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A pilot study of foster care placements of Latina and Caucasian females in Santa Clara County

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A Pilot Study of Foster Care Placements of Latina
and Caucasian Females In Santa Clara County

by

Melissa Paulette Suarez

A Research Report Presented to
the Faculty of the College of Social Work
San Jose State University

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Abstract

This pilot study examined the placements of Latina and Caucasian females ($N = 45$) in foster family care placements in Santa Clara County. Case record data gathered by Santa Clara County's Social Services Agency were used in order to examine client demographics. The data set used for this study was divided into two groups: one representative of Latina teens aged 13 to 18 in foster care ($n = 21$), and the other their Caucasian counterparts ($n = 24$). This study compared Latina and Caucasian female teens in order to examine if there were any significant differences in the service received by the two groups. The findings indicated that there were no significant mean differences in number of foster placements and number of previous referrals to child welfare services between type of service plan implemented by child welfare services, type of abuse, and ethnicity and primary language of their foster caregiver.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The Santa Clara County Department of Family and Children's Services (DFCS) is one component of the county Social Services Agency. The mission of the Santa Clara County Social Service Agency is "to deliver the highest quality services to all citizens in our community in a prompt, dignified and efficient manner" (Santa Clara County Social Services Agency Guide, 1992). Furthermore, the mission of the Department of Family and Children's Services is to protect children from abuse and neglect, promote their healthy development and provide services to families which strengthen their ability to care for their children. The department is responsible for prevention, intervention, advocacy and public education related to the protection of children and their need for permanency and stability in their care and nurturing (Santa Clara County Social Services Agency Guide, 1992).

The Department of Family and Children's Services is the agency which provides child welfare services for Santa Clara County. These services begin from the point at which a referral of child neglect, abuse or exploitation is accepted until a permanent plan has been implemented or stabilized for the referred child. The services provided, within the State of California, fall into four separate yet connected programs: (1) emergency response; (2) family maintenance; (3) family reunification; and (4) permanency planning. This study will focus on family reunification services. The goal of family reunification is designed to provide time-limited foster care services to prevent or remedy abuse or exploitation when the child cannot safely remain at home and needs temporary foster care while services

are provided to unite the family.

The past two decades have seen enormous growth in the number of child abuse and neglect reports received and investigated by DFCS (El Comit /DFCS: Strategic Plan, 1993) These current trends are of special concern to the Chicano/Latina community. In 1992, Chicano/Latina's represented 18.5% of the adult population in Santa Clara County, however they represented a disproportionate number of Chicano/Latinas in the child welfare system (El Comit /DFCS: Strategic Plan, 1993). Currently, Chicano/Latina's represent 21% of the population of Santa Clara County (Santa Clara County Social Services Agency Fact Sheet, 1997).

In 1992, Chicano/Latina Children, under age 18, made up 29% of the child population; however, they number 42% of children placed in the child foster care system. Also from fiscal year 1984 to 1992 the overall number of children in foster care increased by 51%. Consequently the number of Chicano/Latina children in placement increased by an overwhelming 91% (El Comit /DFCS: Strategic Plan 1993). Currently, the Chicano/Latina population in the child welfare system is 37.5% (Santa Clara County Social Services Agency Fact Sheet, 1997).

In light of these factors, on January 11, 1993, the Department of Family and Children's services was presented with and implemented a long-range five-year plan in an attempt to provide services in a more culturally sensitive way. This was done so that the service recipients would be of so that the recipients of the service would be better able to utilize resources and understand this very complicated

system. This plan of action called for responsive, accountable and customized service, that was neighborhood-based, and allowed for easy access. It also was to be empowering, culturally competent, linguistically appropriate and client-oriented in order to develop respect and trust between the agency and its consumers. Another focus was to deliver services in a culturally sensitive way and for this service to be culturally relevant (El Comite/ DFCS: Strategic Plan 1993).

This descriptive study examined child welfare services and its methods of service delivery with regard to the specific impact on the Latina teen population (13-18) in foster family care. The outcome of this study will be utilized as an indicator of the county's culturally competent services, and the success of the strategic plan.

Research Question

What are the similarities and differences in foster care placements for Latina and Caucasian children in Santa Clara County?

Overview of Chapters

Chapter 2 of this study reviews literature relative to the differences and similarities in the foster care experience between the Caucasian population and that of minority populations. Previous research points to the fact that there are fewer foster care placement disruptions when the child and foster parent are of the same ethnic and/or racial background (Folaron & McCartt-Hess, 1993). This literature also reports there are significantly fewer disruptions when foster parents have knowledge of the ethnic and racial traditions of the child even if they are of a different race (Folaron & McCartt-Hess, 1993).

The theoretical framework of this research will be presented in chapter 3. This study utilized social information processing theory (Milner 1993) to show how conceptions of race and ethnicity are formed and how they are utilized in our interactions with others. This theory also acknowledges social “lenses” through which we see the world and its relatedness and importance to social behavior and “cultural competency.” Chapter 4 will consist of the methods by which the data were obtained. More specifically, this chapter will discuss sample size, types of statistical analysis utilized and the operationalization of terms used to describe the sample groups. The results section, Chapter 5, will illustrate the findings of Latina teens ages 13 to 18 who are currently in foster family care in Santa Clara County, with regard to the similarity of race and ethnicity between themselves and their foster parent, number of foster placements, age, number of previous referrals to child welfare services, and type of abuse. Chapter 6 will discuss the study findings in the context of the research question, the literature reviewed and the theoretical framework in order to interpret the data and offer conclusions regarding its implications.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

There are children who are physically, sexually, and emotionally abused by their own parents or caregivers. Victims of child abuse die or suffer from long-term physical and psychological scars that interfere with their ability to grow into healthy and productive adults. Bowlby (1973), in his classic research on attachment and loss, asserts that children's past experiences interfere with the child's ability to trust and bond with adults.

When these children are removed from their abusive situations, they are most often placed in out-of-home care, more commonly referred to as foster care. Unfortunately, many foster care experiences do not give a child a sense of healing, stability, or permanence. Many children are moved from one foster home to another, which may be causing further damage to the child.

This literature review will focus on the following themes: (a) the lack of fit between the system and the service recipients; (b) the disparity between disruption rates of foster care placements and the need for mental health services between the Caucasian and minority populations; and (c) the role of cultural competency, or lack thereof, and its relationship to service delivery.

A review of the available literature indicated a lack of information specific to the Chicano/Latina community in regard to foster care. However, there are many studies that examine the experience of African-American children in out-of-home care (Brown & Bailey-Etta, 1997; Folaron & Hess, 1993; McRoy, Oglesby, & Grape 1997). These studies examine a multitude of issues including the cultural

differences in the "system" of child welfare in relation to the culture of origin of the children. Since these studies examine cultural differences, they are used in this study to infer information about other "minority" races.

The lack of fit between the child welfare system and its service recipients is becoming more and more apparent. Most practitioners in the Child Welfare System are Caucasian females, and the majority of the children in "the system" are children of color. McRoy et al. (1997) view this disparity as one of the many barriers that exist between the child protective services system and children and families of color. The authors further assert that there may be a lack of understanding by workers, which could lead to a greater number of minority children being placed in out-of-home care more often, for a longer period of time, and with fewer support services. The authors have found that the most successful placements of children have been with caretakers of the same culture. They have also found that social workers who have specific knowledge of the cultural traditions of minority groups have been more successful in the recruitment and retainment of same-race caregivers.

Another component of this disparity is the lack of cultural compatibility between the system and the minority families it seeks to serve. Brown and Bailey-Etta (1997) point out that many of the reforms that affect the child welfare out-of-home care system took place when the majority of children in this system were Caucasian. In addition, they discuss the differences of culture and its traditions. When viewed through a "cultural lens," children's experiences are significantly

different before becoming a part of the child welfare system. Currently, the majority of children in the system belong to ethnic and/or racial minority groups, and the existing service programs and providers may not be as culturally relevant to these children, as compared to their Caucasian counterparts.

The next theme which needs to be addressed is that of the disparity between the rates of disruption of foster care placement and the delivery of mental health services to children of color. Folaron and McCartt-Hess (1993) have found that children of cultural backgrounds other than Caucasian have a significantly higher rate of placement disruption. This may be due to a lack of preparation and support of appropriate foster family placements. They further suggest that to sensitively and competently serve children who are not Caucasian, further development of the knowledge and skills of all persons who provide services to these children and their families is essential. They assert that what is needed is a process to accurately assess the children's and families' needs as well as the foster families' ability to respect and affirm the child's racial roots, whatever the racial identity or composition of the foster family. The authors call for practitioners to provide caregivers with resources specific to the unique perspective of the children in their care.

Children whose foster care placements have been disrupted have a difficult time trusting others and exhibit lower self-esteem as compared to those of their counterparts with stable foster placements. These children typically exhibit deficits in education, and display behavioral and emotional problems. Lyman and Bird (1992) have shown that there is a significant difference between those children in

stable placements and those who have had disrupted placements. These children exhibit deficits when compared to the normative population in the areas of social relationships, family relations (including foster families), and emotional health. The results also support the concern that multiple placements can create risk and that efforts aimed at stabilizing the placement experience need to be paramount in the placement decision process. Berry and Barth's (1990) findings provide further support, stating that adolescents in disrupted placements have a higher rate of emotional and behavioral problems than those of adolescents who have not experienced placement disruptions. They state that race was the only significant variable associated with placement disruption. These researchers contend that there is a lack of information specifically questioning whether or not these adolescents can be successfully integrated into a foster care family.

Finally, children in foster care typically have higher rates of mental health treatment of some than do children who have not been removed from their families. However, Garland, Landsverk, Hough, and Ellis-MacLeod (1996) state that once race and culture are accounted for, "minority" children are reported to have a lower rate of mental health treatment than their Caucasian counterparts.

The last area of focus in this literature review refers to the role of cultural competency and its relationship to service delivery. McPhatter (1997) addressed the effects of cultural incompetence. She stated that the current level of "cultural incompetence" can persist only at vast detriment to children, families, and communities, the child welfare system, and society as a whole. The author

contends that cultural incompetence does absolutely nothing to rescue the neediest of children and families, nor does it allow for effective service delivery.

Additional support of this contention is provided by Montalvo (1997), who points to a major problem of the foster care system is a lack of cultural competence in the services provided to Chicano/Latina children. She spoke of redesigning programs so that they have a cultural fit to provide acceptable services to this population. Folaron and McCartt-Hess (1993) maintained that the color-blind approach to placement and service delivery perpetuates racism and hinders the development of children's positive racial identity. Barth and Berry's (1990) study also underscores this point, showing that the service characteristics, rather than the family or child characteristics, would be more accountable for the disparity in placement disruptions. Essentially, the method and quality of services are more responsible for positive results than demographics.

The aforementioned studies call for a change in the way services are delivered to minority clients. Taber and Proch (1987) have found that the key to success in stabilizing adolescent foster care placements was to change the way in which services were offered, instead of trying to change the youth. McPhatter (1997) and Zayas, Evans, Meija, and Rodriguez (1997) also believe that cultural competency among practitioners and caregivers, along with a fundamental change in the system of child welfare, is the key to providing adequate and effective services to all children.

Zayas et al. (1997) describes and examines the usefulness of a culturally

competent training program developed for staff delivering mental health services to Hispanic children and families in crisis. This program involved the awareness of critical cultural values, beliefs, behaviors, and interactions that structure social and family life and psychological functioning. It includes self-awareness, acceptance of differences, knowledge of client's culture, and adaptation of helping skills to the client's culture. They assert that there is not enough evidence to state that their day-long program will have long-term effects; however, they are confident that it provides a foundation on which to build culturally competent services.

In summary, this chapter examines relevant research in relation to minority children and the foster care system. The literature review utilizes studies which examine three major themes: (a) the lack of cultural fit between the system of child welfare and the service recipients; (b) the disparity between disruption rates of foster care placements and the need for mental health services between the Caucasian and minority populations; and (c) the role of cultural competency, or lack thereof, and its relationship to service delivery. The various authors' suggestions for change in the system of child welfare and its methods of service delivery were also examined. The concepts presented in this literature review will be applied to the results of this descriptive study and their relevance to the research question will be discussed in Chapter 6. The following chapter examines the theoretical framework of social information processing as it applies to the concept of cultural competency.

Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework

Cultural competence in social work practice can be described as an understanding and appreciation of cultural differences and similarities within and between groups. McPhatter's Cultural Attainment Model illustrates a method of achieving cultural competence (McPhatter, 1997). It hypothesizes that beliefs, biases, and stereotypes that are learned can also be "unlearned." It proposes that achieving competence in any sphere is developmental, and learning may take place in any or all of one's thinking, feeling, sensing and behaving dimensions. This model is comprised of three stages; an enlightened consciousness, a grounded knowledge base, and cumulative skill proficiency.

Fletcher (1997), in his discussion of cultural competence, describes the use of what he calls social "lenses" such as gender, sexual orientation, culture, and disability through which practitioners view the world. These "lenses" may directly or indirectly affect social behavior. He asserts that in practice settings, a clients' race may influence a social worker's initial perceptions and expectations. He suggests that social information processing theory offers a social cognitive schema to the idea of cultural competence. This schema breaks down how individuals process initial information--decoding, encoding, recalling, and judging--in ways that allow them to function in the world. Using this idea, race, age, and gender can be understood to be social lenses, a social cognitive schema, through which every initial human interaction--direct or indirect, covert or overt--is viewed, and through which information is processed.

Milner (1993) describes the social information processing model as consisting of three cognitive processing stages, which build upon each other. The three cognitive stages are perceptions of social behavior: interpretations, evaluations, and expectations that give meaning to social behavior: and the information integration and response selection stage.

Stage one of this model describes people's initial perceptions. The model hypothesizes that people have distortions, biases or stereotypes in their perceptions of the social environment. The preexisting schema colors and effects how people perceive external stimulus.

Stage two of the model is associated with interpretations, evaluations, and expectations. The model proposed that people display differences in interpreting, evaluating and associating expectations of the behavior of others. For example, intake summaries affect practitioners' expectations for their client's therapeutic success. As such, in the initial contact, a social workers expectations have significance for the processing of information about a new person or new situation. This can be especially true when cross-cultural communication takes place.

In stage three of the model. The person integrates the information and selects a response. This stage relies on the perceptions and interpretations of the two prior stages. Misconceptions or distortions in either of the first two stages may effect the response that is chosen.

The aim of cultural competence is to provide the practitioner with enough information relative to the client so that misconceptions, stereotypes and biases are

kept to a minimum. Many models of cultural competence (e.g., McPhatter, 1997) suggest an unlearning of these biases, along with their replacement with culturally relevant knowledge of the clients, will assist a practitioner in attaining skill proficiency in working clients with other backgrounds other than the practitioner.

In summary, this chapter outlines the social information processing model and its relations to biases within and between groups. It is utilized in order to provide a framework in which to view cultural competency. This framework, as well as the previously reviewed literature will be integrated with the results and research question and will be discussed further in the discussion section of chapter 6. The following chapter will address the methodology, data collection, and data analysis utilized in this study.

Chapter 4: Methodology

This descriptive study will examine the foster family care received by Latina teens in Santa Clara County's Child Welfare Services and if it is similar or different than that of Caucasian teens. This will be achieved by comparing data regarding this specific sample with a comparable Caucasian sample. By comparing these data sets, it will be possible to determine if this Latina sample has similar or different foster care placement outcomes.

Study Design

The data set will consist of the entire population of existing data of current open cases in Santa Clara County's Child Welfare System. The study compared the two groups in terms of the following variables: (1) age; (2) service plan; (3) primary language of the child; (4) ethnicity of the child; (5) primary language of the foster care provider; (6) ethnicity of the foster care provider; (7) number of previous referrals to the child welfare agency; and (8) the nature of the abuse. Analysis of these variables determined if the two groups were significantly different.

Study Population

This research utilized existing current cases open to Santa Clara County's Social Services Agency. The total number of participants was forty-five ($N = 45$) with the sample group of Latinas ($n = 21$), and the sample of Caucasian teens ($n = 24$). The mean age of the Latina sample was 15.7 years and the mean age of the Caucasian sample was 14.9 years.

Sampling Plan

The sample population consists of case record selected data for all Caucasian and Latina teens (13-18) in Santa Clara County's Child Welfare Services who were placed in foster care. The majority of participants were residents of the county, or had at least one parent who resides within county lines.

Measures

This study utilized data gathered by the Santa Clara County's Social Services Agency. Case record data were collected in the following areas: type of maltreatment (abuse or neglect), current age of the child, number of placements, cultural and language differences between the child and foster care giver and differences in primary language of the child and the caregiver.

Operationalization of Concepts

The term "cultural competence," for purposes of this study, will be defined as a set of academic and interpersonal skills that allow individuals to increase their understanding and appreciation of cultural differences and similarities within, among and between groups. This requires a willingness and ability to draw on community-based values, traditions, and customs and to work with knowledgeable persons of and from the community in developing targeted interventions, communications and other supports. A culturally competent program is one that demonstrates sensitivity to and understanding of cultural differences in the program design, implementation, and evaluation.

The term "Latina" will be used to refer to those individuals who have self-

reported their ethnicity as Hispanic or Mexican. This term is an umbrella term and refers to people of many ethnic backgrounds who have originated from Central or South America, Mexico, or the Caribbean, whose language of origin is Spanish.

For statistical purpose of statistical analysis, the type of abuse received by the children in the study was categorized as one of two classifications: direct or indirect. Categories such as physical, sexual, or emotional abuse were denoted as direct forms of abuse. Categories such as general neglect, or absent caretaker were classified as indirect forms of abuse.

Analysis of Data

This study will examine the aforementioned variables of age, number of previous referrals to child welfare services, number of foster placements, ethnicity and primary language of the child in foster care and the foster care provider. These variables will be analyzed with the utilization of an independent samples t-test in order to test the significant mean differences between Latina and Caucasian teens for that of the dependent variables.

Limitations of Study

Since this study is limited to recipients of Santa Clara County's Child Welfare System, and is limited to one aspect of its service delivery, it is not applicable to other populations in other parts of the state or country. Also, since this study is limited to one aspect of service delivery, it may not be appropriate to judge cultural competence in service delivery throughout the agency as a whole.

Human Subjects

This study was conducted with already existing data previously gathered by Santa Clara County. Therefore, there were no personal interactions with the subjects.

Summary

This study utilized case records data gathered by Santa Clara County's Social Services Agency Department of Family and Children's Services. The data were obtained for both Latinas and Caucasian females between the ages of 13-18 in foster family care and were analyzed using t-test analysis in order to compare group differences in number of foster placements, number of referrals to child welfare services, and direct or indirect abuse.

Chapter 5: Results

This chapter will illustrate the findings of this descriptive study, utilizing both descriptive and inferential statistics to demonstrate differences between Latina and Caucasian females aged 13-18 who are currently in foster family care in Santa Clara County. This discussion will first introduce the descriptive statistics, giving the reader a greater understanding of the characteristics of the two populations. Secondly, the inferential statistics will be used in order to compare the means and standard deviations of specific characteristics of the two samples, indicating whether or not the differences are statistically significant.

The total number of participants in this study were 45: Latina ($n = 21$) and Caucasian females ($n = 24$). Based on analysis of the main study variables, no statistically significant differences were found when comparing Latina and Caucasian females by age, number of referrals, and number of foster placements. In addition, no statistically significant differences were found when comparing type of abuse by number of previous referrals and number of foster placements.

Figure 5.1 displays the distribution of ages for both Latina and Caucasian females. The mean age for Caucasian females is 14.9 years of age ($SD = 1.41$), and the mean age for the Latinas 15.7 years (1.65).

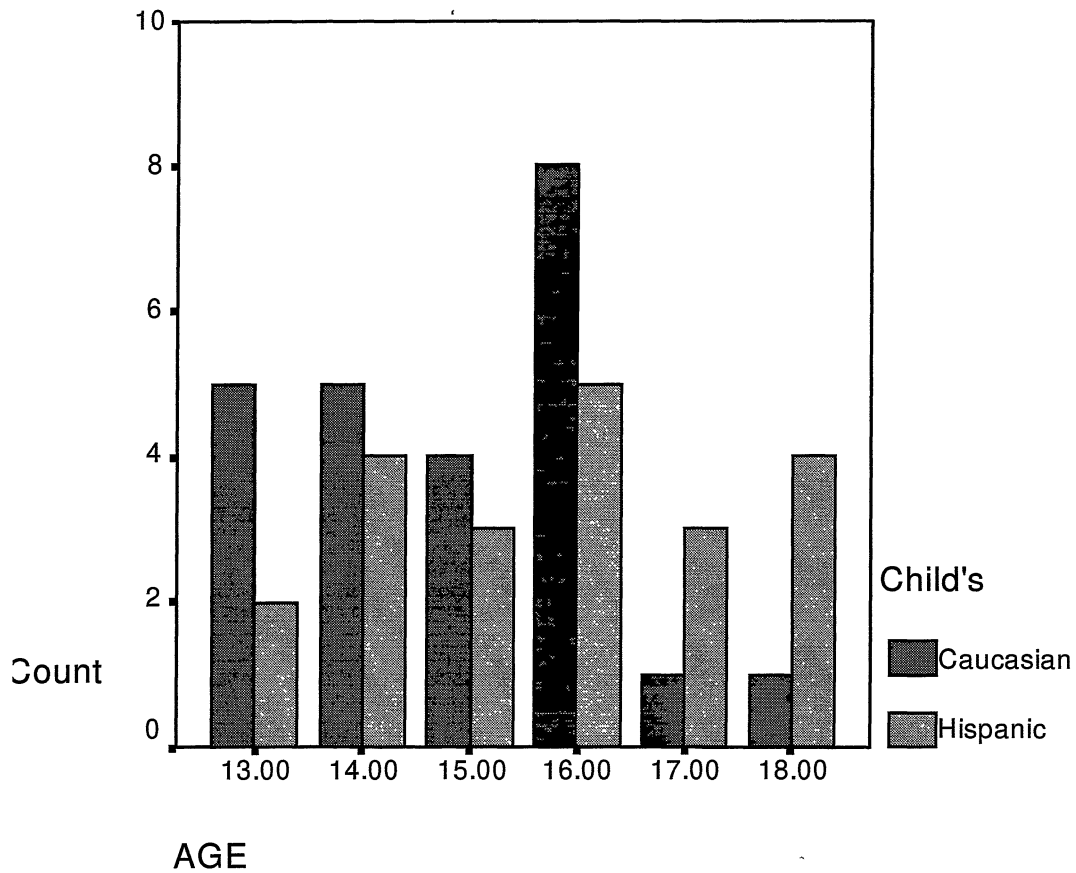


Figure 5.1

Child's Ethnicity by Age

The social services plan for the two samples yielded no differences regarding the disposition of the child's plan, whether it be family reunification services or permanency planning. One of the twenty-one Latinas had a family reunification plan, while seven of the twenty-four Caucasian females had a plan of family reunification (see figure 5.2).

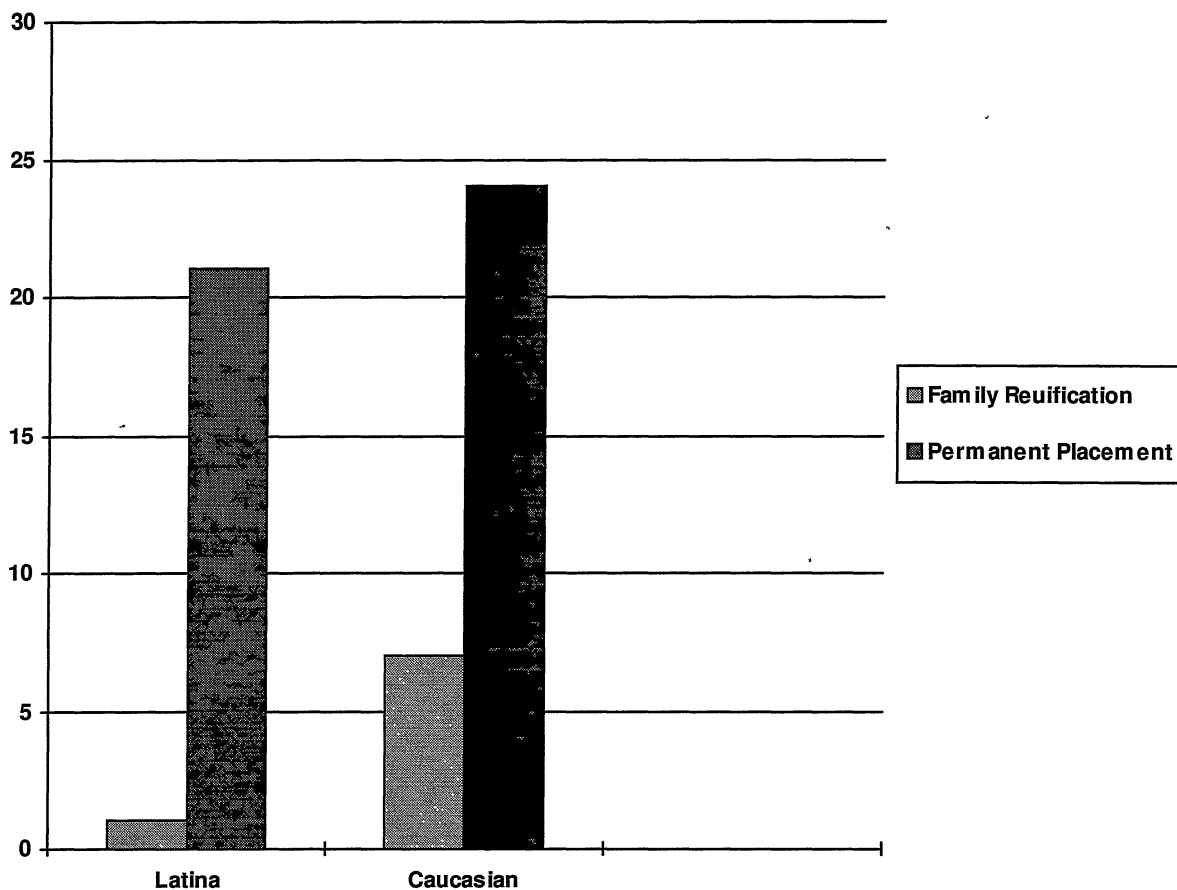


Figure 5.2

Child's Ethnicity by Service Plan

There was no significant difference in the number of foster homes in which the two samples had been placed. That is, Caucasian females had a mean of 1.9 foster home placements, as compared to Latinas, who had a mean of 1.8 foster home placements.

In terms of language spoken in the foster family, the entire Caucasian population (100%) spoke English as their primary language. The Latina population, on the other hand, spoke both English and Spanish: 71% of the Latina population

spoke English as a primary language, and 29% of this population spoke Spanish as a primary language

The primary language of the child, English or Spanish, was compared with the primary language of the caretaker. The data show that 97.4% of English speakers are in English-speaking households as opposed to 85.7% of Spanish speakers being in Spanish-speaking households (See Table 5.1).

Table 5.1

Child's Primary Language by Primary Language of Caregiver

Primary Language of Child	Primary Language of Caregiver	
	English	Spanish
English	37 (97.4%)	1 (14.3%)
Spanish	1 (2.6%)	6 (85.7%)

The children's ethnic background was compared to the ethnic background of the foster care provider. 71.4% of Latinas were placed with a caregiver who was of the same ethnic background. Caucasians had an ethnic matching rate of 83.3%. (see Table 5.2).

Table 5.2

Ethnic Background of Child by Ethnic Background of Foster Caregiver

Background of Child	Background of Foster Caregiver		
	Latino	Caucasian	African-Am
Latino	15 (71.4%)	4 (14.3%)	2 (9.6%)
Caucasian	3 (12.5%)	20 (83.3%)	1 (4.2%)

Table 5.3 shows the means and standard deviations for number of referrals and number of foster care placements for Latina and Caucasian teens. T test analysis between groups yielded no significant differences. Further, table 5.4 illustrates the mean and standard deviation for type of abuse by number of referrals and by number of foster homes. No significant differences were found.

Table 5.3

Ethnicity by Number of Referrals and by Number of Foster Placements

	Latina	Caucasian
	<u>n</u> = 21	<u>n</u> = 24
	<u>M</u> (<u>SD</u>)	<u>M</u> (<u>SD</u>)
Number of referrals	5.19(3.79)	6.96(5.74)
Number of foster placements	1.86(1.28)	1.92(.28)

Table 5.4

Type of Abuse by Number of Referrals and by Number of Foster Placements

	Direct Abuse	Indirect Abuse
	<u>n</u> = 20	<u>n</u> = 25
	<u>M</u> (<u>SD</u>)	<u>M</u> (<u>SD</u>)
Number of referrals	6.55(4.84)	5.8(5.11)
Number of foster placements	1.7(.47)	2.04(1.09)

The following chapter will discuss the research finding in the context of the research question, the literature and concepts reviewed and the theoretical framework of social information processing.

Chapter 6: Discussion

The purpose of this descriptive study was to analyze the similarities and differences in the foster family care program and the services it afforded to the children under its protection. This project focused on Caucasian and Latina teens in foster family care in Santa Clara County. All of these teens studied were currently receiving court-mandated services through the Santa Clara County Department of Family and Children's Services. The two groups were compared in terms of the following variables: (1) age; (2) service plan; (3) primary language of the child; (4) ethnicity of the child; (5) primary language of the foster care provider; (6) ethnicity of the foster care provider; (7) number of previous referrals to the child welfare agency; and (8) the nature of the abuse. An analysis of selected variables resulted in no differences in the foster care placement service delivery. These findings will serve as an indicator of Santa Clara County's level of cultural competence in its foster family care program.

The question of whether or not there were differences in the foster care placements of Latina and Caucasian teens in Santa Clara County was the focus of this study. The findings thus far have been inconsistent with this researcher's initial notion. This researcher's initial point of contention, that Latino children receive significantly different services than their Caucasian counterparts in the child welfare system was not supported by this research study.

The argument articulated by Folaron and McCartt-Hess (1993) that children's

experiences are significantly different before and after becoming a part of the child welfare system was also not supported. The majority of the children studied were in placements with caregivers of their same ethnic background. Also, almost all of the primary languages of the children and caregivers were congruent.

Much of the literature points to the fact that most social work practitioners are Caucasian, and many of the recipients of service are “minority” populations. The literature also asserts that these cultural differences may create barriers for proficient service to people of color. The demographics of Santa Clara County’s Social Services Agency do not follow the trend denoted in the literature. This county’s demographic breakdown is as follows: Caucasian (58%), Latinos (21%), African-Americans (4%), and Asian and Pacific Islanders (16.8%). The Social Services Agency has a demographic breakdown as follows: Caucasian (35%), Latino (33%), African-American (6%), and Asian and Pacific Islanders (25%) (Santa Clara County Social Services Agency Fact Sheet, 1997). Although people of color are overrepresented within the agency by demographics in relation to the County’s racial and ethnic make-up, the percentage of Latino social workers is significantly lower than that of the Latino population served. This is the only culture still underrepresented by percentage of workers at the agency.

A key to understanding Santa Clara County’s inconsistency with the literature, in terms of service delivery may be found in McPhatter’s (1997) cultural attainment model. McPhatter contends that cultural competence can be attained by an enlightened consciousness, a grounded knowledge base, and cumulative skill

proficiency. In Santa Clara County, two-thirds of the workers are non-white. This may account for greater knowledge in working with minority populations. As a result, they have a greater capacity for cultural competency which is reflected in their delivery of services.

As stated earlier, there are limitations to this research. First, the sample size was small, consisting of only 45 participants. Due to this small size, some inferential statistics were not appropriate for this study. Second, this research only accounted for the type of services and did not factor in their effectiveness, and how that relates to the Latino and Caucasian populations. Finally, Santa Clara County is not representative of the nation or region in its racial and ethnic demographics, nor in the demographic composition of the employees of the social services agency.

The implications of this study are that the cultural competence of the social services workers does lead to a better fit between the children placed in foster care and the foster care families. This agency's commitment to providing culturally competent services is evidenced by their implementation of the long-range plan for improving services to Spanish-speaking individuals. Santa Clara County can serve as a model of how to implement and integrate culturally competent services into their system of care. However, further research needs to be conducted in order to validate whether or not providing culturally competent service will result in a higher success rate for Latinas within the child welfare system.

Chapter 7: Summary and Conclusions

This pilot study examined the placement of Latina and Caucasian females aged 13 to 18 in foster family placements in Santa Clara County. The purpose of this study was to examine the similarities and differences between the two sample groups in terms of the following variables: (1) age; (2) service plan; (3) primary language of the child; (4) ethnicity of the child; (5) primary language of the foster care provider; (6) ethnicity of the foster care provider; (7) number of previous referrals to the child welfare agency; and (8) the nature of the abuse. This was done by using existing data gathered by Santa Clara County Social Services Agency, the agency that delivers child welfare services in this area.

This study presented an opportunity to assess the county's level of cultural competency in terms of delivering equitable services to the two sample groups. The results indicated that there are no statistically significant differences between the two sample groups with regard to the variables studied. Further, the findings of the study were not supported by the literature reviewed and the outcomes were not consistent with this researcher's original contention that Latino children receive significantly different services than those of their Caucasian counterparts.

The results of this study lead to several conclusions. That is, the findings indicate that foster family care in Santa Clara County is ethnically compatible, this may be due to the percentage of minority workers in the agency who might be more equipped to prepare the foster parents for the special needs of the children in their care. Languages of foster parents were similar to the primary languages of the

children. Santa Clara County's unusually high level of diversity makes generalization of these study findings difficult for comparison regionally or nationally, yet may point to success in the placing of children in ethnically similar homes. This agency's commitment to success with Latino placements was bolstered by the long-range plan for Spanish-speaking individuals.

Although this agency's staff is ethnically diverse, it still falls short of accurately reflecting demographic percentages of the Latino population served by it. A point for further research would be to determine how staff diversity relates to the difference found in terms of the services plan goal of permanency planning between Latinos and Caucasians receiving foster care services

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Appendix A



San José State
UNIVERSITY

**Office of the Academic
Vice President**

**Associate Vice President
Graduate Studies and Research**

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TO: Melissa Suarez
435 Irving Ave.
San Jose, CA 95128

FROM: Serena W. Stanford *Serena W. Stanford*
AVP, Graduate Studies & Research

DATE: March 5, 1998

The Human Subjects-Institutional Review Board has approved your request to use human subjects in the study entitled:

**"Out-of-Home Placements for Latina Teens in
Santa Clara County"**

This approval is contingent upon the subjects participating in your research project being appropriately protected from risk. This includes the protection of the anonymity of the subjects' identity when they participate in your research project, and with regard to any and all data that may be collected from the subjects. The Board's approval includes continued monitoring of your research by the Board to assure that the subjects are being adequately and properly protected from such risks. If at any time a subject becomes injured or complains of injury, you must notify Serena Stanford, Ph.D., immediately. Injury includes but is not limited to bodily harm, psychological trauma and release of potentially damaging personal information.

Please also be advised that all subjects need to be fully informed and aware that their participation in your research project is voluntary, and that he or she may withdraw from the project at any time. Further, a subject's participation, refusal to participate, or withdrawal will not affect any services the subject is receiving or will receive at the institution in which the research is being conducted.

If you have any questions, please contact me at
(408) 924-2480.

The California State University:
Chancellor's Office
Bakersfield, Chico, Dominguez Hills,
Fresno, Fullerton, Hayward, Humboldt,
Long Beach, Los Angeles, Maritime Academy,
Monterey Bay, Northridge, Pomona,
Sacramento, San Bernardino, San Diego,
San Francisco, San José, San Luis Obispo,
San Marcos, Sonoma, Stanislaus

Appendix B

San Jose State University
College of Social Work

Field Agency's Approval of Research Project Prospectus

Instructions: This form must be completed by all students participating in University-related research projects, including S.W. 298 projects. The form should be completed and submitted to the student's S.W. 298 instructor or faculty sponsor. All students are expected to advise their agencies of the content of their research projects as well as plans related to their proposed methodology, data collection, and data analysis activities. Completion of this form does not remove the obligations of students to complete other college, university, or agency research review and approval procedures/policies.

If significant changes are made in the project a new form must be completed and submitted. All S.W. 298 students must complete and submit this form prior to commencing their actual research work with data collection or clients; and in any event before the end of their first semester of study.

The field instructor's or other agency representative's signature certifies that the student has discussed and shared their plans with the agency, and that the agency is not in opposition to the project. The S.W. 298 instructor and/or other college officials should be contacted if there are any concerns, questions, or objections.

Name of Student: Melissa Suarez Name of Agency: Santa Clara Co. Social Svs. Agency
Field Instructor's Name: Jorge Gonzalez F.I.'s Telephone #: 441-5291
SJSU Instructor's Name: Dr. Merighi Semester(s): Spring 1998
Proposed Topic: Cultural competence in the County's Foster Care Programs

Brief Description of Project – Timelines, Sample/Subjects, and Methodology:

This evaluative study will examine if Santa Clara County provides culturally competent care to Latina teens (13-18) in out-of-home care, and how this care effects the success/failure rate of these placements. This case records study will use existing data gathered by Santa Clara County's Social Services Agency as it pertains to client demographics, placement success/failure rate, and utilization of services by this population. The data Set will be divided into two groups, representing Latina teens (13-18), and their Caucasian counterparts before and after the County's adoption of a long range plan to increase culturally competent services to the Latino population.

Signature of Student: Melissa Suarez Date: 2-9-98
Signature of Field Inst./Agency Rep.: Jorge Gonzalez Date: 2/9/98
Signature of 298 Instructor/College Rep.: Joseph Merighi, PhD Date: 2/16/98