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The Long-Term Effects of Transracial Adoption

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Based on a national survey of 372 adoptive families, the authors compare and contrast the long-term adjustments of Colombian, Korean, and Afro-American transracial adoptees with those of in-racially adopted whites. After adoptees had been in their adoptive homes for at least six years, the results showed that the adolescent and school-aged transracial adoptees were no more poorly adjusted than their in-racially adopted counterparts. This study provides additional confirmation of the utility of transracial placement as an effective policy option for homeless minority children.

In recent years there has been an outpouring of interest in transracial adoption. In the field of social work, continuing debate and controversy have been provoked about the implications of transracial adoption for child welfare. Questions have been raised about the effects of this policy on the adopted children, their adoptive and birth parents, and the larger ethnic communities that these adoptions join together. One of the many questions raised concerning transracial adoption is whether the policy is a justifiable one in terms of the well-being of the transracial adoptee and the groups that gain and lose children as a result of it.

When transracial placements first began in the United States in the years following World War II, they were generally applauded or ignored by social service professionals and the black community.¹ Social workers expressed some anxiety about the workability of these placements, but little doubt about their need or desirability. As the number of transracial

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adoptions increased dramatically during the late 1960s, steadily mounting criticism was voiced.

The changing civil rights movement, with its greater emphasis on ethnic pride and militancy, led many racial and cultural minorities to question transracial placements. Increasing criticism developed within the black community. Native Americans also expressed deep concern about the relatively large numbers of Indian children placed with white families. Objections to transracial adoptions peaked in 1972 when the National Association of Black Social Workers expressed "vehement opposition" to the practice.²

As a result of this criticism, there has been a noticeable decline in transracial adoptions.³ Since the NABSW expressed its objections, the adoption of black children by whites has diminished considerably. Yet, the adoption of Asians by whites has continued at a level of several thousand a year, and there has been a moderate expansion in the number of Central and South American children adopted by white parents.⁴

One of the objections leveled against transracial adoption is that it results in cultural genocide. Detractors of transracial adoption contend that it takes children away from their homelands and strips them of their connection to their community and culture.⁵ They assert that the practice is psychologically crippling to the children involved, leaving them in a cultural no man's land, never fully being accepted in the majority culture, and maladapted for effective participation within the culture of their birth. Opponents also charge that the transracial adoptee is likely to experience a deep sense of personal isolation, identity confusion, and poor self-esteem, and that transracially adopted children will be unable to effectively cope with the hostility and rejection of white society. The National Association of Black Social Workers takes this position: "Black children should be placed only with black families whether in foster care or for adoption. Black children belong physically, psychologically and culturally in black families in order that they receive the total sense of themselves and develop a sound projection of their future. . . . Black children in white families are cut off from a healthy development of themselves as black people. . . . [We must] go back to our communities to end this particular form of genocide."⁶

To date, there has been surprisingly little evidence amassed in support of the damaging consequences of transracial adoption. Many studies have been done on the initial adaptations of transracially adopted children in their adoptive homes. The consistent finding of all these studies, usually involving preadolescent and younger children, is that approximately three-fourths of these children adapt well. Less than a fourth have been found to have moderate to serious maladjustment problems.⁷ Studies of racial awareness, identification, and self-esteem

of transracially adopted children have not indicated any evidence of problems either.

Some critics have countered that the racism of white society against the transracial adoptee is not likely to become virulent until these children approach or reach adolescence.⁸ They contend that most of these studies say very little about how the children will adapt as they grow older. Evidence on longer-term adaptations remains limited, but it is beginning to accumulate. One study of Korean adolescent adoptees found that the overwhelming majority of these children had little Korean identity but—according to a widely accepted psychological self-concept inventory—had developed relatively healthy self-concepts.⁹ Another study recently conducted in Great Britain of thirty-six black, Asian, and mixed-race children adopted by white parents yielded virtually similar findings.¹⁰ Still another study—half of whose sample consisted of adolescent adoptees—found no significant differences in self-esteem scores between a sample of black transracial adoptees and a control group of black in-racially adopted children.¹¹ This last study was the first of its kind to include a control population of in-racially adopted minority members.

Despite the absence of empirical evidence, social service professionals have apparently acceded to the pressures of organized groups within and outside of their profession who have advocated the curtailment of transracial placements. Although they have not terminated these placements altogether, they have reduced the number of those placed transracially from that of ten years ago.¹² The present period is one in which we find expanded efforts to secure in-racial placements for homeless minority children. Yet, there remain an alarmingly high number of minority children caught within a revolving door of foster and institutional care—children who could benefit greatly from permanent placement.

Our concern in the present research was to investigate the long-term impact of transracial placement. We were interested in exploring whether there were some adjustment problems inherent in the experience of transracial adoption that might not have emerged in earlier studies. We also wanted to probe whether adjustment difficulties were more likely to occur during adolescence.

Although most discussion of transracial adoption has focused on black children adopted by white families, the same objections have been raised to the transracial adoptions of Asian and Latin American children. However, no single study has attempted to compare the experiences of all these groups of adoptees. We would expect that the contrasting experiences of Afro-Americans, Asians, and Hispanics in the United States would lead to different adaptations for transracially adopted children of these backgrounds. We wanted to know whether

blacks, Asians, and Hispanics would show substantial differences in the difficulties they faced and in their adoptive adjustments.

The question may be raised whether intercountry adoptions and domestic transracial adoptions are sufficiently alike to be treated as a single category. We believe that all of these adoptions involve very similar processes: a separation from birth parents and birth culture, differences in the socially significant physical characteristics between the adopted child and their adoptive parents, and the exposure of both adopters and adoptees to some measure of social disapproval. In each instance—the adoption of black children, Korean children, and Colombian children—although the importance of each element varies, the impact of separation from family and culture, physical difference, and prejudice is common to all.

Background of the Research

This research was based on a questionnaire survey mailed to a national sample of adoptive families. Our sample was drawn from three sources—the membership lists of various adoptive parent groups in different regions of the country, a list of adopting families given by a large adoption agency, and the names of unaffiliated adopting families who had contacted the parent groups in the study. Members of adoptive parent groups were overrepresented in the sample, but approximately 20 percent of sample members did not belong to such groups.

One thousand one hundred questionnaires were sent out in the original survey in 1975, and one follow-up letter was sent to delaying respondents. Ultimately, more than 67 percent of the population sampled returned usable questionnaires, yielding a total sample of 737 adoptive families. In the 1981 follow-up study, upon which this analysis is based, we sought to recontact the respondents to the earlier survey. Despite our efforts to resurvey our sample population, directly or through their adoptive parent organization affiliation, we were unable to administer the follow-up survey to 26 percent of the respondents because they had moved and their postal forwarding requests had expired. Of the remaining number of 545 possible respondents, 68 percent cooperated with the follow-up study, yielding a total of 372 responding families who participated in the later survey.

Respondents adopted their children through a variety of sources: domestic and foreign, private agencies, regional social service departments, and independent adoptions. Seventy-six percent of responding families had adopted internationally, and 24 percent had

adopted domestically. Eighty-nine percent had adopted through private agencies and regional social service departments; 11 percent had adopted independently. The sample included all major subgroups of contemporary transracial adoptive families.

It is not certain how closely our sample resembles the population of transracial and in-racial adoptees, since there are no comprehensive statistics collected on these populations. We did find, however, that when we compared the Afro-American, white, and other subsamples in our study to similar samples from other studies, their characteristics were very similar.¹³

In 1981, the following percentages of racial and national subgroups of adoptees were noted among the last adopted children of our respondent families: white children born in the United States, 17 percent (65); Afro-American children, 13 percent (47); Korean children, 43 percent (161); Colombian children, 5 percent (19); other children, 22 percent (80).

At the time of our 1981 study, two-thirds of the adoptees were between seven and twelve years of age. Thirty-one percent were between the ages of thirteen and twenty, and the remainder were between twenty-one and twenty-five. Only the Colombian children differed substantially from the other groups of adopted children—all of these children were between seven and twelve years of age.

Results

The Adjustment of Transracial Adoptees

We measured the adjustments of transracial adoptees in terms of the perceptions of their adoptive parents. The question may reasonably be raised as to whether these perceptions are a reliable and valid indicator of the adjustment of adopted children. Our confidence in the use of parental perceptions rests, in part, on the results of prior studies in which parental perceptions have been shown to be closely correlated with the assessments made by trained interviewers and clinicians. Fanshel, in his study of native American children adopted by white parents, made the following comment on the close correspondence between parental perceptions of the frequency of given symptoms in their children and clinicians' ratings of children's adjustments: "The correlations of the symptom measures with the Overall Child Adjustment Rating were even more impressive (.53 and .55) indicating that parental responses to fairly concrete questions about the adjustment of their children, worded in terms they can understand, approximate fairly closely the judgments of the professional based upon a larger corpus

of information.”¹⁴ Charles Zastrow, in his study of black children adopted by white families, also reported a close correlation between the ratings assigned by trained interviewers and the assessments made by parents.¹⁵

The data discussed by Fanshel and Zastrow consisted of parental responses to interviewers' questions, and our data relied on responses to mail questionnaires. Yet, despite these differences, there is little reason to believe that this would substantially alter response patterns from one context to another. Structured questions would tend to reduce variations in meaning between written and oral presentations. This is especially true with the highly educated and motivated respondents in our sample. For these reasons, we are confident that the adjustment questions used in our study are comparable to measures of adjustment used in other adoption research. While parents' perceptions of adjustment are not coterminous with those of the clinician, they are closely associated with them.

It is also important to remember that the concept of “adjustment” is a social as well as a psychological construct. The behavioral content of adjustment will vary depending upon the social situation and shared values of particular parents. A child who persistently asked questions might be considered well adjusted by urban parents who were university professors. The same behavior could be considered deeply problematic by parents in a rural community where traditional values are prominent. The statement that a child has many or few emotional problems is always made by parents relative to their perception of what is normative for the emotional development of a child of a given age, sex, and social situation.

Our measure of adjustment is an additive scale based on three questions dealing with the parents' overall evaluation of the adoption, the frequency of emotional problems, and the frequency of growth problems. These questions were included on both the 1975 and 1981 questionnaires. Factor analysis indicated that the responses to these questions formed a single factor, and a Cronbach's alpha of .68 suggested a reasonable level of reliability. These three questions were then combined into a scale of children's maladjustments that we employed in our multivariate analyses of the adjustment of transracially adopted children. Each of the three scale items had four ranked responses. These were combined to yield a twelve-point scale for the index of children's maladjustments.

Table 1 displays the parental perceptions of adjustment among the adoptees in 1981, at least six years after their initial placement. The results showed that adjustment problems for Colombian children were no more severe than those experienced by white adoptees. Indeed, the Colombians tended to be better adjusted than their white counterparts. The transracial adoptees who were born in Korea also were reportedly no more poorly adapted than their adopted white peers,

Table 1

PARENTAL PERCEPTIONS OF THE ADJUSTMENT OF THEIR ADOPTED CHILDREN BY THE CHILD'S RACIAL OR ETHNIC BACKGROUND

	Parents of White U.S. Child	Parents of Colombian Child	Parents of Korean Child	Parents of Afro-American Child
Child has emotional adjustment problems* . . .	40	26	37	54
Child has growth problems*	4	5	13	7
Child's adjustment described as fully satisfactory	43	73	53	19
Child has moderate to high scores on maladjustment index	64	42	60	77
Child shows discomfort about appearance	16	11	26	38
Child has received professional care for problems	25	0	10	16
Above average school grades	48	58	58	43
Has above average interest in school	52	79	59	40
Frequent conflict with siblings	10	0	16	19

* Reported sometimes or often.

except in their slightly greater frequency of growth problems and discomfort about their appearance. Most transracial adoptive parents of Colombian and Korean children considered the adjustments of their children to be more than satisfactory.

At the other end of the spectrum we noted apparently poorer adjustments of Afro-American adoptees. The differences between the Afro-American adoptees and the whites were generally consistent, although they were not statistically significant when we applied chi-square significance tests to the data.

One may wonder why Colombian adoptees fared so well in their psychological adjustments. Many studies, including our own work, have consistently shown that a child's age at placement has a great deal to do with his or her adjustment to adoptive homes.¹⁶ Those placed at later ages are much more likely to have adjustment difficulties. Long periods in foster and institutional care increase the likelihood that children will have had disruptive experiences. Children entering adoptive families when they are older are also more likely to have formed personalities that might be inconsistent with the expectations of their adoptive parents.

We suspect that the relative youth of the Colombian children had a great deal to do with their more favorable adaptations. Families in

our sample who adopted Colombian children were much more likely to have had their children placed as infants. Sixty-seven percent of the Colombian children were less than two years of age in 1975 as compared to 27 percent of the Korean children, 24 percent of the white children, and 14 percent of the Afro-Americans.

The inferences we have drawn from table 1 seem to be supported by multiple regression analyses of children's maladjustments in 1975 and 1981. A multiple regression analysis of the adjustment of white and Colombian children in 1975 revealed no significant differences between white and Colombian adoptees when the age of the adoptee and the age of placement were adjusted for. Age of the adoptee and age at placement were the only significant variables in this equation. Family opposition to the adoption and the child's ethnic background—also included as variables—failed to achieve significance. These findings are consistent with the interpretation offered for the data in table 1. The relative youth and early placement of the Colombian children seem to account for their apparently superior adjustments.

The recalculation of this multiple regression employing our 1981 data again revealed that the adoptee's ethnic background (white or Colombian) was not a significant predictor of 1981 maladjustment scores. Neither age in 1981 nor age at placement achieved significance, but children's 1975 maladjustment scores (here entered as an independent variable) did. (Children's maladjustment scores in 1975 were added to the four variables of age, age at placement, family opposition, and ethnicity.) As age and age at placement were significant predictors of the 1975 maladjustment index, they appeared to be important indirect influences on 1981 maladjustment scores. Thus, the data from multivariate analysis are not inconsistent with our interpretation of table 1.

Are Transracially Adopted Afro-Americans More Poorly Adjusted?

We were interested in understanding the poorer adjustments of the Afro-American adoptees. Even though the trends fell short of statistical significance, the primarily consistent pattern of poorer adjustments deserved further analysis. In an earlier study in 1975, we compared and contrasted the adjustment of Afro-American adoptees with their white in-racially adopted counterparts.¹⁷ At that time, too, a pattern was noted showing poorer adjustments for the Afro-Americans. Then, however, most of the differences were statistically significant with chi-square.

In the earlier study we analyzed some of the known influences on adoptive adjustments. As one might have expected, the data showed that Afro-American adoptees were much more likely to be recipients of racial antipathy than most of the white adoptees. For example,

among families adopting white children, 92 percent of the mothers' parents expressed approval of their daughters' adoptions; in comparison, 46 percent of the parents of those that adopted blacks approved.

The data also showed that the black adoptees were more likely to be adopted when they were older, and to enter their adoptive families at later ages. Eighty-six percent of the Afro-American adoptees were over two years of age when they were placed, as compared with less than 70 percent of all other adoptees. Only 14 percent of the black children under five years of age were described as being poorly adjusted, as contrasted with 36 percent of those over six. We wanted to assess whether the poorer adjustments of the Afro-American children in 1975 were by-products of racial antipathy, advanced age, or delayed placements.

When each of these factors was examined separately—the child's race, age, age at placement, and the intensity of opposition expressed by family and friends—they were found to have an influence on adjustment outcomes. Yet, in a multiple regression analysis, when each factor was controlled at the same time, only two variables remained as significant determinants of adjustment outcomes: the age of the child at placement, and the intensity of family and friends' opposition.

The influence of family and friends' opposition on adjustment outcomes gives support to critics of transracial adoption. Yet, the impact of this factor was not nearly as great as the child's age at placement. Age at placement alone accounted for 15.1 percent of the 20.9 percent of the variance explained by all four variables. Similarly, when the intercorrelated ($r = .51$) variables of age and age at placement were excluded from the regression equation, the equation lost significance. Thus, it was demonstrated that the most decisive element in influencing black children's maladjustment scores in 1975 was the child's age at placement.

After these adoptees had been in their adoptive homes for six more years, we reevaluated their adjustments. We wanted to know whether the longer-term adjustments of transracially adopted Afro-Americans were perceptibly worse than those of in-racial adoptees. In 1981, 30 percent of our Afro-American adoptees were described by their parents as having problem-free adjustments; 47 percent were described as primarily well adjusted with some problems. The remaining 23 percent were judged to have frequent adjustment problems. For whites, the comparable figures were as follows: 46 percent very well adjusted, 33 percent somewhat well adjusted, and 22 percent with frequent adjustment problems. While the black transracial adoptees were less likely to be rated as very well adjusted like their white counterparts, these differences fell short of statistical significance.

Parents were also asked if they had ever wanted to get—or had actually received—the help of professionals to assist them with their

children's behavioral problems. Sixteen percent of the parents of Afro-American adoptees reported wanting such aid for their child's behavior, as compared to 25 percent of parents of in-racial adoptees. Substantially similar percentages of transracial and in-racial adoptees were reported as having difficulties in getting along with their peers, with approximately a quarter of both groups indicating such problems occasionally or more often. Slightly more of the transracially adopted children (19 as compared with 10 percent) were reported as having difficulties in getting along with their brothers and sisters.

Since all of our respondents were of school age, we thought it advisable to evaluate their school adjustments. None of the Afro-American adoptees were judged to be doing below average schoolwork; fifty-seven percent were described as average students, and the remaining 43 percent were considered to be doing above average. These evaluations showed close comparability with the white adoptees; 6 percent were described as doing below average school work, 46 percent as doing average work, and the remaining 48 percent as doing exceptionally well.

Where black adoptees seemed to trail behind the whites was in their scholastic motivations; here the differences approached, but did not attain, statistical significance. While 52 percent of the white adoptees were judged as possessing exceptional interest in school, for blacks the comparable figure was only 40 percent. Thus, the adoptive adjustments of our black transracial adoptees did not demonstrate that they were significantly more maladjusted when compared with white adoptees. Although the black adoptees showed somewhat greater problems on a few of our adjustment indicators, by and large, the differences were insubstantial (see table 1).

With our 1981 data, we also repeated the regression analysis for the transracially adopted Afro-Americans and the in-racially adopted whites. The same variables that appeared in the earlier analysis were included here. A new variable was also added—the degree of maladjustment that children had in 1975. This proved to be the most significant factor in explaining variations in children's adjustments in 1981; it alone produced a beta weight of .507, accounting for 19 percent of the explained variations in adjustment scores. The only other factor to attain a statistically significant value was the opposition of family and friends (in 1981), which attained a beta weight of .273 and accounted for only 7 percent of the variance in adjustment scores. The race factor itself proved to have no statistically significant value in accounting for the differences in adjustment scores.

This regression analysis only confirmed other trends noted in these comparisons. Race difference and racial antagonism are not completely inert factors in influencing the outcome of a transracial adoption. Yet, they are overshadowed by the significance of factors associated with

the child's age and long delays in his or her eventual adoptive placement. These latter factors, by affecting the child's early adaptation in his or her adoptive home, ultimately produce longer-term adverse consequences.

Adaptations of Korean Adolescent Transracial Adoptees

In the final part of our analysis of transracial adoptive adjustments, we focused on the adoptive adaptations of adolescents. Some critics of transracial adoption contend that it is only when children reach adolescence that they are fully exposed to society's racism.¹⁸ They argue that the period during which adolescents confront feelings of self-doubt, ambivalence, and role confusion is likely to be particularly trying for the transracially adopted child. Adolescent turmoil is especially compounded for transracial adoptees because of their marginal affiliation to the ethnic group of their birth and that of their adoptive parents. We examined these questions with our Korean respondents. Fifty-five adolescent Korean adoptees were compared with the responses of thirty-two white in-racially adopted adolescents who were thirteen years old or older. Considering that Koreans comprise the largest single group of today's transracial adoptees, it becomes especially important to understand the adaptations of these young people. When we attempted a similar analysis with Afro-American adolescents, we found that the numbers in our sample were too small to permit statistically meaningful comparisons.

In reviewing adolescent adaptations in our 1981 study, we were struck by the lack of problems encountered in most homes. Table 2 shows the responses of Korean adoptees aged thirteen and older, and compares their responses to those of white adoptees in the same age range.

The trends shown in Table 2 were consistent, indicating that the Korean adopted adolescents were well-adapted in their American homes. Approximately three-fourths were described as well adjusted in their adoptive families. Considering the general tendency of older adoptees to have more frequent adjustment problems, this suggested that transracially adopted Korean adolescents were better adjusted than most adolescent adoptees. The apparently positive adaptation of the Koreans was confirmed when we compared them to their white American counterparts. Here we were surprised to find that the Korean adoptees were better adapted than white adolescents. Despite the fact that their Korean features and heritage were devalued, the adjustments of these adopted adolescents were superior to those of white U.S.-born adoptees.

The trend was repeatedly demonstrated in all of our adjustment indicators except one. Only in their discomfort about their appearance did the Koreans show more of a negative response than white adolescent adoptees. Kim¹⁹ has also found discomfort about appearance to be

Table 2

ADJUSTMENTS OF KOREAN AND WHITE ADOPTEES THIRTEEN YEARS OF AGE OR OLDER, 1981

	Korean Adoptees 13 and Over	White Adoptees 13 and Over
Child described as mostly or extremely well adjusted	74	62
Child described as being free of emotional adjustment problems	65	52
Child described as being free of growth or developmental problems	96	71
Child received professional help for problem behavior	9	33
Child's schoolwork above average	55	29
Child's interest in school described as above average	46	38
Child said to have some or frequent problems in getting along with peers	29	43
Child is sometimes or frequently uncomfortable about his appearance	28	19

one of the few areas where adopted Korean youth are likely to have problems. Despite this anxiety, however, Korean adoptees appeared to adapt especially well.

We suspected that these trends might have been influenced by variations in age between the two groups. We anticipated that the poorer adjustment of the white adolescent adoptees might be attributable to the fact that they were older than the Korean adoptees or were older at placement. Yet when we compared both groups of children there was no indication that this was the case.

Adolescent Korean adoptees tended to be older than their white counterparts. The mean age for the adolescent white adoptees in 1981 was 16.3; for the Koreans it was 17.4. While only a quarter of the Koreans were between age thirteen and fifteen, one-half of the adolescent whites belonged to that age group. Korean adoptees were also more likely to have been adopted at older ages. The average age of adoption for the Korean adolescents was 5.3 years; for the whites it was 3.2. Only a small fraction—4 percent—of the adolescent Korean adoptees were adopted before they were a year old, compared to half among the white adolescent population. One must keep in mind that all the evidence we have accumulated indicates that older children and those who are placed later are likely to have poorer adjustments.

What accounts for the better adjustments of the Korean adolescents? It has been suggested by some of those familiar with Korea and the

foreign adoptions of Korean children that immigration to the United States is frequently seen as a very desirable goal by many Koreans. Professor Dong Soo Kim of the School of Social Work of Norfolk State University suggests that as a result of sharing such sentiments, Korean adoptees usually come to have very positive expectations of their American adoptive homes.²⁰ He claims that in many cases these expectations become self-fulfilling prophecies. Kim suggests that the high morale of Korean adoptees enables them to overcome problems created by their difficult preadoptive environments. This explanation is most interesting, but by no means fully demonstrated. This question deserves further thought and continued research. The trends showing adolescent Korean adoptees—who are older—to be better adapted than their in-racially adopted white counterparts is a most startling result. It is not clear that we can generalize from these data on the adjustment of transracially adopted Korean adolescents to all transracially adopted adolescents. Yet these data would seem to conflict with the expectations of those critics of transracial adoption who have seen adolescence as a time of particular crisis for nonwhite adoptees in white homes.

Summary and Conclusion

When we examined all the results of our study and others, we found little evidence to support critical claims against transracial adoption. Initially, and six or more years later in their adoptive homes, among each of the three groups of transracial adoptees studied here—Colombians, Koreans, and Afro-Americans—results indicated that children's adjustments were generally similar to those of white in-racially adopted children. Hispanic transracial adoptees from Colombia were found to be at least as well, if not slightly better, adapted than in-racially adopted whites. Transracially adopted Korean adolescents were found to be somewhat better adjusted than their comparable white in-racially adopted peers.

Some readers may find these data contrary to their expectations. They might easily have anticipated that the dislocation of Korean and Colombian children from their respective homelands would have led to more maladjustment in their adoptive families. Yet, previous research on the adaptations of Korean adoptees by Winick, and on European orphans adopted by Americans after World War II by Rathbun, DiVirgilio, and Waldfogel, is consistent with our findings.²¹ The impact of a positive home and family environment can undo much of the damage created by previous deprivation in young children. There is no prior research on this point among Colombian children, but it

would seem reasonable to expect that these findings would apply to them as well.

Only among Afro-American adoptees were some signs of poorer adjustments shown, as compared with their white counterparts. But, the evidence suggested that the differences were primarily attributable to their older ages at placement and more troubled preplacement histories than to any elements associated with transracial adoption. Thus, we found little support for arguments contending that the placement of transracially adopted children in white homes will produce damaging psychological consequences.

Our findings on transracial adoption and those of other researchers are beginning to raise serious questions about the appropriateness of curtailing these placements. This evidence indicates that whatever problems may be generated by transracial adoption, the benefits to the child outweigh its costs. There is no evidence that any of the serious problems of adjustment suggested by the critics of transracial adoption are present in any meaningful proportion for nonwhite children who have been adopted by white parents. There is, of course, evidence from our own study and others that the developmental and emotional damage sustained by black children without permanent placement is considerable. Despite the very meaningful advances that have been made in the placement of minority children in minority families, large numbers of black and Hispanic children still remain in foster and institutional care. For these nonwhite children, transracial adoption may be the only realistic possibility for their permanent placement.

Our findings support the position that transracial adoption remains a viable option for the placement of homeless nonwhite children. It is important to understand that the opposition to transracial adoption is by no means uniform or universal among American blacks or other racial minorities. A 1977 study of black community attitudes toward transracial placement found that most Afro-Americans were prepared to accept transracial placements, especially if the alternatives for black children were foster or institutional care.²² If social workers fail to consider transracial adoption as a possibility for nonwhite children, then they are likely to run the risk of inflicting serious and lasting emotional damage on children who cannot be readily placed in minority homes.

Notes

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