexican American children were placed in homes in which the levels of education of the parents were less than college. These parents also showed tremendous love and affection for their children. These parents were more willing to allow their children to have Mexican American friends. This suggests another hypothesis for testing: the lesser the education of Anglo parents who adopt Mexican American children, the more open they are to their children maintaining cultural ties and having Mexican playmates.

Question #10: Findings and Analysis

Findings revealed a broad range of occupations among the couples. Two of the males were engineers and three were teachers. One of the fathers was in a managerial position.

He was the chief of fiscal services at a Veterans Administration Hospital. A foreman was included in the sample. Only one unskilled blue collar worker was represented, and he was a truck driver.

Five of the adoptive mothers were employed in professional positions, including those of social work, nursing, education and physical therapy. One of the nurses had chosen to be a full time mother and had not practised her profession. The other mothers continued to work. Only one, a nurse, worked part-time. One of the mothers worked as a florist in the business of her extended family, but was not employed at the time of the study. Another of the mothers was a full time homemaker for a social services agency. The other two adoptive mothers had elected to remain to remain at home.

This information revealed that primarily these are families in which both spouses are employed. To some degree this may be a factor in their ages at the time of adoption. They may have delayed having children and worked until financially secure.

The majority of the couple were professional. and this may be a characteristic of those couple who adopt Mexican American children.

Question #11

This question focused on the income levels of the

couples at the time of adoption. The income levels varied, the smallest was in the range of $12-15,000 and the highest was $36-37,000. The income was not necessarily a correlate of educational attainment. The truck driver earned $15,000 which was the same salary as the teacher. One couple in which the male had not finished high school made a maximum of $36,000 annually.

This information revealed that these couples' incomes were middle class and better.

Question #12

This question focused on ethnic background of child. Four of the children were of Mexican heritage, two of them were of Mexican and Anglo heritage and three were mixed, other than Anglo. Generally, the adoptive couples had vague information in this area. One couple did not know the ethnic background of their child but it was assumed to be Mexican American. Another couple was told their adoptive child was Mexican American and was from a part of Mexico where the people are relatively dark. The skin colors of the children varied from fairness to darkness. One of the couples who had three boys and wanted a little girl was happy that the child fit into their family's physical appearance and would be reared as an Anglo child. The father explained that whenever it would be to their daughter's advantage to be of a

minority background such as college, employment, then they would make this an issue. This couple revealed nonsense of pride in their daughter's ethnic background and would only use it when it would be to her advantage.

The adoptive planning and placement of the Mexican American children with their adoptive parents also raised some questions. One couple stated that they come to meet their child at a park. The child went home with them that day, and this must have been a shock for both the parents and the child. This couple had adopted a second child and the mother referred to her as their pride and joy. The father claimed to have an excellent relationship with the first adopted boy. The way in which this adoption was handled undoubtedly was traumatic for the boy and the adoptive parents. It would have been difficult for the adoptive parents to raise questions about this procedure for fear of endangering their chances at adoption. It may certainly be stated that this adoption did not start off on the best footing.

Question #13

This question sought to identify the regional birthplaces of this population of adoptive parents. The findings reveal that over one-half of these couples have lived in California all of their lives. The other adoptive parents

were born in varied regions throughout the United States.

In analysis of these findings, unlike the majority of families in the United States, who change their residence several times in their lives, the adoptive parents have remained relatively stationary and appear quite stable. This population of adoptive parents may be very different from those in other regions and/or states throughout the United States.

Question #14

The couple from Texas disagreed as to the ethnic background of their adopted child. The father insisted his daughter was not of Mexican but of Spanish heritage. The mother appeared more comfortable with the Mexican heritage. When they were asked how they would describe their child's nationality on a questionnaire, the mother stated "white." The father was not sure as the daughter was "mixed" racially. The other couples stated they would describe their adopted children as Mexicans. Even though the couples were aware of their child's Mexican background, and stated they would not hide it if asked about it, the response must be accepted at face value. One of the couples stated that they were proud their daughter looked like the rest of the family and they would not think of raising her as anything but an Anglo child.

Question #15

This question sought information on the ethnic neighborhood in which the adoptive parents lived.

The majority of the parents do not live in integrated neighborhoods. Some described their neighborhoods as primarily white with only a smattering of minorities. They did not know minority families to whom they referred. This may well be a result of their socioeconomic status or their preference. It is not possible to say. Only one of the couples had several immediate neighbors who were Mexican American, and this couple was the only couple located on the eastside of San Jose, where resides the majority of the Mexican American population of San Jose.

This finding is significant, and raises several questions. If the neighborhoods are not ethnically integrated, then how will the parents insure their child's ethnic heritage? Do they plan to move? So they plan to enroll him/her in ethnic activities, or participate in ethnic celebrations? If they do not, then the possibility is great that they do not plan to perpetuate consciously or deliberately the child's ethnic heritage.

This ethnic isolation also suggests that possibly these parents have incorporated ethnic stereotypes and have attempted to isolate themselves from ethnic minorities. The ethnic/racial distributions of the neighborhood were:

White	Mexican Americans	Blacks	Asians	Other
70%	20%	5%	3%	2%

The fact that only one couple lives on the eastside suggests the need for special recruitment efforts aimed at the Mexican America population on the eastside.

Question #16:

As a means of testing racial/ethnic attitudes, the adoptive parents were asked about the racial/ethnic composition of their previous neighborhoods.

This data also revealed the adoptive couples had previously lived in non-integrated neighborhoods, and had had little contact with Mexican Americans. The evidence is heavily weighted that these adoptive parents had litte or no exposure or contacts with Mexican Americans. Thus, the placement of a Mexican American child with them must raise some questions as to their understanding of the child's culture and their intentions of maintaining the child's cultural heritage.

Questions #17 and #18

This question asked if the adoptive parents had Mexican American friends before they adopted. Only one of the couples had a close Mexican American friend. This friend was the Godfather of their natural child. Another couple's

daughter was dating a Mexican American and the couple revealed no concern in this area. Other couples had Mexican American friends in high school but these friendships did not continue. The couples were not socializing with Mexican Americans; their contacts with Mexican Americans were generally limited. Thus the sample revealed a high degree of geographical isolation from Mexican Americans, revealing racial, social and economic distance between these Anglo adoptive parents and Mexican Americans, but yet they had adopted a Mexican American child. Those who acknowledged contacts with Mexican Americans revealed no regular visiting patterns.

Questions #19 and #20

These questions asked if the couples following adoption had attempted to make friends with Mexican American families. Only one couple admitted any attempt to become involved with organizations related to racial issues. This couple were members of FAIR and had served on panels advocating the adoption of minority children by Anglo parents. This couple were the parents of three racially mixed children, and at the time of adoption had requested specifically requested a Mexican American child. The organization with which they were active had changed its focus and thus they had withdrawn their membership. The remainder of the sample

denied that their interest in any cause was a motivating factor in their adopting. Interestingly, none of the couples appeared socially conscious people with the exception of the couple who formerly belonged to FAIR. All of them appeared relatively conservative in their ideologies.

Question #21

This question sought information on whether couples had previously had contacts with Mexican Americans through employment.

Findings revealed that several of the couples had worked with Mexican Americans for extended period of time. These couples felt their contacts were good.

Even though several of the couples had worked with Mexican Americans, their contacts had not developed into friendships. They were brought into contact with each other due to work. These contacts were not always positive, but generally they were not characterized by excessive friction, and were job related.

Question #22 - #24

Questions 22-24 focused on the attitudes of these adoptive parents in several areas such as their adopted child dating, marrying, and having Mexican American friends. The parents were asked to rate their findings in regard to the above areas.

All of the couples stated their approval of their adopted child dating or marrying a Mexican American. Only two of the couples would encourage their child to have Mexican American friends, and only two of the couples stated they would encourage their Mexican American children to make Mexican American friends.

Analysis of this data reveals great acceptance of marriage between their adoptive child and a Mexican American, but less acceptance in the area of the adopted child having Mexican American friends. This is an interesting finding. It suggests if friendships are not encouraged between the Mexican American adopted child and other Mexican Americans, then marriage within the ethnic group may not occur. These parents do not present a wide acceptance of contacts between their child and other Mexican Americans. This suggests a belief on their part, conscious or unconscious, that their child would identify with and live within their value system, to the esclusion of his/her ethnic heritage. A degree of isolation from the child's ethnic heritage is indicated. Some parents stated their child could marry whenever he/she chooses to, and others cloaked their answers with qualifying phrases. The findings suggested that the adoptive parents would be happier if their child married an Anglo, even though this was not definitely stated.

Questions #25 and #26

These questions sought to identify how the adopted child, if he/she was filling out a form, would identify his/her ethnic background, and how parents would do the same.

Only one of the couples responded that they were not sure how their child would respond. The investigator questions if this couple has ever discussed with their adopted child his different ethnic heritage. Other couples stated that their child would respond "Mexican American."

In Question #27, only one couple stated they would classify their child as something different from Mexican American. The adoptive mother from Texas specifically stated she would classify their child as white. The husband said she had four different nationalities and did not know what he would answer. The other couples stated that they would describe their child as Mexican American, which again may be due to the fact that their child's physical characteristics identify his/her background.

Question #27

This question sought to collect information on the couple's attitudes once they had definitely decided to adopt a Mexican American child. As mentioned previously, the couple who adopted the Mexican American child who had been a

foster child with them expressed some uncertainty if they had not had the child with them for such a long period. The single parent expressed her views about the child's cultural awareness (she is adopting a 12-year-old Mexican-American girl). She expressed fear about what would happen between the two of them if the child would reject her white mother and/or become exceedingly militant. If this happened, the parent was fearful the child would evaluate her as well.

The other seven couples expressed no concern. Their response must be questioned. Either they were blinding themselves to the status of the minority group in the United States or had unshakable confidence in their ability to rear a Mexican-American child in a positive environment. It is possible they thought that by adopting a child he would magically become Anglo.

Questions #28 and #29

These questions focused on how comfortable the couples were in informing friends and relatives of their plans to adopt a Mexican-American child.

Two adoptive couples stated their mothers had some precaution about their plans. One grandmother expressed her views that all adopted children are dumb while the other expressed concern over possible discrimination directed toward the children. Generally, the couples received positive support from families and friends when they informed

them of their adoptive plans. Only one of the couples did not reveal their plans to their friends.

The findings suggest these couples had good supportive systems, and were encouraged to follow through in their plans. While two grandmothers expressed more concern, none of the couples were discouraged by friends or relatives.

Questions #30, #31, #32, #33

These four questions focused on relations among family, friends, and neighbors, and if the fact of adoption of a Mexican-American child had changed the relationships. These questions were very important in attempting to arrive at an overall understanding of whether the adoption had had negative influence.

Simon has suggested that changes in relationships among friends in particular are not uncommon when a new addition to the family appears. These changes are deemed to be more significant if the new addition is a member of another race.[2]

One half of the adoptive parents revealed they see their parents at least once a month. One fourth see their parents once a week or more, and the remainder see their

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[2]Simon, p. 89.

parents a few times a year. Some of the parents lived considerable distances, so visiting was impractical. All of the adoptive parents had discussed plans with other parents before the adoption. Only a few of the parents expressed that their relationships with their parents had been strained as a result of the adoption. The majority stated their families had been supportive and positive toward the adoption. Three of the adoptive mothers had sensed some hesitation on the parts of their own mothers as to whether this was a good idea. These hesitations were attributed to narrow-mindedness and/or prejudice, especially to the concern of the future implications of such actions for society. One uncle completely disassociated himself for a year from one of the couples, but then reunited with the couple. This couple expressed a low tolerance to anyone who did not accept their adopted children in a similar manner as their own were accepted. It definitely appeared that none of these couples were willing to forfeit adoption even if their families expressed disapproval of it. Also, even though the majority of the couples' parents lived close by and were accessible to these couples, the couples did not appear particularly attached to their own parents and monthly or bi-monthly visiting suited their needs.

Similar positive remarks were received from friends and neighbors. These parents were concerned that their

families and friends treated their children with kindness and respect. Since some of the friends wanted the couples to adopt to become families, they encouraged them and did not appear concerned over the child they adopted. Friends provided great support to one of the couples who were encountering problems in their adoption. The couple had five (5) natural children and were emergency foster parents also. Their adopted child had severe medical problems which always placed her life in jeopardy. The case against the couple adopting this Mexican-American child was strong, but they were finally approved and attributed this approval to the support they received from others.

Thus these parents received positive support from friends and relatives.

None of the adoptive parents sense their adoption of the child as an altruistic act. None of them displays an attitude of "Wasn't this kind of us?" Indeed, most of them felt very fortunate to have been able to adopt their children.

Question #34

This question focused on comments of friends following the adoption. Most of the parents could not immediately comment on this question. This may have resulted from their having adopted the child some time ago, and they could not recall any specific comments which remained with

them. People were aware of the adoption and made favorable comments when they first viewed the adopted child.

Question #35

This question sought information on how the adopted parents would handle the child's questions if he asked why he looked differently from them. This couple explained that differences did not mean anything. They attempted to encourage their children to "like" themselves and be proud of who they were. Two of the Mexican-American children in the sample were older children and were aware of the reason for the differences in appearance. Three of the children had been foster children and thus also had awareness of the reasons for their differences. Several of the children were infants. One of the children was very light in appearance and two of the children were dark but aware of reasons for differeneces due to the nature of the way they were adopted.

This appeared an area in which these parents had given little consideration. The older children who were adopted may not have to grapple with this question, but the younger ones will. The manner in which the parents answer it will reveal their own comforableness in this area.

Question #36

This question sought answers as to how would the

adoptive parents feel if their adopted child would attempt at some point to locate his natural parents.

The majority of the parents expected their child would seek out his natural parent. Some parents doubted it, and others stated it depended on the climate, that is, if other children were doing it. Only the single parent who had earlier expressed some fear around her child's quest for identity verbalized concern if this should happen. All of the other adoptive parents said without a doubt they would assist their child.

This answer requires further analysis. The magnitude expressed by these parents is real and suggested they are secure in their adoptive role. One must ask, does this result from the fact that their child is a Mexican American? Are they sincere when they make such an answer? This means even more surprising when the couple stated they would view their daughter naturally as being white, and another was happy because their daughter's physical appearance blended in well with the family. This answer at this point must be taken with a grain of salt, possibly due to the newness of the adoption, and the possibility of not having to face this this issue for a number of years.

Question #37 & #38

These questions asked if the adoptive couple expected their child to identify with the Mexican-American culture,

and if they would assist him.

Four of the couples responded they did not expect their child to identify with the culture. Two couples were certain their child would identify with his culture, while three of the couples were not sure. They felt this would depend on the political climate, or peer pressure. Only one couple expressed hesitancy in assisting their child in identifying with the Mexican-American culture, stating "It depends on how far. We would not encourage our child's interests in joining any radical organizations." The other couples (this included the single parent) stated they would indeed assist their child in identifying with the Mexican-American culture if the child expressed a desire to do so.

The analysis of this question reveals that the couples were not enthusiastic about assisting their Mexican-American children to identify with their culture. Again, the responses indicated a desire for the Mexican-American children to identify with the Anglo culture. Five couples presented an essentially negative response to the question, and three were not positive about their feelings in this area. Therefore, the conclusion is that these parents will not deliberately attempt to strengthen their child's Mexican-American identity.

Questions #39 & #40

These two questions centered on reasons for adoptions.

Reasons for Adoption

	Adoptive Parents
Infertility	3
Population boom, yet wanted children	2
Empathy for homeless children	1
Became attached during foster care	2
Wanted stimulus of a child	1

The reasons for adoption varied. They essentially focused on the desire to have a family, which suggests affectional needs. The highest percentage of the reasons was infertility, followed by a desire to have children without contributing to the population boom, and attachment during the period was in the foster home.

These reasons are not unusual. They are the usual reasons cited by foster parents in their motivation for adopttion. In this aspect, these parents appeared no different from any other foster parents.

The response to Question #40 is interesting. Only one of the couples made a conscious decision at the beginning of the adoption process to adopt a "dark-skinned child." The single adoptive parent had initially attempted to adopt a child from India and had made inquiries in this area. Her reason was that she wanted a child different from herself.

We may conclude that this agency initially offered the possibility of adopting a Mexican-American child, and the adoptive parents were receptive to this suggestion. It was an agency-induced decision. None of the couples stated

the child they adopted was a second choice. In their application forms they had written that race was irrelevant. However, they stated they would not accept a black child. The couples were aware of the difficulties in adopting a white child. They had expected to adopt a non-white chile and did not think much leeway existed for them. Nevertheless leeway did exist as they had excluded the black child. Thus, the difficulty in adopting a white child, and refusal to adopt a black child left only the Mexican American child available to them. In a hierarchical level of position we would list the first choice as a white child, second choice as a Mexican America child and the black child is excluded. This behavior may have relevancy because the Mexican American is the largest minority population in the Southwest United States. It would be an interesting study to compare the attitudes of Anglo parents who adopted Mexican American children with Anglo parents who adopted black children.

Questions #41 - #43

These questions focused on 1) motivation, 2) racism, and 3) attitudes toward Mexican American firls who give up their children for adoption.

Parents were asked to comment on whether they felt racism affected their lives, and if so, how? Six couples stated that racism did not affect their lives at all. The

single parent expressed that racism does affect her life at work. She stated that she feels excluded by Mexican American workers. She also said that the Mexican Americans where she works are always complaining about discrimination, and sometimes she feels it is "just an excuse." The couple who have adopted three racially mixed children feel very affected by racism and have attempted to promote racial relations through "Cross-Cultural and Transracial Adoptions." They experience a lot of staring and disapproving looks as well. Another couple only stated, "Yes, there are rough problems."

In retrospect of these findings, it means that the majority of these adoptive parents have very little social awareness, are even oblivious to the reality of racial relations that surrounds them. Their responses showed no concern over racial matters, and this naivite may be destructive if their role as parents and their relationship with their Mexican American child who will not be able to deny his/her Mexican American background as he moves into the greater society. Without preparation by both parents and child for future discrimination, their adopted child will experience great pain and confusion.

Th comment expressed by the single parents is not an uncommon assumption of white America, where Anglos do not want to have to listen to demands for equality for too long, becoming rather annoyed, impatient and threatened.

One of these couples stated that they felt proud of those Mexican American girls who give up their children, and had a lot of respect for such behavior. One-third of the couples expressed great sympathy for Mexican-American girls who relinquish their children, while one-third stated they could make no judgement for such a sensitive and personal choice.

Parents' reasons for why Mexican American girls relinquish their children varied. Over one-half stated that it is probably a decision based on the girl's financial position, in other words, the girl feels unable to maintain the financial responsibility of raising a child. Two couples suggested that the girl felt shameful having had a child, and there was family pressure to give up the child. Other couples states that the girls feel there are better opportunities for their children than the young mother can offer. One mother expressed, "The culture is becoming less family oriented, girls cannot 'hack it' and they are probably on drugs." This answer was very interesting.

Again, the parents revealed some unusual attitudes when discussing why the mother had given up her child for adoption. A high percentage claimed the decision was based on financial reasons. Two couples suggested the mother felt shame for having had the child and was bowing to family pressure. One couple stated the girls were aware that

adoptive families could provide better opportunities for the child. It is surprising that the greatest weight was given to financial considerations. This suggests that these parents did not recognize the pain or anguish which went into this decision. They were oblivious to the psychological pain which a mother undoubtedly endured in this decision. The child became viewed as a commodity which became theirs, due to the financial inability of the mother to care for the child. This leads to some questioning of the emotional state of these parents and their ability to empathize with the pain of others. The parents were asked about their feelings towards Mexican-American girls who give up their children for adoption and generally the couples expressed sympathy for them. Some of the couples expressed an inability to make a judgement on such a sensitive and personal choice. The fact that some of these parents could not respond to this question suggests that they were blocking out this area, or were insensitive to the mother of the child whom they had adopted. One must wonder how they will explain to the child the fact that his natural mother had given him up for adoption. Since one would think that this question could also come up in the adoption study, it is difficult to think that the parents had not reflected on this area. Certainly, such attitudes could be investigated and analyzed before the child is placed with the couple.

CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this investigation was to identify the motivation, racial attitudes, and demographic characteristics of Anglo parents who adopted Mexican-American children. The investigator was particularly interested in determining if this practice was: 1) in the best interest of the children and 2) if these parents are interested in maintaining the ethnic identity of the child. Generally speaking, the findings of this study revealed that these parents were middle-class, basically professional or semi-professional, generally had better than average educations, lived in generally all-white neighborhoods, and had few Mexican-American friends.

The adoption of the Mexican-American child was not their initial choice. Generally, they were aware that due to their ages adopting a white child would be difficult and they would be eligible for a Mexican-American child. Thus, the Mexican-American child was a second choice. These parents generally revealed considerable naivetee about the racism that exists in American society. They anticipated little difficulty, if any, in rearing their child; the majority of them viewed their child as being an Anglo, as if by magic felt this would become a fact. They expressed no strong desire to maintain the cultural heritage of their Mexican-

American child, or to expose him to events or associations which would enhance his identity. Thus, we can conclude that these children will probably someday encounter conflict in the development of their identities. They will also lose their cultural heritage. Their parents were generally unrealistic in the perceptions of the vast challenges they as parents would face in rearing their Mexican-American child. As they had isolated themselves in almost all-white neighborhoods, they also planned to isolate their child from the Mexican-American culture.

The social distance between these Anglo adoptive parents and the Mexican-American community is also seen in the social isolation of the Anglo adoption workers and the Mexican-American community. This distance of staff from the Mexican-American community explains why children's ethnicity is often ignored. Until the last year, only one third-world adoption worker was employed with the Department of Social Services. Those four (4) third-world adoption workers employed presently remain isolated from the majority of Anglo adoption workers so that there is little cooperation among workers.

This practice may be looked at from a framework of evaluating if there is anything about the Mexican-American culture worth maintaining and preserving. The answer lies in the fact that all cultures have values worth maintaining, and

if the Mexican-American child is removed from contacts with his own culture, then he will suffer from ego-damage in identity formation. Since these parents did not place great importance on the preservation of cultural ties, then the possibility is great that the Mexican-American child's cultural heritage will be lost to him. In this aspect, the practice is a damaging one.

Also, some couples had negative attitudes toward blacks, and one must wonder if similar attitudes, possibly unconscious, may not exist toward all colored minority groups. However, the couples denied racist attitudes and appeared naive in their understanding of racial prejudice in American society. In a similar manner, the couples also did not empathize greatly with the child's mother. They viewed her as giving up the child as a result of financial necessity, but did not recognize the pain inherent in such a decision. Based on these findings, it is concluded: 1) that the couples who adopted these children did so as a second choice, revealing that the motivation of these adoptive parents was left unexplored; 2) these couples are middle class, living in relative isolation from minority groops; 3) these couples denied strong attitudes of racism, but this is open to question; 4) these couples do not value the cultural heritage of the Mexican-American child, and will attempt to rear him as Anglo; and 5) these couples did not emphasize with the

plight of the child's mother or her pain in giving the child up for adoption.

At this time the third-world adoption workers at the Department of Social Service are recruiting third-world professionals to come to the adoption bureau for information and educational meetings related to the special needs and aspects of these respective ethnic (racial) groups. This will add to the development of cultural sensitivity among adoption workers.

Even though these parents did not recognize the magnitude of racism in U.S. society, it is difficult to conceive of any person being totally unaware or unconcerned. For this reason, new special efforts directed toward recruiting minority adoptive parents for the many minority children awaiting adoption must be initiated. An example is the proposed program of a community outreach and education program in the East Side of San Jose which will reach this minority community. The intention is that these people will become familiar with the services of the adoption bureau and will consider becoming adoptive applicants. This committee of third world workers who have proposed the preceding idea have also attained approval of their recommendation that adoption workers provide statistical information on the ethnic breakdown of clients and dictation on the same for every client including natural parents, adoptive parents, and

children. Dictation would include reference to the social/ cultural background of clients, language spoken by clients, degree of interaction with other minority people, nad cultural heritage, such as diet, religion, etc. In this way, minority children may be placed with their respective ethnic groups

Our profession has a responsibility to respect all value systems as valid and important. Yet if we continue to follow established adoptive practices in regards to cross-cultural placements, children's values remain unprotected and threatened. Ethnicity must be considered, for after all, the ultimate recipient should be the child.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study of cross-cultural adoption of Mexican-American children by Anglo parents clearly indicates that such children suffer a loss of cultural identity. This being established, it would follow that social work in adoption agencies might well gear its policies and practice with the following recommendations in mind:

1. This practice should be abolished or children will continue to be denied their cultural heritage.

2. In any area of children having been placed cross culturally, there must be assurance that the children will be placed within their heritage.

3. The adoption process should focus clearly on the ethnic heritage of the child as an important and necessary adjunct to identity formation. Until the time when placements can be developed for Mexican American children with Mexican-American adoptive parents, it is strongly recommended that much more attention be given to the selection of alternative parents. As social workers, committed to the protection of cultural values, we must look more carefully at such significant factors as:

(1) the assurance that the child is not a second, or even a third choice, but rather that the adoptive parents initially wanted to adopt a Mexican American child.

(2) that these parents accept, with pride, the ethnic background of their adopted Mexican-American child, and raise this child within his/her ethnic heritage.

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