Caucasian Parents and Korean Adoptees: A Survey of Parents' Perceptions

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ABSTRACT. This study explored the transracial adoption experiences of Caucasian parents who adopted children from Korea. Self-report data from parents of 117 adoptive families were used to compare mothers and fathers' perceptions in three key areas: parent reasons for adopting, family adjustment related to the adoption, and racial identity of adoptees. On the topic of adoptee's racial identity, parents' perceptions were compared over a seven-year period. Overall, mothers and fathers' perceptions were more similar than different, and parents appear to downplay their Korean children's race. The findings have implications for post-adoption training for transracial adoptive families. *[Article copies available for a fee from The Haworth Document Delivery Service: 1-800-HAWORTH. E-mail address: <docdelivery@haworthpress.com> Website: <http://www.HaworthPress.com> © 2003 by The Haworth Press, Inc. All rights reserved.]*

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This article presents the findings of a study that surveyed Caucasian parents who had adopted Korean-born children. Gorman (1995) has identified several considerations for parents adopting a child of a different race and from a foreign country: they include realizing how the adoption experience may change the family; developing an appreciation of two distinctly different cultures in their adopted child; and understanding how an Asian child develops, both individually and as part of a family, in a society that is dominantly Caucasian. Such considerations are especially relevant for Caucasian parents adopting children of a different race and/or different culture given the legacy of social injustice, institutional discrimination, and marginalization of racial minorities in the United States.

International adoption has typically followed war or socioeconomic upheaval in the originating country, beginning with an influx of European orphans following World War II. The Korean War marked the beginning of the largest wave of international adoptions worldwide, with the relocation of over 100,000 Korean children to the United States and 50,000 more to Europe, Australia, and Canada (Freundlich & Lieberthal, 1999). The sociopolitical climate surrounding international adoption presents adoptive families with a context that is different from domestic adoptions, with adoptees having to adjust to both a new family and a foreign country.

The study was interested in the international transracial adoption of Korean children into Caucasian-American homes. The literature that gives background to the study's focus is presented by summarizing transracial adoption research that specifically addresses international Korean transracial adoptions and explores cultural competence among transracial adoptive parents.

TRANSRACIAL ADOPTION WITH KOREAN ADOPTEES

The majority of transracial adoption research has involved the study of African American children placed into Caucasian homes. Several studies have sought to compare the experiences of children from differing racial and ethnic backgrounds (Feigelman, 2000; Feigelman & Silverman, 1983; McRoy et al., 1982; Simon & Altstein, 1977). One such longitudinal study (Feigelman & Silverman, 1983) followed 737 families who had adopted African American children and/or internationally placed children from Korea, Vietnam, and Latin America. Data were collected in 1975 and again six years later. Findings indicated that for all of the children, age at the time of adoption was the greatest determining factor of maladjustment. Also, the African American children were found to have experienced more bigotry than the other transracially adopted children, and identified most strongly with their racial identities. Connectedness to racial identity was expressed as racial pride by 70 percent of the African American children and only 57 percent of the Korean-born children.

There were few early studies that focused solely on investigating transracial adoption involving Korean-born children. Kim (1978), a forerunner in the field of Korean adoption research, conducted an indepth study that considered early adjustment and self-concept in Korean adoptees. He found adoptees to have a strong level of self-concept and to be well-adjusted in their adoptive homes. He also was one of the first to stress the importance of parental involvement in supporting their children's exploration of an ethnic identity.

Hovey (1982) compared adjustment of Caucasian-American children adopted into Caucasian-American families with that of Korean-born children adopted into Caucasian-American families. The findings reported that parents with Korean children reported a much higher incidence of problematic symptoms as compared to parents with Caucasian adoptees but these differences disappeared when controlling for children's age and the number of prior placements experienced by adoptees. Indeed, Hovey (1982) concluded that age and placement history affect children's adjustment in a way that "transcends all cultural and racial differences" (p. 6). This finding is consistent with foster care and adoption research on other populations that show older children and children with multiple placement experiences adjust less well when placed in either foster care or potential adoptive homes (e.g., Hughes, 1999; Smith & Howard, 1999).

More recent research on Korean adoptees has been focused on racial and ethnic identity formation. Two separate studies gave rise to stage models for ethnic identity development. Wilkinson (1985) interviewed eight children between 4 and 7 years of age over an eight-month period using play therapy techniques as tools of engagement. Her model delineates five stages: denial, inner awakening, acknowledgment, identification, and acceptance. The stage of *denial* is marked by a strong avoidance of anything Korean and a corresponding need to be identified with the adoptive family. *Inner awakening* describes a quiet increase in interest in Korean heritage as the adoptee becomes more comfortable and secure in the adoptive home. This awakening segues the more active process of *acknowledgment,* wherein a positive connection to cultural heritage is embraced. The last two stages, *identification* and *acceptance*, are marked by a progressive integration of the adoptee's Koreanness into a positive sense of self.

Similarly Huh and Reid's four-stage model (2000), developed from studying 40 Korean adopted school-aged children, proposes a framework for understanding ethnic identity development in Korean adoptees, as well as the role of parents in that development. They propose four age-related stages of identity development. The first stage–*recognizing and rejecting differences–occurs at 4 to 6 years of age. Children in this first stage of identity development learn they are "different," usually by their kindergarten peers who point out their Korean characteristics. While children at this stage may know they are Korean, they are unable to understand what it means to be Korean. This stage is marked by a confusion about race and a rejecting of their own differences, wanting to look like family and friends.*

The second stage–*beginning of ethnic identification*–happens between 7 and 8 years of age. This stage of identity development is marked by an awareness that ethnicity and physical features, such as facial structure, remain constant across time. Additionally, adoptees gain an increased understanding of Korea (e.g., geographical difference from the United States) and why they look different than their parents. Children at this age and stage also report being subjected to teasing that influenced their attitudes toward being Korean. The role of parents in mediating the impact of these external factors was considered extremely significant at this point. The third stage–*acceptance of difference versus ethnic dissonance*–takes place between 9 and 11 years of age. It is in these late elementary school years that adoptees either embrace their differences and identify as Korean-American or minimize their differences and identify as being solely American.

The final stage–*integrating Korean heritage and American culture*–occurs when adoptees are 12 and 14 years old. At this stage of identity development, young adolescents are able to integrate their Korean ethnic heritage and American upbringing. Motivation to pursue Korean-related activities is more internal, with parents having a lessening sphere of influence. The children are aware of stereotypes about Koreans, but their ethnic pride is based more on cultural awareness than their own differences. This stage also includes adoptees that may not have previously identified with being Korean but are beginning to show interest.

In addition to delineating the four stages of identity development, Huh and Reid (2000) also showed that parent involvement across the four stages seems to affect whether children show sustained or inconsistent interest in their Korean identity while growing up. Parents showing support for racial identity development tend to have children that expressed a sustained interest in Korean culture throughout the stages. Huh and Reid's (2000) research reinforces the importance of parental attitudes in adoptees' ethnic and racial identity formation but goes beyond other studies to suggest that racial identity is a desirable developmental outcome in itself and can be considered as a distinct measure of children's adjustment to adoption.

In summary, the research examining transracial adoption of Korean children into Caucasian-American homes adds to the awareness of racial identity development as a separate measure of adoptee's "adjustment." Giving attention to racial identity and adjustment as separate concepts for child development is of critical importance, as other research confirms that racial identity development is a dynamic process that continues well beyond early adolescence and into adulthood (Bergquist, 1997; Meier, 1999). Finally, the extant research gives support to the notion that adoptive parents have a key role in promoting healthy racial or ethnic identity development in their children.

Cross-Cultural Competencies in Adoptive Parents

When considering the implications of transracial adoption research there is invariably discussion about how parents can address the racial, cultural, or ethnic identity needs of their child (Baden & Steward, 2000; Bergquist, 1997 & 2000; Huh & Reid, 2000; Kim, 1978; Simon & Altstein, 1992). After synthesizing a large body of research on transracial adoption, Vonk (2001) identified three areas of competence that are important for transracial adoptive parents to possess: racial awareness, multicultural planning, and survival skills. According to Vonk, racial awareness refers to "the roles that race, ethnicity, and culture play in the lives of others, particularly for those of their children's race and culture of birth" (p. 250). Awareness also involves sensitivity to racism and discrimination, as well as self-awareness of personal stereotypes and prejudices. Multicultural planning involves the facilitation of opportunities for the transracially adopted children to be exposed to and participate in their birth culture. The assumption is that transracially adoptive parents cannot teach about a culture they do not know, and therefore must reach out to their children's birth community (Vonk, 2001). Finally, survival skills cover parents' abilities to prepare their adoptive children with skills to externalize rather than internalize racism and discrimination.

The research on transracial adoption has firmly established that parents have a pivotal role in how well their children adjust as transracial adoptees. The present study explores the roles of parents further by comparing mothers and fathers' perceptions of their transracial adoption experience with their Korean-born children, as well as their awareness of their children's Korean race over time.

METHOD

The research methodology used in this study is presented in three parts. First, the study's sampling approach is delineated. Second, the research design and survey instruments are described. Finally, the major limitations of the study are summarized.

Sample

A convenience sample of Caucasian parents who adopted children from Korea was recruited through a large midwestern adoption agency that placed children throughout the United States. The sampling frame consisted of 126 families that were identified by the agency as living throughout one midwestern state. Surveys were sent out to the entire sampling frame but nine families were eliminated from the study. Divorce or death of a parent accounted for three unusable surveys, three families did not qualify, and three families had at least one parent who chose not to participate.

The sample consisted of 117 families, all of whom had at least one Korean adopted child (N = 175). Nearly half (45%) of families adopted two or more Korean-born children but only 18 percent took in sibling pairs or groups. At the time of the initial survey, the Korean adoptees were an average of 5.7 years old. The majority began living with their adoptive families as either infants or toddlers. Specifically, 52 percent were less than one year when adopted, while 33 percent were between one and three years old. At the time of the survey, children had been living with their adoptive families a median of 3.5 years, and the length of time since the adoption placement ranged from six months to 13 years. Ninety-two percent of children were known to have experienced one or more placements prior to their arriving at their adoptive home. Given the nature of Korean adoption, it is likely that most children were in a foster home and/or orphanage prior to adoption.

All children in the sample were adopted into two-parent Caucasian homes. The average age of fathers at the time of the initial survey was 40 years old, while mothers were about two years younger. Nearly two-thirds of fathers were employed in technical, office, service, or trade jobs, while the remainder held professional positions. Mothers, in turn, were most likely to be homemakers (44%); however, 26 percent held occupations in the technical/office/service/trade industry and 30 percent held professional positions. The majority (86%) of families lived in predominantly Caucasian neighborhoods and most were longstanding members of their communities, with 79 percent reporting residency of five years or more. Most respondents indicated they were regular churchgoers with 66 percent attending church once a week or more and another 23 percent occasionally turning out for church functions. Families were predominantly of either a Catholic (38%) or Protestant (50%) faith and ranged with respect to their political affiliations: Republican (32%), Democrat (25%), independent (36%), and other (7%).

Research Design and Instruments

Surveys were mailed to the cross section of families described above in 1990. The survey instrument included specific questions designed to describe families' sociodemographic characteristics and assess the background history of children adopted from Korea, their reasons for adopting their Korean child, the extent of family adjustment related to the adoption, and parents' perceptions of their adopted child's adjustment and racial identity. Surveys were again sent to families in 1997 to assess changes over time. The 7-year follow-up survey yielded a response rate of 28 percent, which limits the generalization of results greatly. Furthermore, given the nature of survey questions, only the questions related to demographics and racial identities of the Korean-adopted children were included in the follow-up analysis.

Two versions of the self-report survey (short-form and long-form) were sent to families at both time points, along with instructions that one parent was to complete the long form, while the other was to complete the short form. The instructions did not specify which parent should fill out the long or short version of the survey but did instruct parents to complete questionnaires separately and without consultation from each other.

The two forms were identical, except that the long form contained additional questions pertaining to family composition and demographics. Survey questions were designed with pre-coded responses but the survey provided space for open-ended comments as well. An introductory letter from the agency as well as follow-up letters and phone calls were used to increase response rate. All survey respondents were anonymous.

Sociodemographic characteristics of families assessed included marital status, age, employment type, racial make-up of neighborhood, length of time family resided in neighborhood, and political and religious affiliations of parents. Questions designed to describe the background history of Korean adopted children included age at adoption, length of time living with adoptive family, and number of placements prior to adoption.

Mothers and fathers each responded to a single pre-coded question about their reasons for adopting their Korean child(ren). With respect to family adjustment, respondents were asked the degree of problems their family experienced upon placement of each Korean-born child adopted, whether the racial identity of their family changed with placement of each adopted child, and, if time could be reversed, would they adopt their child(ren) again. Additionally, mothers and fathers were each asked to speculate whether they thought their Korean-adopted child would experience difficulty in adolescence either because of their adoptive status or because they were a racial minority.

Five questions were asked of both mothers and fathers to assess their perceptions of their Korean-adopted children's racial identity. Parents were asked how much their child knows about their cultural heritage, which racial group their child identifies with, which racial group their child mostly looks like based on physical appearance, whether their child experienced racial teasing or discrimination in the past year, and which racial group parents would most like to see their child identify with as an adult.

Survey questions were based on Simon and Altstein's (1987) research, which explored parenting practices of Caucasian adoptive parents with African-American children, but were designed to capture parents' perceptions about adjustment (family and adoptee) and racial identity of Korean adoptees. Survey items were designed as simple and straightforward questions that were considered to have high face validity. However, the psychometric properties of the survey were not tested. Furthermore, the survey questions that asked parents to speculate about their children's futures were designed to measure parents' current expectations for their children's futures and hold no claims of predictive validity.

RESULTS

The findings of this study present a descriptive picture of transracial adoptive families living in one geographic region of the Midwestern

United States. The perceptions of Caucasian adoptive mothers and fathers were compared along three dimensions of transracial adoption: reasons for adopting, adjustment related to the adoption, and racial identity of their child. In addition, parents' perceptions of the racial identity of their Korean children were examined by comparing parent responses that were gathered at two points in time that were seven years apart.

Reasons for Adopting a Korean Child

Individual motivations to adopt were different for mothers and fathers. Table 1 compares mothers' and fathers' reasons for adopting each of their Korean-born children. Because parents were permitted to select more than one reason, all analyses in Table 1 are based on bivariate chi-square analyses. As is shown in the Table, mothers and fathers both reported "the desire to adopt internationally" and "the shorter wait time" as the two most frequently cited reasons for adoption. More mothers, however, were motivated by the international nature of the adoption, while more fathers seemed to favor the timely nature of the international adoption process.

Among the least frequently cited reasons for the adoption by both parents was having a special interest in Korean culture. While this finding did not mean an absence of such interest, it is clear that parents' interest in the specific culture of their Korean-born children was less of a motivation to adopt than other reasons listed in Table 1.

TABLE 1. Comparing Adoptive Mothers' and Fathers' Reasons for Adopting Their Korean-Born Children (*N* = 175 children)

	Respondent		
Survey Items	Mother %	Father %	*p-value*
Reason for adopting Korean child			
Desire to adopt internationally	62.0	42.5	.000
Waiting time was shorter	53.1	64.8	.004
Not eligible for white infant	16.8	16.8	*ns*
Wanted another Korean child	10.6	11.7	*ns*
Special interest in Korean culture	9.5	12.8	*ns*
Other	16.8	20.7	*ns*

Adjustment Related to Adoption

Five survey items were designed to measure parents' perceptions of adjustment in this study, which are presented in Table 2 under two categories: retrospective family adjustment and children's projected adjustment in adolescence.

Family Adjustment. Overall, Table 2 shows that mothers and fathers recalled having shared similar views regarding their family's adjustment at the time of adoption. With very little exception, parents reported that they would repeat their decision to adopt their Korean children again. Both parents were consistent in their views about the amount of problems their family experienced at the time of placement. Mothers and fathers reported problems with the placement of approximately half of the Korean adoptees.

Parents also were in agreement as to whether or not they believed that the addition of their Korean children changed the racial identity of their

TABLE 2. Comparing Adoptive Mothers' and Fathers' Perceptions of Adjustment ($N = 175$ children)

	Respondent		
	Mother %[a]	Father %[a]	*p-value*
Retrospective Family Adjustment			
Would you have adopted this child again Yes (vs. No)	98.8	99.4	*ns*
Family problems upon placement of child Few or more problems (vs. none)	43.4	50.0	*ns*
Racial identity of family changed with placement of child Yes (vs. No)	31.8	27.1	*ns*
Child's Projected Adjustment in Adolescence			
Adolescence will be more difficult because child is adopted Yes (vs. No)	41.8	31.2	.011
Adolescence will be more difficult because child is racial minority Yes (vs. No)	42.6	42.0	*ns*

[a] % is based on number of children as the unit of analysis.

family. More than two-thirds of parents reported that their transracial adoption did not change the racial characteristics of their family. The analysis was repeated giving consideration to the number of Korean adoptees per family since it was plausible that the presence of more Korean children would impact how parents' view the racial composition of their families. Indeed, the number of Korean adoptees was associated with mothers' perceptions about the racial identity of their families but not fathers. Specifically, in families comprising two or more Korean adoptees, more mothers reported a change in the families' racial identity as compared to fathers (39% vs. 28%, $p < .03$).

Adjustment of Korean Adoptees. At the time of the initial survey, Korean children were an average of 5.7 years old. As such, survey questions about adjustment in adolescence required that parents speculate about the future. Specifically, parents were asked to contemplate how their children would fare in adolescence given that they were adopted and given that they were a racial minority (see Table 2). Mothers and fathers were in agreement that less than half of their children were expected to experience problems related to being a racial minority in their teen years. Parents had differing perceptions, however, when considering adoption as a source of problems for teens in the future. More mothers reported that problems in adolescence would stem from the fact that children were adopted. This was particularly the case for families that had adopted only one Korean-born child.

Racial Identity of Korean Adoptees

Table 3 compares parents' perceptions of the racial identity of their Korean-adopted children at the time of the initial survey. Mothers and fathers had different opinions about how much they believed their children knew about Korean culture. Fathers seemed to believe that children knew more about their cultural heritage than did mothers.

Other survey items that measured parents' perceptions of their children's racial identity are also delineated in Table 3. Mothers and fathers seemed to agree with each other in terms of classifying their children's race; however, the findings suggest that, overall, parents did not recognize the racial distinctiveness of their Korean children beyond physical appearance. While the majority of parents perceived their children to have a Korean physical appearance, less than half believed that their children identified as being Asian or Korean. The findings suggest that parents anticipated that children would identify less with a Korean racial group over time. Indeed, the majority of parents reported that they

TABLE 3. Comparing Adoptive Mothers' and Fathers' Perceptions of Racial Identity (*N* = 175 children)

Survey Items	Respondent Mother %	 Father %	*p-value*
Given age, how much child knows about own cultural heritage			
Very much	8.6	12.6	.000
Some	47.4	45.7	
Very little	44.0	41.7	
Racial/ethnic group that child identifies with[a]			
Korean/Asian	46.2	40.2	*ns*
Caucasian	17.1	23.1	
Both/Either	36.8	36.8	
Based on physical appearance, the racial ethnic group that child looks most like			
Korean/Asian	95.5	92.2	*ns*
Caucasian	2.2	3.4	
Both/Either	2.2	4.5	
Child was teased or discriminated against because of race/ethnicity in past year[a]			
Yes (vs. No)	32.1	25.9	*ns*
Racial/ethnic group that parent would most like to see child identify with as an adult			
Korean/Asian	16.8	17.9	*ns*
Caucasian	5.0	12.3	
Both/Either	78.2	69.8	

[a] Analysis excludes children under 5 years old. *N* = 117.

did not wish for their children to identify with being Korean in their adult years.

Racial Identity of Korean Adoptees: A 7-Year Follow-Up

Seven years after the initial survey was sent, families were once again invited to complete the study's survey. A total of 33 families, with 51 Korean adopted children, replied to the second-round survey for a response rate of 28 percent. The demographic profile of families that participated in the follow-up survey was similar to that of the initial sample. The majority (86%) of families continued to live in predominantly Caucasian neighborhoods, and religious and political affiliations reported by parents were similar to those of the larger sample from seven years earlier.

The seven years in between surveys brought some changes to families, however. Family size increased to an average of three children per family. Indeed, there were 22 new additions to families with nine new biological children, seven new Korean-adoptees, and six new adoptees from other countries. Additionally, six of the 33 families reduced in size by becoming single-parent households. On average, parents reported being 48 years old. The average age of the Korean adoptees was 20.7 years.

Table 4 re-examines parents' perceptions of their children's racial identity seven years later. As shown in Table 4, more mothers and more fathers report that their children gained knowledge about Korean culture. This increase in cultural awareness was most likely due to children growing older and passing through normal developmental stages such as those proposed by Huh and Reid (2000). Although most of the Korean-adopted children were in their adolescence by the second-round survey, parents reported that more than one-third knew very little about their own cultural heritage.

In the 1997 survey, fewer parents reported their Korean adopted children as identifying with a Korean or Asian racial group. Instead, parents reported that their children identified more with being Caucasian. Moreover, more parents indicated that their children's physical characteristics appeared less Korean over time. In the second-round survey, more parents said their children looked "American" or "either/or" (i.e., either Asian/Caucasian) and less reported their children as looking either Korean or Asian. Indeed, the findings in Table 4 suggest that the parents' wishes to have their Korean children not identify exclusively with a Korean/Asian racial group increased over time. Yet, both mothers and fathers reported an increase in the number of children being teased because of their race/ethnicity over time.

Limitations

Inherent in cross-sectional survey research are limitations that prohibit generalizing the study's findings. This study reports on a sample of Caucasian parents living in a Midwestern state who adopted a Korean-born child. Generalizations to other adoptive parents must be made with caution. Furthermore, with less than one-third of the initial sample responding to the follow-up survey, we cannot say with confidence that differences observed over time would have been true for the entire sample of 117 families. Since study participation was voluntary, it may also be that respondents to the follow-up survey were somehow different from the larger sample. At the very least, follow-up respondents were

TABLE 4. Comparing Adoptive Mothers' and Fathers' Perceptions of Racial Identity Over Time

	Mothers' Perceptions (*N* = 49 children)		Fathers' Perceptions (*N* = 39 children)	
Survey Items	1990 %	1997 %	1990 %	1997 %
Given age, how much child knows about own cultural heritage				
Very much	6.5	17.4	15.4	23.1
Some	37.0	41.3	35.9	48.7
Very little	56.5	41.3	48.7	28.2
Racial/ethnic group that child identifies with				
Korean/Asian	45.1	19.6	43.1	23.5
Caucasian	25.5	37.3	15.7	29.4
Both/Either	29.4	43.1	41.2	47.1
Based on physical appearance, the racial ethnic group that child looks most like				
Korean/Asian	94.1	84.3	96.1	74.5
Caucasian	5.9	2.0	-	-
Both/Either	-	13.7	3.9	25.5
Child was teased or discriminated against because of race/ethnicity in past year				
Yes (vs. No)	32.6	47.8	21.1	42.1
Racial/ethnic group that parent would most like to see child identify with as an adult				
Korean/Asian	19.6	2.0	7.8	9.8
Caucasian	9.8	15.7	7.8	11.8
Both/Either	70.6	82.4	84.3	74.5

more interested in sharing their adoption experiences with researchers for a second time, a feature that may not have been characteristic of adoptive families overall.

Another set of limitations existed with respect to the research design. A cross-sectional design is characterized by a sample of participants that are at various stages or phases of experiencing the phenomenon under study. This study, for example, included parents that were both new to transracial adoption and those that had many years of experience. In short, parents responded to the survey with a wide range of experiences influencing their answers.

The study provides a descriptive picture of one group of adoptive parents' perceptions about their transracial adoption experience. The study also examines whether mothers and fathers were similar or different in their views.

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Research on transracial adoption has confirmed that adoptive parents play a critical role in their adopted children's adjustment, particularly in the area of developing a healthy racial identity. This study furthers our understanding of how mothers and fathers view key aspects of the adoption, as well as their perceptions of adoptees' racial identity over time.

Overall, the findings showed that mothers and fathers were more similar in their perceptions about their adoption experience than they were different. In summary, the study found that parents were in agreement on a number of fronts: the amount of problems experienced by the family at the time of adoption, the commitment to their adopted child, the degree of difficulty their children were expected to face in adolescence because of race, the ethnic group they believed their children to identify with (at present and in the future), the physical attributes of their children that characterize race, and the belief that their children were teased because of race.

The study findings also suggest that in their agreement, parents appeared to downplay the racial distinctiveness of their Korean children and this tendency increased over time. While the majority of parents acknowledged that their children looked Korean, consistently less than half the sample believed their children to identify with the Korean race. The finding is particularly compelling given that all children were Korean. In the same vein, consistently less than half of the parents reported that they had either experienced or expected problems related to the fact that they had transracially adopted children. Given that adding a family member to a household is generally acknowledged as a stressful transition in a family's development, it is perhaps surprising that more parents did not claim having experienced problems during this transition time.

It is possible, and very likely, that the tendency to downplay both racial differences and problems that are naturally part of transracial adoption go hand-in-hand. Most families in the study adopted their children as infants or toddlers and no doubt were excited by the joy of adding another family member rather than troubled by the problems that typically accompany structural changes within a family. It seems, however, that parents' hopes associated with adoption may overshadow the reality of race differences that forever change their family portrait. Indeed, most parents in this study saw the addition of a Korean child to their family as changing the family's racial identity to "Caucasian with Korean children," rather than a multiracial or multicultural family unit. Using Vonk's (2001) 3-dimensional "toolkit" of cultural competence, concern could be raised regarding the parents' preparedness to address racially charged material with their children. In turn, this raises questions as to the likelihood of parents to include multicultural planning in family life, and, more importantly, parents' abilities to provide their children with survival skills to manage encounters of racism and discrimination throughout their lives.

The findings of this study also found differences in parents' perceptions. First, mothers and fathers reported different priorities in their motivations to adopt. Mothers' top motivation centered on the international nature of the adoption, as compared to fathers who reported the short wait time as their number one reason. Second, for families adopting more than one Korean child, mothers were more inclined than fathers to report that the racial identity of their family had changed. Third, more mothers believed that their children would experience problems in adolescence because they were adopted. Finally, mothers reported that their children knew less about Korean culture than did fathers. The limitations of this study prevent us from understanding more fully the nature of perceptive differences between mothers and fathers.

The emotional, financial, and psychological stresses associated with international adoption essentially demand that couples agree on the decision to become adoptive parents. However, the significance of the idea that mothers and fathers have independent views of the transracial adoption experience has implications for post-adoption training. The differences, in and of themselves, could frame discussions about the meaning of international adoption to parents both individually and as a couple. Also, the differences between parents can be thought of as an asset to parenting children of a different race. That parents are in disagreement of how much their children know about their cultural heritage, for example, can keep discussion alive as to whether parents are "doing enough" for their children. The somewhat ambivalent commitment parents seem to have to exposing their children to Korean culture may be a function of their generalized desire to adopt internationally, rather than any strong connection to Korea in particular. Training could be designed to help parents become aware of how to use differences between them to benefit their children.

Finally, another compelling finding of this study was the notion that parents' perceptions about race and their children's experiences related to race might be at odds. Parents consistently categorized their children ethnically as Korean or Korean-American; however, over time there was a tendency to increasingly identify them as American, minimizing their Koreanness. Parallel to this was an increase, from 1990 to 1997, in parents reporting the number of children that had experienced racial teasing or discrimination. This finding suggests an inherent conflict in these families. That is, on the one hand, parents recognize that their children's Korean race has increased as an issue as children matured into adolescence. On the other hand, parents seem to "downplay" racial identity and appearance over time. The contradiction may well provide additional conflict for transracial adoptees that are faced with racial teasing outside the home and a mixed racial identity at home. It is necessary to point out that because of the low return rate on the second administration of the survey, these findings could not be construed as being statistically significant; however, they are noteworthy if they do in fact represent an incongruent process.

This inconsistency raises the question as to how well transracially adoptive parents respond to or assist their Korean children with issues of racism or discrimination when they deny or minimize the fact that their children are, in fact, different and *that* difference literally colors their experiences. Vonk (2001), in her development of a three-part definition for cultural competence in transracial adoptive parents, specified that parents must impart survival skills to their children. These include educating children to the realities of racism and discrimination and helping them to learn coping strategies through open and honest discussion. However, prior to being able to impart these skills, parents must be able to understand the unique cultural and racial needs of their children, and recognize that their children will experience racial prejudice at some point.

The findings of this study have implications for educating and training prospective parents as well as adoptive parents. There also is relevance for post-adoption services that focus on fostering culturally relevant parenting skills and venues for adoptees to explore issues of identity and develop cultural survival skills. The implications for parenting approaches and impact on how the transracial adoptee views him or herself is, for the most part, unknown. However, it does seem apparent that parents may not be as prepared to support their children when they are confronted with racism or prejudice if the role of race is minimized in the family.

It is important to note that since this study was conducted, pre- and post-adoption services have evolved, and adoption agencies are attempting to address the needs of their prospective and adoptive transracial families in varying degrees. The findings of this study help us to understand how parents view their adoption experiences, as well as how the race of a transracial adoptee can fade in the minds of parents over time.

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