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Interracial Adoption: In Whose Best Interest is it?

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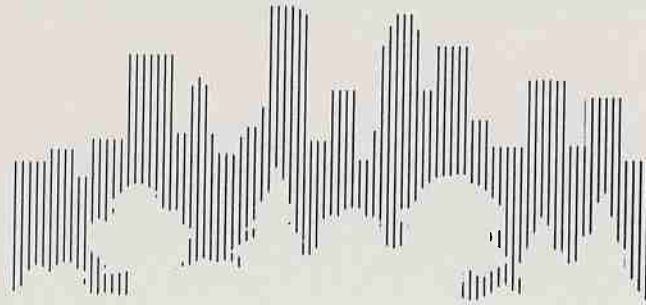
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**MASTERS IN SOCIAL WORK
THESIS**

Pamela L. Beyer

**Interracial Adoption:
In Whose Best Interest is it?**

1998

**MSW
Thesis**

**Thesis
Beyer**

Interracial Adoption:

In Whose Best Interest Is It?

A Look at Adjustment, Self-Esteem and Racial
Identity Among Korean Adoptees In America

by

Pamela L. Beyer

Augsburg College, MSW Program

1998

INTERRACIAL ADOPTION:
IN WHOSE BEST INTEREST IS IT?
A LOOK AT ADJUSTMENT, SELF-ESTEEM AND RACIAL IDENTITY
AMONG KOREAN-ADOPTEES IN AMERICA

PAMELA L. BEYER

Submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirement for the degree of
Master of Social Work

AUGSBURG COLLEGE
MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA

1998

MASTER OF SOCIAL WORK
AUGSBURG COLLEGE
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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to our beautiful daughter, Sheri, who came into our family in August of 1978 full of smiles and love. Our lives have been so blessed and enriched through you, that we deeply hope that we have been able to in some ways compensate for the losses you have had to endure by being adopted into our family. You are the inspiration for this study, and your input has been invaluable. Be proud of your heritage, and may you enjoy all the happiness you deserve. We are happy to share you with your wonderful family in Korea.

I also dedicate this thesis to my mother, Elmira Christianson, who impressed in me the value of an education and the quality of caring for others. She has provided me with encouragement and assistance over the years, and I'm grateful.

Also, in memory of my father, Obert Christianson, who passed away in 1984. He taught me to appreciate diversity and to have concern and compassion for the disadvantaged. That was how he lived his life, and no words could have ever taught me that lesson as well. You are missed.

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To my dear husband, Glad, who has spent the past two years patiently waiting for me to have time to spend time with him, I want to say “Thanks. My love for you has grown even stronger. Although this time also marked the beginning of our empty nest, I hope our next years together will be as happy as the last twenty-eight.” To our children Stacey, Scot, and Sheri; who have been supportive and understanding when mom has been so preoccupied with studying; thanks for standing by me. Special thanks to Stacey and Tammy for allowing me to sleep over on school week-ends and giving us a grandchild during this time. Thanks to Scot for spending time with dad some of these week-ends, and to Deana for truly becoming a member of our family. To our daughter Sheri, who was disappointed we were unable to come see her this winter in Hawaii, thanks for understanding.

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ABSTRACT

INTERRACIAL ADOPTION:
IN WHOSE BEST INTEREST IS IT?
A LOOK AT ADJUSTMENT, SELF-ESTEEM AND RACIAL IDENTITY
AMONG KOREAN-ADOPTees IN AMERICA

EXPLORATORY/KOREAN ADOPTees

PAMELA L. BEYER

1998

This study investigated the impact of interracial adoption on adjustment, self-esteem, and racial identity among Korean adoptees who were adopted into Euro-American families, as related by the adoptees. Twelve respondents between the ages of 18 and 22 answered survey questions relating to their self-concept, their involvement in cultural activities, problem areas as a result of their interracial adoption, adoptive parents' characteristics and responsibilities, and the roles of social workers. Respondents indicated that their adoptive parents' sensitivity as well as involvement and education in Korean culture was important and should be the focus of recruitment and training efforts by social workers.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

This chapter will include a description of some of the problems related to interracial adoption, the history and background of interracial adoption, the purpose of this particular study, the significance of the study, and the research questions that were addressed.

Statement of the Problem

More than 100,000 children from other countries have been adopted by Americans since the 1950s, as “the adoption of foreign children by persons in developed countries has become an increasingly important phenomenon after World War II” (Weil, p. 276). Ideally these children should be able to remain in their country of birth and live among their own people and culture. However, many of these children would likely grow up in institutions, rather than in homes with caring families. Some people believe that all children deserve loving homes, and that living in a family of a different race or culture is better than no family at all. And yet, some may ask, “Whose best interest is being served: the child needing a home, or the parents wanting a child?” Are these children doing as well as we want to believe they are? How do these children fare? Are they able to adjust and adapt into the new culture and community? Do they develop a healthy self-esteem while perceived by many as minorities? Are they able to develop a pride in their culture and have a positive sense of racial identity? This study addresses these questions.

Background of the Problem

Intercountry adoption began following World War II and continues today due to a shortage of adoptable children within the United States. "The U.S. is the major receiver of foreign children" (Weil, 1984, p. 61). In 1996, there was a total of 11,316 intercountry adoptions. While fewer white babies are placed for adoption by their mothers, the number of parents wanting to adopt has increased due to a decrease in the fertility rate. Extensive adoption figures are available only from 1986. According to the National Committee for Adoption and the 1989 Adoption Factbook, there was a total of 104,088 domestic adoptions in 1986. Of those, only 24,589 involved infant adoptions including all children under two years of age. However, the number of white couples seeking to adopt reached about 2 million. While this discrepancy exists, white parents will likely be adopting children from other countries and races. Further, "child experts agree that a stable home life with its attendant security and continuity is essential to the emotional and psychological well-being of children" (Ballard, p. 337). Barbara Trolley (1995) believes that "the well-being of the child depends on appropriately grieving the losses associated with being internationally adopted while at the same time appreciating the positives" (p. 257). Because it is likely that natural and man-made disasters will continue and children will be left in need, intercountry adoptions will

continue.

Purpose of the Study

A number of studies have been done concerning the adoption of black children by white parents. While several studies also look specifically at Hispanic children adopted by white families, few researchers address the traumatic experience and loss intercountry adoptees face when they must leave their country and culture behind. Ruth McRoy, (1991), believes that “intercountry adoption has been less controversial, in part perhaps because its practice developed out of the devastation created by war and other natural and man-made disasters” (p. 55). Also, “much of the early research on transracial adoption examined short-term outcomes for the children and families involved and tended to rely on point-in-time analyses of child and family well-being” (Courtney, 1997, p. 752).

The purpose of the study that is the basis of this thesis is to gather thoughts and feelings directly from Korean- American adoptees about their adoption experience. According to the National Adoption Information Clearinghouse, since 1990 approximately 22% of the 59,175 intercountry adoptions in the United States have involved placing Korean children in European-American homes. What do these Korean adoptees think about their interracial adoption? Has it been a blessing for them, or has it negatively

impacted on the development of their self esteem and racial identity?

Significance of the Study

It is likely that no one can state better the impact, benefits, and costs to interracial adoption than adoptees themselves, a belief collaborated by feminist theorists. Hearing first hand what this population has to say can assist social workers in providing better services to orphans and to adoptive families. "Research is needed to assess how the internationally adopted child feels about his/her mixed heritage and how he/she would like to define his/her cultural identification" (Trolley, p. 260). Adoptees are the experts, and asking them to share what difficulties they faced, how these were solved, and what their parents provided that were particularly helpful, can provide valuable information to social workers working in adoption. The voices of interracial adoptees should be heard. Through the use of a exploratory research utilizing a questionnaire, Korean adoptees in Minnesota were asked to share their thoughts about their interracial adoption experience.

Research Questions

How do Korean adoptees perceive the effects that their interracial adoption have had on their self-esteem? How do Korean adoptees perceive the effects their interracial adoption have had on their racial identity? How did their adoptive parents influence the development of their self-esteem? How

did their adoptive parents influence the development of their racial identity?

Summary

This chapter has included a statement about the problem that may be associated with interracial adoption, a background of interracial adoption, the purpose of the study, the significance of the study, as well as the research questions. Chapter two will include a review of the literature on research done on interracial adoption. Specifically that will include the adjustment issues for interracial adoptees, the impact on self esteem, as well as on racial identity. Chapter three includes discussion of various theories that may account for the stages of development involved in self-esteem and racial identity. Chapter four will include a discussion of the methodology regarding this study. Chapter five will present the research findings, and chapter six will present a discussion of these findings.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

As interracial adoptions have become more popular among Americans as a way to create families, is it possible that these children are being forced into an arrangement that causes them to lose their ethnicity and sense of self? This chapter reviews previous studies addressing this question. Three main areas will be considered when evaluating under what conditions interracial adoption is in the best interest of the child and to what degree these placements are successful for the child. First we will look at adjustment which can be described as the ability to fit into their families and adapt to the differences. This adaptation can be related to the family of adoption as well as the ability to function in the community and school. Next we will look at self-esteem, that being the sense of self the adoptee develops in spite of living with a family of a different race or culture. And finally, we will look at the child's tendency to identify with his or her racial or cultural group and the likeliness that the child will be comfortable with his/her race. More than two dozen studies were reviewed, found through a systematic research of books and journals. Some were found through references within previous studies as well as unpublished dissertations.

Adjustment

Most of the research results gathered indicate that transracial and

interracial adoptees adjust comparatively as well as same race adoptees. While adjustment was identified in varying ways, the combined results of these studies are quite striking. Some studies (Feigelman & Silverman, 1981; Kim, 1978; Rathbun, 1965) looked at adjustment through behaviors exhibited by children and adolescent. Some studies (Kim, Hong & Kim, 1979) considered school performance, and another (Johnson et al, 1987) looked at developmental stages by comparing non-adopted cohorts with interracial adoptees. Other studies (Benson et al., 1994; McRoy & Zurcher, 1983; Simon & Alstein, 1987), looked at the quality of family relationships as reported by the parents and the adoptees. And still other studies (Koh, 1993; Simon, 1988) conducted interviews and gathered qualitative data from adoptees and their parents. Simon's study involved black and Korean children. Results seemed to strongly indicate that these children have minimal adjustment problems.

Adoption in and of itself presents possible adjustment problems. Christopher Bagley did a comparative study of all children admitted to two residential treatment centers in Western Canada over a ten year period, between 1978 and 1988. The first finding was that "11.75% of 519 children in two residential centers for severely maladjusted children in the areas studied had been previously adopted" (Bagley, p. 273), not a particularly

overwhelming amount. A comparison of 61 adopted and 61 non-adopted children in these two residential centers further identified “four main types of maladjustment” (Bagley, p. 323). These are: 1) Children having genetic factors or organic trauma in the perinatal period; 2) Long-term effects of trauma which occurred prior to adoption; 3) Abuse and disruption in adoptive families, which may include marital problems or abnormality in a parent; 4) Step-parent adoptions, which proved to be the most problematic in both prevention and intervention. Overall, the study showed that the problems exist within the family system, not necessarily within the child or due to the adoption issue itself. Data gathered by Bagley through his research indicate that “at least two thirds of children who are removed from dysfunctional families in which outcomes for them would have been poor, have highly successful outcomes in adoptive families” (Bagley, p. 328).

Among the first groups studied involving the adoption of children by adoptive parents of another culture were transracially adopted children, namely black children adopted into white families. Johnson et al (1987) looked at developmental tasks determined as appropriate for similar age children. About 3/4 of the transracially adopted children were on target for these tasks and had no signs of emotional problems. They had close relationships with their families and had no problems forming friendships. This figure was compared

to 80% for children adopted in-racially, not a significant difference.

One of the first studies conducted on foreign-born children and their adjustment was done in 1957 by Constance Rathbun, Letita DiVirgilio and Samuel Waldfogel (1965). This study was conducted during the first year of the placement of 38 children, and a report was presented to the American Orthopsychiatric Association. The study indicated “an unexpected degree of psychic equilibrium during their first year of adoptive placements” (p. 604). A follow up study done six years later by Rathbun, McLaughlin, Bennett, and Garland included semi-structured interviews with the adoptive parents of 33 of the adopted children. A two-part rating scale was developed, based on 12 factors comprising personal competence, home, school and community relationships. “Five were classified as superior (15%); secure at home and school, accepted by peers and effective in all their relationships. Another 16 were considered adequate (49%), comfortable and generally normative youngsters. The adjustment of 10 was viewed as problematic (30%)” (Rathbun & Waldfogel, p. 606).

Benson, Sharma, and Roehlkepartain (1994) looked at adjustment through the quality of family relationships developed between the adoptee and other family members. The adoptees were more likely to be strongly attached to their parents than those in same-race families, as reported by the adoptees.

Simon and Alstein (1987) found that transracial adoptees considered themselves as having as close of ties with their relatives as those born into the family. They also found that families members believed that adoption had joined them together and strengthened ties and commitments in spite of the racial differences. McRoy and Zurcher (1983) found that strong bonds had developed between parents and the adoptees in both transracial and inracial families.

Four major behavioral symptoms were the focus of a study done in the late 70s by Kim and Hong and Kim (1979), meant to measure the adjustment of Korean children in American homes. Temper tantrums, shyness and withdrawal, excessive and frequent crying, and learning difficulty were considered signs of distress. Of the 16 children who showed evidence of these symptoms, only one required psychiatric intervention. A study conducted by Rathbun and colleagues (1965) on 38 intercountry adopted children indicated that 80% of the children had mild to moderate adjustment problems, with 20% showing severe symptoms related to adjustment into the new family. However, a number of these particular children were known to have suffered deprivation and abuse, which could have raised these figures for those reasons rather than the culture difference. Another significant factor that can pre-determine level of adjustment is the age at which the child was adopted. The

“older foreign child’s adjustment is a more prolonged process of accommodation and assimilation to the new home and community” (Kim, 1978, p. 480). They may need to learn a new language, as well as adapt to changes in diet, customs, rituals, and even sleeping habits. Silverman and Feigelman (1981) compared the adjustment of 56 black children adopted by white families with 97 white children adopted by white families. The results indicated that the child’s age at the time of the adoption had more impact on the adjustment, rather than the transracial adoption itself.

Feigelman and Silverman looked specifically at Korean adoptees in a 1981 follow-up study, and found adjustment rates to be higher as compared to white adoptees of the same age. Approximately 3/4 of those questioned were described as well adjusted. This study also revealed a general tendency for older Korean adoptees to have fewer adjustment problems than older adoptees in general.

Another study addresses adjustment, having used personal interviews as the means of obtaining information. Rita Simon (1988) and her colleague, Howard Alstein, conducted a longitudinal study that tracked 200 families who adopted a black or Korean child between 1965 and 1972. They were interviewed in 1972, and again in 1984. They were surprised to find “how committed the children were to their adoptive parents” (Simon, 1988, p. 1).

She further concluded by saying that her study “also shows that it is a myth that transracially adopted kids must inevitably have psychological problems. The truth is they do not. Transracial adoption causes no special problems, and may, in fact, produce black, white, and Asian adults with special interpersonal talents and skills at bridging cultures” (Simon, 1988, p. 2).

Another study done as a follow-up of intercountry adoptees three years after the initial study by Frank C. Verhulst and Herma J. M. Versluis-den Bieman (1995) did show a change in adjustment. A sample of 1,538 intercountry adoptees was studied at ages 11-14 at the initial assessment and again three years later. Using the Child Behavior Checklist, “adoptees showed an increase in maladaptive functioning in adolescence” (p. 151). There was a “significant increase in the child behavior checklist problem scores and a decrease in competence scores across time” (Verlhulst & Bieman, p. 160). Several possible explanations are presented that could explain this decline in functioning, including the traumas experienced early in their lives, an increasing concern for their biological parentage as they age, or their different physical appearance which becomes more obvious to them as they age.

Thus, research indicates that these adoptee’s adjustment problems do not seem to be different from those of same race adoptees, and that if such problems do exist, they may be related to other dynamics. While the term

'adjustment' can mean many things, the various research methods and study focuses together can create an overall picture that one method or study alone could not provide. The methods and samples used in these studies omit the opinions and thoughts of older adoptees, a more quantitative method that could possibly elicit information that could be helpful as they reflect back on their adoption experience.

Self Esteem

For the sake of this discussion, self-esteem is defined as how persons perceive themselves, either negatively or positively. Do these adoptees feel good about who they are? Various standardized scales and tests were used in studies done to evaluate how interracial adoptees felt about themselves, and if being adopted into a family of a different culture or race had a negative impact on their self-esteem. Study results showed that this phenomenon did not impact negatively on the adoptee's sense of self. Again, results tended to show that the quality of the family relationship had a greater bearing on self-esteem than the interracial adoption.

Simon and Alstein (1992) used the Self-Esteem Scale on adopted black Junior and Senior high school students to measure how they perceived themselves. There were no meaningful differences in the results between the adopted and non-adopted youth. They further broke the study into four

groups for purpose of comparison. They examined the scores of black transracial adoptees separately from other transracial adoptees, as well as those of white born and white adoptees and found them to be the same. McRoy and Zurcher (1983) had earlier used the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale, and found that there were no differences in self-esteem or self-concept between the transracially and inracially adopted adolescents that were compared. They further found that self-esteem seemed to correlate directly with the family integration and closeness, as opposed to racial similarities. Those children who felt they had close ties with their family, whether adopted or not, also experienced and reported high self-esteem. The Search Institute's (Benson & Roehlkepartain, 1994) study showed an interesting pattern in which both transracially and inracially adopted children indicated higher self-esteem than a sample of regular public school adolescents. Mecklenburg (1988) studied 18 white families who adopted black children and found that the ego levels of adopted children and their parents were significantly higher than comparison groups.

Estela Andujo conducted a study in 1988 of transethnically adopted Hispanic adolescents. Compared were two groups involving Mexican American children, one group adopted by white families and the other group by Mexican American families. Data were secured through face to face interviews, which

involved the Tennessee Self Concept Scale, the Twenty Statements Test, and the Mexican-American Value Attitude Test. “No significant differences were found in the overall level of self-esteem between the transethnic and same-ethnic adoptees” (Andujo, p. 533).

Dong Soo Kim (1977) also used the Tennessee Self Concept Scale, along with questionnaires answered by 406 adopted Korean children. “As a whole, the children’s self-concept was remarkably similar to that of other Americans as represented by a norm group in the Tennessee Self Concept Scale” (Kim, 1977, p. 5). Benson and Roehlkepartain (1994) also found a strong correlation among transracial adoptees who identified as being close to their parents also reported having good self-esteem.

Similarly, Frances M. Koh’s (1993) interviews with adopted Koreans indicate a strong sense of self, particularly from those who had good family relationships. She conducted extensive interviews with 12 different individuals and found that most of them felt comfortable about being adopted and growing up in their American homes. Koh particularly was interested in learning about what factors most affected their self-esteem. As she had supposed, “parental love and support seem to contribute foremost in building one’s self-esteem” (Koh, 1993, p. 13) as indicated by the adoptees. Other areas identified by these adoptees as important avenues for developing positive

self-esteem were achievements through one's own efforts, having a belief system, and coming to terms with personal racial and ethnic issues. These interviewees all "felt they gained enormous benefits from being adopted and living in the United States" (Koh, 1993, p. 12).

Study results all tend to indicate that interracial adoption does not negatively impact on the adoptee's self-esteem. Rather, the single most important influence on the child's self-esteem is the quality of the family relationship. This result came out through comparing questionnaire results, as well as through individual interviews. It seems that self-esteem may be the least vulnerable area in the adoptee's development, but we now examine racial identity.

Racial Identity

The term racial identity is used in this context as "how a child sees him or her self in relation to his or her 'racial group', or how the child evaluates either positively or negatively, their own 'racial' group and their own 'goodness of fit' within this group" (Banks, 1992, p. 5). While empirical studies indicate that interracial adoptees are able to develop a positive sense of racial identity, the results of direct interviews reveal the difficulties these children face without specific efforts by parents to address this issue. Adoptees self-report that specific components are necessary for positive racial identity to

develop, and parents play a major role in providing some of these components. As we review the study results and move into discussion about adoptees' feedback, these components will be identified.

Simon and Alstein (1992) used dolls among younger adopted children to measure racial attitudes, awareness, and identity. No consistent differences were found through this process when children were asked their preferences for choosing between dolls of various skin colors. According to Simon and Alstein, "This was the first study of racial attitudes and identity among young children in American society that reported no white racial preferences" (1992, p. 132.)

McRoy and Archer (1983) studied black adoptees in white homes vs. white adoptees in white homes, and found a positive relationship between racial identity and the parent's perceptions of the child's attitude toward the racial background. Results were based on extensive interview questions, in an open-ended format. Further, "interview responses were analyzed according to the parent's expressed attitudes toward the child's racial identity and the parent's consequent actions" (McRoy & Archer, 1983, p. 525.) Parents who tended to nurture the black identity in their child, provided access to black role models and peers, and attended to the child's black heritage appeared to be a key factor in this positive racial identity. Therefore, this study (McRoy & Archer, 1983) found a high correlation between parental attitudes and racial

identity.

The Search Institute (Benson & Rohlkepartain, 1994) found a dramatic similarity in the findings when comparing transracially adopted youth who were black, some who were Asian, and same race adoptees. Groups compared alike in “sense of purpose, clarity, social isolation, and self- affirmation” (Benson & Roehlkepartain, 1994, p. 98). When looking at typical adoption issues, however, adoptees did say that being a person of color presented more challenges than adoption, but that these challenges were not necessarily related to family problems but to community and societal problems. Findings indicated that feelings of racial embarrassment among African American adolescents were very low; 70% of them reporting to never having such feelings. Further, 74% of those adolescents reported having frequent feelings of racial pride.

Estela Andujo’s (1988) study of transethnically adopted Hispanic adolescents does show “differences were noted in the self-identifying references and levels of acculturation between the transethnic and same-ethnic adoptees” (Andujo, p. 532). This information interestingly reveals that “the higher-income, same-ethnic adoptees, along with the majority of the transethnic adoptees, tend to describe themselves as being American and to minimize their ethnic heritage” (Andujo, p. 534).

While parents were identified as the children's main reference group for identity, "socioeconomic factors also appeared to have played a role in the development of ethnic identity among the adoptees" (Andujo, p. 533). In 1975 Feigelman and Silverman conducted a study on 298 families who adopted children from Korea, of whom 161 replied to a follow-up questionnaire in 1981. Fifty seven percent of the Koreans reported that they sometimes or often expressed pride in their Korean heritage, and 64% sometimes or often expressed interest in their Korean heritage. Unfortunately, the findings revealed that there tends to be a gradual decline in racial pride and identification as these Korean adoptees grow older. Data also indicated that there was a correlation between the child's positive racial identity and the parent's tendency to positively emphasize that racial identity. Parents positively emphasize racial identity by being interested in the child's background, by showing respect and recognition for the child's race and by believing their child should share these beliefs as well.

The Chicago Child Care Society and the Children's Home and Aid Society (Johnson et al. 1987) provided samplings from their placements of black infants with white parents, and compared black infants placed in same-race families vs. white families. At the age of four, more of the transracially adopted children (71%) identified with being black, as opposed to the in-

racially adopted children (53%). By the age of 8 when questioned again, the inracially adopted children identifying as black surpassed the transracially adopted children by 80% as compared to 73%. This would indicate that “the children in all-black homes experienced a later racial identity development and now surpassed the children in transracial homes” (Johnson et al., 1987, p. 51).

Dong Soo Kim (1978) conducted the first nationwide study of long term adjustment of adopted Korean children, focusing on identity and socialization patterns of teen-agers aged 12-17 years. While she found their adjustment was not particularly problematic and that they tended to progress in all areas of their lives, they did tend to complain about their physical features. She further states, “With this kind of negative body image, they tend to reject their own racial background” (p. 482). Over 25% of the respondents identified themselves as “American, a little more than 8% identified themselves as “Korean”, and the majority identified themselves as “Korean-American”. While this could be a matter of semantics, the parental feed-back also indicated a denial of racial and ethnic difference in their adopted children in this study.

William Feigelman and Arnold Silverman conducted a follow-up study in 1981 on 161 families who adopted children from Korea. A questionnaire devised by them revealed that “forty eight percent of the adoptees identified

themselves exclusively with their Korean racial heritage or with both Asian birth group and their white families. Fifty seven percent of all Korean adoptees expressed pride in their Asian background sometimes or often, and sixty four percent expressed interest in their Korean heritage sometimes or often” (Feigelman & Silverman, p. 152-153).

While these findings may be troubling to those concerned about the effects of interracial adoption, the overall reports indicated that these children have made an impressively healthy, normal development adjustment into their new families. Many of these studies again echo the role parents play in racial identity. “If the parents nurture, encourage, and support the child’s positive racial identity, the child is more likely to develop a positive sense of self as related to his or her race and world at large.” Unfortunately, “even in this country, with our relative wealth, both financial and programmatic, we have failed to devise adequate defenses/ against the forces of family dissolution” (Joe, 1978, p. 5), and adoption will continue to be necessary. Social problems will likely continue to leave children neglected, abused, and abandoned worldwide, and interracial adoption may continue to answer this need or be part of the continuum of responses.

Summary

These research findings indicate that children raised in an interracial

family do fare as well as those raised in same race families with regard to adjustment and the development of self-esteem. The most vulnerable area seems to be racial identity. While all three of these areas were particularly influenced by parental attitudes and efforts, the area of racial identity remained the area that required the most parental effort and attention. Unless adoptive parents seek out resources and assist the child in developing a sense of their racial identity, assimilation into the dominant society results in a suppression of the child's racial identity. Finding ways to encourage and nurture that identity is imperative.

Because research has not adequately sought to focus on the adoptees' own interpretations and statements, this study will be an expansion of Frances M. Koh's research into impressions expressed by emancipated Korean adoptees and their reflections on their adoption experience. How do they think their interracial adoption has impacted the development of their self-esteem, as well as their racial identity? Hearing the adoptees' thoughts may lend insight into the practice of interracial adoption. In the next chapter, various theories explaining the development of self-esteem and racial identity will be described.

Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework

The major goal of this chapter is to introduce various theories that might explain how the interracial adopted person's self-esteem and identity develop.

Introduction

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory, Erik Erikson's Stage Development Theory, J. E. Marcia's Identity Development Model, the General Systems Theory, as well as Lee's (1988) Asian American Cultural Identity Model together attempt to explain the individual's development of self-esteem and identity.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory suggests that individuals are motivated by basic needs. These are: physiological needs, safety needs, needs of belonging, intimacy needs, and esteem needs. When these needs cannot be met in the country of birth, children may be adopted to countries and families able to provide for these needs.

Erikson's Stage Development

Erik Erikson's Stage Development theory identifies eight states of psychosocial development and conflict that when mastered can then lead to

the next stage. An individual who is unable to resolve the conflicts or crises that exist within one stage, may not be able to successfully move on to the next state. An interracially adopted child with the accompanying losses may have difficulty transcending through these stages, and be unable to develop a strong personal identity.

Marcia's Identity Development Model

Marcia's identity development model presents identity in four statuses that hopefully allow individuals to fully explore their identities. These statuses are: achievement, moratorium, foreclosure, and diffusion. "Identity achievement is characterized by exploration of and commitment to an identity" (Markstrom-Adams, 1990, p. 297), and this identity exploration is a process. Identity achievement is attained by exploring and committing to a specific identity. Moratorium is when the individual has explored an identity but remains uncommitted to it. Foreclosure refers to exploring but discontinuing it prematurely before a commitment is made. Finally, diffused refers to the inability to identify or reconsolidate an identity.

General Systems Theory

General Systems Theory explains the reliance on environmental factors for the basic needs, particularly for children. This also includes self-esteem and identity. As interracial adoptees gather information and have exchanges with

persons in their environment, they develop a sense of self in relation to others around them. These others include parents, families, communities, and others. “Symbolic interactionism” further explains that the concept of self esteem and identity is an interactive process between the individual and those around him/her.

Problems with Existing Theories

While these theories explain development of self-esteem and racial identity of persons of the same race as the majority, they do not consider the dynamics and features that can be more specific to persons of another culture being raised by Caucasian parents. Also, the models presented thus far tend to present more linear explanations that assume that one level must be achieved before successfully moving to another level. Further, inability to do so results in conflict and problems, according to the theories, when in reality people may experience successful development in a variety of ways- even skipping supposedly essential stages.

Lee’s Asian American Cultural Identity Model

Lee’s Asian American Cultural Identity Model asserts that “cultural identity is defined as the formation of a set of beliefs, behaviors, attitudes, and personal characteristics that incorporate aspects of Asian group consciousness as well as dominant (i.e., Anglo) cultural consciousness” (Lee, 1988, p. 35). It

further proposes that this formation occurs in three stages: ethnic identification, marginal, and integration. Again, however, this model was developed for Asians raised within their ethnic group in America and does not address Asians raised outside of their ethnic group such as in an interracial adoption. There is no model that addresses the phenomenon of interracial adoption per se. However, Lee's model does identify that "the goal in the development of Asian American cultural identity is to feel good about being both Asian and American" (Wickes, 1993, p. 37). Dae Won Kim Steven Corvin (1987) suggests that "the immediate adjustment period adoptees will have upon arrival in their new home [and] the degree of success of this initial adjustment period will have a great influence on a child's later development of self-identity" (p. 2). It is evident that a model or theory that specifically addresses the interracially adopted child's experience within the family setting described in this research would be very helpful.

Discussion

An attempt has been made through this research to determine whether Korean adoptees answering our questions feel that their adoption into American families has adequately allowed them to meet basic needs, including esteem and a positive Korean identity. And, what steps were taken by their parents on their behalf to increase the chances this would occur? This

information could be valuable to social workers who arrange interracial adoptions when providing pre-adoption and post adoption services to adoptive parents. The results could impact policies on interracial adoption and lead to further research into this practice. Finally, this study can be part of the development of a model for understanding and predicting dynamics likely to occur in interracial adoption, both strengths and vulnerabilities.

Lee's Asian American Cultural Identity Model best describes the Korean adoptees experience in attempting to develop a healthy self-esteem and a racial identity among the models discussed. Even though this model focuses on Asian Americans who live among other Asian Americans and does not specifically consider Asian persons raised within Euro-American homes, it is the closest model to considering the Asian's dilemma of developing a healthy self-esteem and a positive racial identity when living within a predominantly white environment.

Chapter 4: Methodology

This chapter will describe the study and how it was conducted.

Research Design

The study was a qualitative, exploratory survey that attempted to elicit the thoughts and feelings of Korean adoptees regarding their experiences of being raised by a family who is not of their culture. An attempt to get access to a large sample was sought through an adoption agency that provided services to a diverse population, but this was unsuccessful. However, through this process the existence of a group of exclusively Korean-American adopted persons was identified, who could represent a diverse sampling. Information was gathered through the use of a questionnaire that was completed by adoptees themselves. Some of the questions provided a choice of answers similar to a Likert scale, some listed options that included multiple choices, and others asked open-ended questions requiring further thought.

Research Questions

In this study, interracial adoption was examined. The research questions were: How do Korean adoptees perceive the effects that their interracial adoption have had on their self-esteem? How do Korean adoptees perceive the effects that their interracial adoption have had on their racial identity? According to Korean American adoptees, how did the adoptive

parents influence the development of their self-esteem? According to Korean American adoptees, how did the adoptive parents influence the development of their racial identity?

Concepts, Units of Analysis

The unit of analysis for the purposes of this study was individual adoptees. These individuals were asked to attempt to explain how their intercountry adoption has impacted their self-esteem and racial identity. Self esteem is defined as how one feels about oneself. Does the adoptee feel good and positive about her/him/self? Identity is how one sees oneself, particularly in relationship to others around them. Then, in relation to these two concepts comparatively, cultural identity can influence self-esteem. For example, if a Korean adoptee is proud of being Korean due to positive interaction and feedback from others, self-esteem would likely be better or higher. So, racial or cultural identity is defined as the concept one has about oneself based on a comparative frame against people either of a similar or dissimilar cultural identification. For purposes of this study, the independent variable is interracial adoption. The dependent variables are the adoptees ability to adjust to life in the interracial family, the development of self-esteem in that setting, and what cultural group the adoptee tends to relate to as a result of being adopted from one culture into another. Self-esteem will be rated on a scale of

1-5, one being low or having poor self-esteem, and 5 being high or having a very positive self-esteem. Racial identity is classified into specific groups, and the respondent marks the group which is most reflective of that person's racial identity.

Study Population

The target population included Koreans born in Korea and adopted into European American families as infants or children, aged 18-22 at this time. These children ranged in age at time of adoption from several months up to five years of age.

This age group of 18-22 year olds is of interest to the researcher for several reasons. First, this age of young people are now likely leaving their family homes and going off to school or work. They may be processing how their adoption has impacted on their emancipation and launch out into a life of independence. Second, because this age group may be seeking greater independence from family and parents, they may be more willing to question their parent's role in their self-esteem and identity formation, and possibly be more objective in that pursuit for independence. Third, the researcher's adopted daughter is in this age group, and the research question is of ongoing concern on her behalf.

Including those adopted prior to the age of 5 should eliminate the age

variable at time of adoption, since research has indicated that the older the placement the more difficult the adjustment for the child. The researcher wished to consider those adoptees only who have little or no memory of their life in Korea, as that memory could taint the results since those persons adopted at an older age would have developed a stronger Korean identity prior to coming to the United States.

Sample

Respondents were contacted through the Minnesota Adopted Koreans group, and those wishing to respond did so voluntarily. This process provided a probability sampling, since the purpose of the group was to serve Korean adoptees. The sample size was 12, approximately 9% of those who were sent the survey. A cross-sectional sampling was desired; however, those respondents that were willing to complete the questionnaire were not screened due to confidentiality. An equal representation from both male and female adoptees was desirable, but this could not be controlled for because of this voluntary status. Nor could socioeconomic status. All information gathered was through the questionnaire process, unless a respondent indicated a desire to speak directly to the researcher. The questionnaire was completed in the respondent's own home or choice of setting.

Measurement Issues

The sampling came from members of an organization called Minnesota Adopted Koreans. Members could include non-Korean family members as well as unadopted Koreans. Most of these persons live in Minnesota and desire the supportive services and contact they receive through this organization. These persons were sent a consent letter and questionnaire. While our sampling was random, it is possible that those adoptees who responded did so because they had particularly negative or particularly positive experiences to relate. Reliability of the instrument will be difficult to establish, since the study will not be duplicated elsewhere or at another time. Validity is dependent on how questions are stated, what respondents' perceptions are about certain topics, and how clear questions are asked. The validity is reduced because it was necessary to have volunteer participants. It is possible that sampling bias exists as well. The design has threats of both internal and external validity, but can set the stage for more rigorous designs in future research. Also, the single variable that cannot be separated from the overall adjustment, self-esteem and identity issues would be adoption itself. Whether adoption or if interracial adoption issues have impacted the most, would be difficult to isolate.

Data Collection

The questionnaire was developed by the researcher, by researching and analyzing previous studies. (See Appendix F, p. 76) The data collected through the literature review also revealed that a gap existed in that few studies focused on an exploratory model that utilized qualitative questions or that focused on Korean adoptees alone. Questions focused on thoughts and feelings about the interracial adoption experience. The questionnaire began with a number of items, which were responded to by ratings using an ordinal scale. These items were statements that focused on the adoptees' feelings about themselves, their adoption experience, their family relationships, and about interracial adoption. The respondent was asked to respond by number how strongly they either agreed or disagreed with the statement.

The next portion asked the respondents to check from a list of daily activities or relationship issues that may or may not have been problematic for them, based on their interracial adoption experience. Another list of possible activities or participation in cultural activities was listed on the next portion of the questionnaire, where the adoptee could indicate what their adoptive parents introduced or encouraged them to participate in with the attempt to establish cultural identity. They were also asked to indicate which of those were the most valuable to their esteem and identity development. Then,

several open-ended questions were included that attempted to elicit from the adoptee some suggestions for prospective adoptive parents and social workers who work with them.

The questionnaire was pretested by several of the researchers' acquaintances. Feedback was sought from these persons in regard to clarity of questions, inclusion of certain questions, and relativity of questions for them. The questionnaire was revised as a result of that feedback. The questions were developed through the review of the literature on previous studies.

Data Analysis

A comparison was made concerning the level of their reports about self-esteem and participation in cultural activities to identify a potential correlation. Open-ended results were sorted by themes, and then into categories. Similarities and differences were noted. All information was sorted and analyzed through hand tabulation.

Human Subjects

Approval for this study was requested and received from Augsburg Institutional Review Board prior to the beginning of the study. Questionnaires were sent to members of Minnesota Adopted Koreans who fit the required profile by the co-chairmen of that group. A consent letter (Appendix D) was provided to respondents. No pressure was applied to prospective respondents

to participate, and participation was completely voluntary. Names and other identifying information were not required. A toll-free number for crisis counseling was provided, in the event questions or inquiries elicited stress or mental health issues. The researcher's campus mailing address, as well as the thesis advisor's telephone number and address were made available if respondents felt strongly about the contents of the questionnaire and wished to speak to those concerns. Data will be destroyed by August 1, 1998.

Strengths and Limitations

Adoptees themselves were allowed to speak directly to the questions presented. Results are not based on observations, subjective assessment tests, or on the perceptions of others. Adoptees themselves know their own thoughts and feelings better than those around them. This is their experience, and their opinions should count the most. Feedback from one of the Minnesota Adopted Korean co-chairs indicated that the questionnaire was not as overwhelming as another she had received from another source, and that made responding much more manageable. Lengthy qualitative responses were considered overwhelming, and the format of this questionnaire was perceived as less difficult and "user-friendly".

The limitations of this study are the limited number of respondents that can be identified and adequately analyzed, and the possibility that these

respondents do not represent the larger identified population. It is also likely that their opinions can and probably do change over time. It would have been helpful to have had the respondents identify their gender, their geographic location in Minnesota, as well as their education level.

Implication for Practice

Adoptees can provide valuable information to social workers who work in the adoption arena. How adoptive parents are evaluated and chosen can depend on their attitudes about culture and other important features identified by adoptees. Training of adoptive parents can include suggestions by adoptees. Also, ongoing services to adoptees can include areas seen as a need by adoptees. So, as long as Korean children are not able to remain in their birth country and in a family of Korean descent, adoptees can receive resources that will increase the possibility that all of their physical and emotional needs are met when social workers use the information provided by adoptees.

Chapter 5: Results

Surveys were completed and returned by twenty-three Korean adoptees, with twelve of them falling within the age of eighteen and twenty-two as preferred. Ten returns were received from adoptees older than twenty-two. Two of those had been adopted after age 5. The results of the surveys returned by adoptees aged eighteen and twenty-two only were used. Those results will be included in this chapter.

The Scaling Questions

A series of thirteen statements were rated by the respondents, using the numbers one through five. One indicated that the person strongly disagreed with the statement, two indicated the person disagreed, three indicated that the person wasn't sure or was neutral about that statement, four indicated that the person agreed with the statement, and five was an indication that the person strongly agreed. Results are shown in Table 5.1.

To the statement "I feel good about who I am", six persons (50%) strongly agreed and five persons (42%) agreed. The remaining person (8%) was unsure or was neutral. Five persons (42%) strongly agreed that they are attractive, and six (50%) agreed. The remaining person was unsure or neutral. Eight persons (66%) were unsure or neutral about the statement "I wish that I had remained in the country where I was born." One person (8%) disagreed,

Table 5.1 Responses to Scaling Questions

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Unsure or Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
I feel good about who I am.	0	0	1	5	6
I believe I am attractive.	0	0	1	6	5
I have wondered about my birth parents.	0	1	1	4	6
Having Korean friends has been important to me.	1	0	1	4	6
I can talk to my parents about being adopted.	2	1	0	1	8
I am proud of being a Korean.	0	0	3	2	7
I feel close to my adoptive parents.	0	1	2	2	7
I feel comfortable around Korean people.	0	1	3	2	6
I feel comfortable around European-American or "white" people.	1	0	3	5	3
I believe I have had major difficulties due to being adopted by parents who are not Korean.	1	3	2	3	3
I am happy to be in America.	0	0	6	4	2
I wish that I had remained in the country where I was born.	0	1	8	1	2
I am happy that I was adopted into a family that is not Korean	3	0	8	1	0

one person (8%) agreed, and three (25%) persons strongly agreed. Seven of the twelve (58%) respondents strongly agreed that they were proud of being Korean. Two respondents (16%) agreed, and three others (25%) were unsure or neutral. When considering the statement "I am happy that I was adopted into a family that is not Korean", three (25%) strongly disagreed, eight (66%) were unsure or neutral, and one (8%) agreed. While seven persons (58%) strongly agreed that they felt close to their adoptive parents and two (16%) agreed, one (8%) disagreed, two (16%) were unsure or neutral. Three persons (25%) strongly agreed and three (25%) agreed that they had had major difficulties due to being adopted by parents who were not Korean, while two (16%) were unsure or neutral, three (25%) disagreed, and one (8%) strongly disagreed.

When given the statement, "I am happy to be in America", two (16%) strongly agreed, four (33%) agreed, six (50%) were unsure or neutral. No one disagreed. However, six (50%) strongly agreed that they had wondered about their birth parents, four (33%) agreed, one (8%) was unsure or neutral and only one (8%) disagreed. Only two (16%) reported that they strongly disagreed that they could talk to their [adoptive] parents about being adopted, and one (8%) disagreed. One (8%) agreed, and the majority of eight (66%) respondents, strongly agreed. Most strongly agreed or agreed that they felt

comfortable around Korean people, six (50%) and two (16%), respectively. Three persons (25%) were unsure or neutral, and one (8%) disagreed. To the statement "I feel comfortable around European-American or "white" people, three (25%) strongly agreed, two (16%) agreed, three (25%) were neutral or unsure, and one (8%) strongly disagreed. Having Korean friends has been important to the six (50%) who strongly agreed and four (33%) who agreed. One (8%) person was unsure or neutral, and one (8%) strongly disagreed.

Those statements that the respondents agreed to most favorably and may possibly show some type of correlation are: I feel good about who I am, I am proud of being Korean, I feel close to my adoptive parents, I have wondered about my birth parents, I believe I am attractive, and having Korean friends has been important to me. Two others statements drew equally positive and negative responses: I believe I have had major difficulties due to being adopted by parents who are not Korean, and I am happy to be in America.

Checklists-Ages of Respondents

Eight of the respondents were aged twenty-two, one was twenty, two were nineteen, and one was eighteen. The majority, eight (66%) , think of themselves as Korean-American. Two (16%) think of themselves as Korean, and two (16%) just as persons.

Table 5.2- Cultural Identity

I think of myself as...

Korean	Korean-American	a person
2	8	2

Checklists- Problem Areas

Results of tabulations for areas identified as problematic for the adoptees are shown on Table 5.3. Those areas identified as most problematic due to interracial adoption were identity formation as reported by nine persons (75%) , extended family relationships as reported by seven persons (58%) , dating as reported by six persons (50%), and lack of same race adult role models as reported by five (42%). Four persons (33%) indicated that birth family relationships were problematic, that their self-esteem had suffered, as well as school functioning due to their interracial adoption. Three persons (25%) felt it had negatively impacted their ability to make friends, and two (16%) felt it had negatively impacted their acceptance in the neighborhood. Only one person (8%) felt that participation in sports had been a problem because of their interracial adoption.

Checklists- Activities Parents Involved Them In

Of those activities listed that respondents were asked to check if their

Table 5.3 Problem Areas

	checked twice to emphasize	checked once	Total
identity	5	4	9
extended family relationships	5	2	7
dating	3	3	6
same race adult role models	3	2	5
self-esteem	3	1	4
birth family relationships	2	2	4
school functioning	1	3	4
friendships	0	3	3
acceptance in neighborhood	0	2	2
others- adoptive family relationships	0	1	1
participation in sports	0	1	1
job searches	0	0	0

parents had involved them in, attendance at culture camps was checked by the highest number of respondents. Nine of the twelve respondents (75%) indicated their parents had them attend culture camps, and six of those nine (50%) thought that it was most helpful that they had done so. Table 5.4 shows the participation in activities by adoptees initiated by parents.

Eating ethnic foods and friendships with Koreans received 8 checks each (66%). Four of the eight respondents doing so indicated that eating ethnic foods was most helpful, and three of the eight respondents thought that friendships with Koreans were most helpful.

Seven of the twelve respondents (58%) had ethnic trinkets purchased for them, and two of those seven thought that was most helpful. Reading magazines and books about their culture was indicated also by seven of the respondents (58%), and three of those thought that was most helpful.

Six of the twelve respondents (50%) had family discussions about their adoption, and two of those thought that was most helpful. Receiving counseling and attending ethnic festivals were checked by five of the twelve respondents (42%) . One indicated that counseling was most helpful, and none of them felt that attendance at ethnic festivals was most helpful.

Receiving four votes (25%) was search for birth family. One person indicated that was most important.

Table 5.4 Activities Initiated by Adoptive Parents

	Yes, did participate	This was very helpful	TOTAL
culture camps	3	6	9
eating ethnic foods	4	4	8
friendships with Koreans	5	3	8
magazines, books, etc.	4	3	7
ethnic trinkets	5	2	7
family discussions	4	2	6
ethnic neighborhood	0	2	2
counseling	4	1	5
birth family search	3	1	4
teen groups	2	1	3
birth family contact	2	1	3
travel to birth country	1	1	2
ethnic festivals	6	0	6
language classes	3	0	3
ethnic music	3	0	3
viewing videos	2	0	2
workshops	2	0	2
adoptive family groups	1	0	1
dance classes	1	0	1
ethnic plays	1	0	1
language camps	1	0	1
tae kwon do	0	0	0
other	0	0	0

was involved in a number of activities upon their own initiation rather than his/her parent's involvement. Of the four persons reporting being involved in 2 activities or less, three of those also reported not feeling good about themselves or prideful of being Korean. (See table 5.5.)

Table 5.5- # of Cultural Activities

# activities	0	1	2	5	6	8	9	13	14	16
#people	1	1	2	1	1	2	1	1	1	1

Open-ended questions

When asked through open-ended questions what had been the most helpful to them in the development of their self-esteem, three persons made mention of "my parent's encouragement," or having "parents just listening to what an adoptee may be going through." Three respondents mentioned the importance of attending culture camps and as one stated: "Being part of a Korean culture camp to find out who I was." Three mentioned having Korean friends, and one of the respondents said: "Knowing other Korean Americans, especially fellow adoptees, helped me feel 'normal'." Two persons mentioned participation in sports, two mentioned friends "as well as feedback from peers,"

and two mentioned they felt they had themselves been the most instrumental in their own self-esteem. Other dynamics mentioned were their intelligence as an aid in developing a strong self-esteem, being a Korean was related to their self-esteem, helping Korean teens had enhanced their self-esteem. One mentioned that doing a birth parent search had assisted in developing his/her self-esteem. One also reported that perceiving herself as attractive to men had helped her self-esteem. (See table 5.6)

When asked what had been the most helpful in the development of their identity, five persons indicated that having Korean friends had helped the most. Three persons again mentioned culture camps, and how this had assisted them in learning “to be comfortable with myself; like looks and...learning Korean ways.” Three persons indicated they themselves had been the most helpful in the development of their own identity through “soul searching” and also by being allowed by their parents to “take [their] own steps or journey to lead to who I am today.” Two persons stated that friends (not necessarily Korean friends) had been important in their identity development, and two persons stated that involvement with persons of their culture had been important. As one respondent stated, “Coming to the University of Minnesota helped me develop my identity. I am around a lot of Koreans adopted and not, and I have begun to understand my culture and the way they act.” One

Table 5.6- Important to Self-Esteem

- Going to Korean culture camps. (3)
Support from family and friends. (3)
Sports and hobbies. (2)
My own thoughts.
My dad as a positive role model.
Being seen as attractive to men.
Confidence in my intellectual abilities.
Having Korean friends,
Helping Korean teens.
Parents who listen to what an adoptee may be going through.
Knowing other Korean adoptees.
Being in college and realizing being myself and not having to impress people, but being proud of being a Korean adoptee.

(#'s indicate the number of times that response was given by respondents.)

person indicated that counseling had been helpful. Another person stated that going to Korea had been the most helpful. (See table 5.7.)

The greatest loss most respondents reported, 6 or 50%, was not knowing enough about their culture, which included not knowing the Korean language. One respondent stated, "I think that my greatest loss is my lack of true understanding of Korean culture and language." Three persons (25%) mentioned the greatest loss was not knowing their birth family. As one said, "There is no record of my birth parents on file, which may have helped just to know one bit of information." One of those persons specifically mentioned not knowing their birth grandparents was a loss. Two persons discussed the loss of not having any information about their birth family, and two talked about the difficulty of identifying as an American vs. a Korean, saying: "The greatest loss and gain as well has been assuming my identity as an American, as well as losing twenty years of thinking, acting, and understanding my Koreanness." Two respondents talked about not having a "tribal" connection to their Asian cohorts due to their interracial adoption. Two others talked about not having had any cultural experiences that could assist them in identifying as Korean. One person said, "I never went to culture camps, Korean groups, or was exposed to anything related to Korea while growing up." One

Table 5. 7- Important for Racial Identity

- Having Korean friends. (3)
- Going to culture camps. (2)
- Going to counseling. (2)
- Being around Korean adoptees.
- Learning Korean ways.
- My friends.
- Involvement with other persons of color.
- Identifying as an Asian.
- Going to Korea.
- Helping Korean teens.
- My parents' support of my decisions in terms of my identity.
- Soul searching.
- Being on the board of the Asian American Student Cultural Ctr.
-

person felt the inability to discuss his birth family with his adoptive family was the most difficult. (See table 5.8.)

When asked what specific characteristics social workers should look for when considering an adoptive parent for a child of another culture, mentioned most often was the importance for cultural sensitivity. Parents must be “culturally diverse and exposed themselves before taking on another life to teach them the true colors of people these days.” This was mentioned by eight (66%) of the respondents to some degree. Five persons (42%) also talked about how necessary it is to understand that there may be difficulties due to the interracial adoption, and that the adoptive parents “must be willing to discuss problems that may arise with their kids due to the adoption.” They cannot assume that the child will automatically assimilate and must “respect the child’s possible interest in learning about his/her native birthplace.” This family structure is unique, and cannot be considered typical. Four persons (33%) indicated that the parents must be willing to involve their children in cultural activities so that they can be more familiar with their culture. Other characteristics mentioned were unconditional love, unselfishness, sensitivity, and patience. While these characteristics may be desirable in all parents, some adoptees feel that these characteristics are particularly important when raising

Table 5.8- Missing Links or Losses

Not knowing my birth parents. (3)

Not knowing the Korean language. (2)

Not knowing what my parents were like.

No sense of "tribe".

No Korean cultural experiences.

No record of birth parents- no information.

Lack of true understanding of Korean culture.

Not being able to discuss being an adoptee with my family.

Thinking of myself as only an American.

Not being one with my culture.

Not being able to hang out with people that look just like me.

Not knowing my Korean grandparents.

a child of another culture. Other qualities adoptive parents must possess are a willingness to search for birth family information and background, as mentioned by two respondents (16%) . One other respondent discussed the importance for the family to be willing to discuss the situation with the adoptive child. The racial background and the child's birth family should be discussed openly. (See table 5.9.)

Social workers must encourage parents to expose their adopted child to their culture. Six persons (50%) discussed this in some way. One person said that social workers need "to emphasize the child being Korean. The parents should not teach their adopted child to be white, and if that is the parents' intention, they should not be able to adopt a child of a different race." Four persons (33%) mentioned that the parents must be understanding of the child and the problems faced in regard to interracial adoption. Two persons (16%) again discussed the potential for problems, and that parents must be aware that problems are possible before they adopt interracially. A suggestion was made to encourage adoptive parents to "talk with other parents who have already done so, know what issues and/or problems that might be encountered as a result from interracial adoption." One person (8%) mentioned that children should be given options for developing their individuality, realizing that" parents can only do so much- allow individuality in their own

Table 5.9- Adoptive Parents' Characteristics

Not be offended if the child is interested in searching for birth family, and be willing to help them do so. (4)

Understand that they may have to deal with problems and questions about racism, identity, etc. (3)

Willingness to give time to attending cultural activities. (2)

Be open minded and know they'll be able to raise a child of another culture.

Be culturally diverse.

Be culturally competent.

Have multi-cultural values.

Be sure they can handle it.

Love the child unconditionally.

Know where they come from and know own culture so as not to be threatened by the child's desire to know its culture.

Be supportive and interested in Korean culture.

Encourage the child's identity.

Patience.

Unselfishness.

Encourage the child's ideas.

Openness to differences.

development of identity, making options available to kids if they want it.”

One other person (8%) mentioned that making a trip to Korea with their child should be encouraged. (See table 6.0.)

When asked what else social workers should do when providing services to Korean adoptees, many items were mentioned. Three people (25%) thought that adoptive parents should be expected to attend panels that might be “given by young adults of different races to see what it may be like to grow up in another nation/culture.” Also mentioned was attendance at groups regarding interracial adoption with other parents. Three persons (25%) mentioned that providing cultural services, such as trips, tours, etc. would be helpful. Another suggestion included by one was that adoptees be encouraged to become social workers. One person mentioned that supportive services could be provided that deal with self-esteem issues. One thought that social workers must have a better understanding of bi-racial family issues. One respondent stated, “One other important service for social workers to provide is letting them know being adopted doesn’t mean it’s a bad thing.” One person felt social workers needed to be truthful about birth families and provide as much information as is available, and another thought that social workers needed to keep better records. One person thought adoptive families

Table 6.0- Social Workers Should Encourage Parents To Do

- Expose the child to its culture. (3)
 - Allow individuality while making options available.
 - Help them understand that parents can only do so much.
 - Encourage diversity.
 - Be comfortable with the child's ethnic background.
 - Help them realize the line isn't going to be narrow and perfect.
 - Be aware of racism.
 - Know the child's ethnic background and teach it to the child.
 - Be forgiving.
 - Be open-minded.
 - Be loving.
 - Realize love isn't enough.
 - Emphasize the child being Korean. (Don't teach it to be white.)
 - Talk with other adoptive parents to become aware of issues and problems.
 - Learn the child's culture.
 - Enroll the child in culture camps, etc.
 - Attend support groups.
 - Talk about how to resolve issues related to adoption.
 - Visit Korea.
 - Openly discuss problems that arise.
-

could be screened better for appropriateness as adoptive parents because “there are too many babies and kids going into abusive homes.” One thought further that social workers needed to be cautious not to recruit racist parents. This person mentioned the distaste she had for her parent’s prejudice against black persons. Another person believes social workers should assist in searches for birth families, and another thought there should be better follow-up following adoption by the social workers. (See table 6.1.)

Summary

The respondents have indicated various themes and commonalities, as well as correlations. While this chapter simply stated the results, the following chapter will discuss these results and analyze them in such a way that the information becomes more useful. These themes and correlations will be pointed out.

Table 6.1- Social Worker's Other Roles

- Look for adoptive parents who are not racist.
 - Keep better records.
 - Help the adoptees find their birth parents.
 - Follow up after adoptions.
 - Allow the adoptees to talk about their mixed feelings.
 - Teach that adoption is not a bad thing.
 - Tell the children the truth about birth families.
 - Screen parents thoroughly- to avoid abusiveness.
 - Teach parents that there are added issues to an adoptive family.
 - Provide support services dealing with self-esteem.
 - Send information on what's going on in Korea.
 - Provide trips-tours to Korea.
 - Be honest about the family.
 - Attend panels presented by other adoptees.
 - Stop making money off of us through groups, trips, etc.
 - Let us be the social workers now, employ us.
-

Chapter 6: Discussion

The final chapter will discuss the results of the survey, and come to various conclusions as presented by the Korean adoptees who completed it. These results will be discussed as they relate specifically to the research questions.

Self-Esteem

Most respondents reported feeling good about who they are, and therefore report a high self-esteem. Most feel they are attractive. However, a few report that developing a high self-esteem has been a problem area for them. Of those persons who reported feeling good about themselves, most also reported feeling close to their adoptive parents. Of those persons who reported feeling good about themselves, most also reported that they could talk to their parents about being adopted. There appears to be a high correlation between the adoptees' self-esteem and the quality of the relationship to the adoptive parents. It also appears to be a high correlation between the level of their self-esteem and their parents' willingness to discuss their adoption openly and without conflict. Overall, the respondents report a high level of self-esteem but that it has not been without problems.

Racial Identity

Being Korean was accompanied by pride in most of the respondents. A

few were unsure. Half of the respondents are happy to be in America, and the other half are unsure. More than one-half are unsure if they are happy about being adopted into a family that is not Korean. Several are unhappy about being adopted into a family that is not Korean. Only one person was happy about being adopted into a family that was not Korean. Yet, some are unsure if they wished they had been able to remain in their country of birth.

However, an equal number feel comfortable both around Korean people as well as around European-American people.

While most have wondered about their birth parents, only one reports having not wondered. Most report that having Korean friends has been particularly important to them in the development of their self-esteem and racial identity. Half of the respondents believe they have had major difficulties due to being adopted interracially. However, since a majority of the respondents reported being proud of being a Korean, these problems do not seem to have overly impeded that development.

When asked directly if identity formation had been problematic due to their interracial adoption, most reported that this had been a problem. Almost half reported having a difficult time developing racial identity due to the lack of same race adult role models available to them. Several mentioned having had a difficult time functioning well in school because of their

interracial adoption, and one felt that participation in sports had been a problem due to the interracial adoption. While most identify as being proud of being Korean, most also say that this has been problematic for them due to their interracial adoption. The majority identify themselves as Korean-American, however, and this would appear to have been a struggle for most of them due to the difficulties surrounding an interracial adoption.

Korean friendships were reported most often as being helpful in the development of the adoptees' racial identity. Attendance at cultural camps as well as through efforts themselves was mentioned by one-third of the respondents, as a way to learn about their culture and in meeting other Koreans. Also mentioned by several adoptees as being important for the development of their identity was support from their parents and several mentioned involvement in a cultural group or center once they reached college.

Again, those adoptees who reported being proud of being Korean, most felt close to their adoptive parents and stated that they are able to talk to their parents about being adopted. Another correlation is the involvement in cultural activities. Of those adoptees who reported having pride in being Korean, most have been involved in various cultural activities. Only one person reported feeling pride in being Korean but had not been involved in any

cultural activities of any kind.

While most do report feeling close to their adoptive families, they are also unsure how they feel about being adopted into a family that is not Korean. While most are unsure if they would have preferred to have remained in Korea, they are also unsure about how happy they are to be in America. Because these adoptees were adopted prior to age five and may have little memory of life in Korea, this uncertainty could be due to fact that they have no way of making such a comparison. They only know life as it is for them here in America now, and may be unsure what life would have been like for them had they remained in Korea.

Parental Influences on Self-Esteem and Racial Identity

Both through the open-ended questions and the lists provided, it was evident that parents must be open to providing cultural experiences for their children as well as a willingness to discuss cultural and birth family issues. There appeared to be a strong correlation between feeling good about oneself and having pride in being Korean. Of those who reported feeling good about themselves, most also reported feeling proud of being Korean. Attendance at culture camps was identified as the most helpful to half of the respondents in developing a strong racial identity. Eating ethnic foods was perceived as most helpful by one-third of the respondents. Several thought that reading cultural

magazines and books had been most valuable. One-fourth thought that having friendships with Koreans had been most helpful. An equal number, one-fourth, thought that having family discussions was most important, choosing to live in an ethnic neighborhood had been most helpful, and another one-fourth thought that owning ethnic trinkets had been helpful.

Adoptive parents must be chosen only if they are willing to take time to expose their child to cultural activities and other persons of their race. As one respondent said, "Adoptive parents should be evaluated for how willing they are to travel, give up time for groups, cultural activities, etc., and have an open mind for raising a child of another race." Also, several mentioned that adoptive parents should be willing to make visits to Korea with the child, and another stated that the adoptive parents must possess "the willingness and understanding to help their adopted children with having contact with the birth family." Adoptive parents should not ignore their children's culture, and must make special efforts to encourage their children to obtain knowledge about being Korean.

It was also mentioned that adoptive parents must be culturally sensitive to all races, as the interracial adopted children should not be expected to ignore their heritage. One of the respondents stated, "Adoptive parents need to be satisfied knowing where they came from and knowing their own cultural

background, so that they won't be threatened by having to teach their adopted child about where he/she came from and the child's culture." Another respondent stated, "The parents should not teach their adopted child to be white", but as another respondent questioned, "How much do {the adopted parents} know and are willing to get to know about the culture, and most important, {are they aware } it is important for the adopted children to know their culture?" These questions must be considered and evaluated before they are allowed to adopt interracially. Parents must be willing to make efforts to provide opportunities and experiences that will teach their children the culture.

Another commonly mentioned trait adoptive parents must possess was an understanding of the possible problems an interracial adoption could cause. One respondent stated, "I think it's important for future adoptive parents to understand and realize that the family they wish to have isn't going to be an ideal family. Yes, they are going to function like any other family because they are a family, but there will be added issues to an adoptive family such as: race issues.... identity issues..." Another said that "they have to understand that there will be problems and know how to deal with {them}." Still another stated adoptive parents must be informed that "later in life that they may have to deal with problems/questions (racism, identity, self-esteem)." So, it is imperative that adoptive parents be somewhat prepared for difficulties that

may occur due to the interracial adoption and be willing to address them appropriately.

The three most important things that the adoptees believe adoptive parents must do is: (1) provide for cultural experiences that will teach their child to appreciate their ethnicity; (2) be culturally sensitive and open to all cultures as well as their own; and (3) expect to have problems related to the interracial adoption and be willing to seek out assistance if unable to solve them on their own. The results are similar to what McRoy and Zurcher found in their 1983 study of black children adopted by white parents.

What Social Workers Should Encourage Parents To Do

Numerous respondents mentioned that social workers should encourage adoptive parents to be involved in their children's culture. Social workers should encourage parents to "attend classes regarding people of minority ethnicities". Parents should be encouraged to "talk with other parents who have already {adopted interracially}," and adoptive parents should be encouraged to "emphasize the child being Korean."

Several respondents thought that social workers needed to encourage adoptive parents to involve the children in cultural activities that would assist them in learning about their culture and being proud of it. As one said, "I think social workers should encourage the parents to enroll their kids in culture

camp, language class, especially when they're young." While one respondent did not personally agree with interracial adoption, he/she stated that social workers should choose parents who will "be devoted to teaching/exposing the child to their original traditions, culture, and people." Several mentioned the necessity of encouraging parents to "educate themselves about their child's background." Investing time and energy in exposing their children to their culture was seen by many of the respondents as imperative, and that social workers needed to emphasize this.

Social Workers' Other Roles

Respondents' other expectations of social workers involved in interracial adoption varied greatly. Several mentioned providing numerous related services, such as camps, clubs, provide panels, support services dealing with self-esteem, and trips and tours of Korea. Several mentioned the necessity of honesty to adoptees. One said, "Always tell them the TRUTH." Another mentioned keeping better records. Still another said that they should "follow up with adoptees after they have been adopted for several months." Another said they should "help them find their birth parents." Another stated that social workers needed to "screen parents who want to adopt thoroughly." This person thought there were too many children ending up in abusive homes. Another respondent said that "one other important service for social workers to

provide is letting {the adopted children} know being adopted doesn't mean it's a bad thing." But rather, as another stated, "ask how they feel about the adoption and let them talk about their mixed feelings." So, follow up services are seen as imperative to many of the adoptees. The adopted children need to be able to access services that relate to their needs.

Implications for Practice, Policy and Future Research

Unfortunately there may always be children in need of homes. "A world where no unwanted pregnancies occurred, where everyone had enough to eat and proper medical care, and where war did not exist would be a world with little necessity for adoption. Unfortunately that is not the world we live in" (Joe, 1978, p. 6). While interracial adoption is not an ideal and perfect solution, it does provide homes for many children whose basic needs may not be met elsewhere. While this policy may seem justified, how the child may be affected by the loss of country and culture must be considered. Programs and policies surrounding selection of adoptive parents could be more specific. While "social science research both supports and negates the importance of racial and ethnic matching in placement decisions" (Kaplan, 1997, p. 7), this question must remain open for review. This is particularly essential since the government's recent "dismissal of the relevance of racial and ethnic considerations in the placement of children" (Kaplan, 1997, p.7) in an effort to

place more of the children in foster care into permanent homes does not include efforts or sanctions that would expect adoptive parents to maintain the child's cultural identity in spite of being placed within an interracial adoptive home. While these sanctions for permanency are being enforced, considerations should be made for including expectations of the adoptive parents that involve providing cultural opportunities to their children. Adoptive parents may need to agree to involving the child in its culture prior to adoption, for example. Attendance at adoptive workshops or parent group meetings may be required. Simply ignoring the child's needs to relate to the birth culture would not best serve the child. Social workers must emphasize adoptive parents' willingness to maintain the child's cultural identity, identify effective ways to address this, provide services and resources, and continue searching into ways to promote cultural identity. Future research may need to continue to determine how these areas may best be addressed, and what needs are further identified by the adoptees.

It would be helpful to identify or develop a theoretical model that relates specifically to the experience of persons adopted interracially. While existing models discuss the experience of persons attempting to assimilate or adjust to the cross-cultural experience, they do not consider the experience unique to persons being raised by the dominant culture. Further research also

could be useful in identifying adoption procedures or policies that could benefit these adoptees.

Social workers may need to be more selective when approving of adoptive families. Assessments related to discrimination and cultural competency could be developed and administered during the home study to eliminate persons who are not culturally sensitive. Follow-up may involve additional visits to families after the placement occurs, as well as providing post adoptive counseling and opportunities for dealing with problems that arise. Policies could be established that outline expectations of the adoptive parents in teaching their child about their culture, and enforcement of those expectations may be necessary.

The policy of interracial adoption needs to be under continual study to determine its effectiveness and appropriateness. Doing so may allow for other solutions to also be considered that may better serve the interests of these children. While interracial adoption may be the best possible solution at this time, this may change as newly developed solutions come forth. Without questioning this policy, we would not be identifying how to address the issues and finding solutions that may be soon uncovered. It may be very useful to replicate this study nationwide to gather more extensive results. A comparative study of older respondents may also be helpful.

Conclusion

The Korean adoptees who participated in this study have presented an array of suggestions that can better serve interracial adopted children. While the majority feel pride in being Korean, they report that these results were due to efforts by their parents. Most see themselves as attractive, but have doubts about whether they are truly happy they were adopted into a family that is not Korean. Most can talk to their parents about being adopted and feel comfortable around both Korean and “white” people. Of the many suggestions that were provided to parents and social workers, the dominant theme presented is that parents must be willing to expose their children to the Korean culture and show respect to all cultures and races. Problems and issues must be expected, and services to address these must be made more readily available and tapped into by the adoptive parents. Foremost, “it is important that the parents always be there no matter what”, and that they are willing to “try to understand their {children’s} point of view by being understanding and objective and especially supportive.” Interracial adoption does bring with it problems, but these problems can be overcome with effort and open-mindedness. Sadly, only one respondent could say she/he was truly happy to have been adopted into a family that is not Korean. The majority were unsure. Because interracial adoptions may be the only way many of these children will

secure a family and a home outside of an institution, efforts must be made to accommodate the special needs as related to racial identity and feelings of self-pride. Love is not enough. As adoptees age they are exposed to more and more people “who in their attempt to understand these youth apply stereotyped generalizations about their race or culture of origin. This interaction with society makes it impossible for {the adoptees} to ignore their ethnicity” (Wilkinson, 180). Parents must make special efforts and be ready to address the need for their children to learn about their culture, and have contact with others of their race. Social workers who influence parents to be involved in their children’s culture in an attempt to teach them to be proud of that culture and work to provide the services necessary to do so, can be very helpful in providing such services throughout the lives of these interracial adopted children.

The words of one respondent were very clear: “I think the reason I’m filling this out [the questionnaire] is because I want you to know that I’m not a victim. Like any other kid, any other race- we all have our obstacles to face. We all either face them and deal with them or we wallow in depression feeling sorry for ourselves. I am the ruler of my life. I control my destiny. And that is why I’m happy and well-adjusted.” This person does not want others to believe he/she is in American as a victim, but as an opportunist. By

researching this practice, hopefully we are able to identify opportunities for these adoptees in our efforts to provide what they know to be best for them.

We all gain through this process, but only if we make efforts to do so.

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Appendix A

January 4, 1998

Melanie Gushwa, Co-Chair
Minnesota Adopted Koreans
P. O. Box 141191
Mpls., MN 55414

I am a graduate student at Augsburg College in Minneapolis, working on a Masters Degree in Social Work (MSW). For my thesis project, I am researching interracial adoption and what those adoptees think and feel about that adoption experience. In particular, I am interested in Korean adoptees, who are between the ages of 18 and 22 and adopted prior to the age of 5.

I have chosen this particular topic because I am the adoptive mother of a Korean daughter who is now 19. It has been challenging and rewarding to nurture a child from another culture, and to make provisions for a healthy self-esteem and racial identity in a Euro-American atmosphere. My research questions are: How do Korean adoptees perceive interracial adoption has impacted their self-esteem and racial identity? And- How did adoptive parents affect the development of these adoptees' self-esteem and racial identity? While these questions have been researched and studied quite extensively among younger children, little has been done within the age group I have described. Putting these questions before Korean adoptees who have reached the developmental milestone of assumed independence is a relatively untapped reservoir of valuable information for adoptive parents and social workers.

I am enclosing the preliminary questionnaire I wish Korean adoptees to complete in response to these questions. It will go before the Institutional Review Board of Augsburg College, and revisions may be necessary. It would be most helpful if MAK could assist me in distributing this questionnaire. I am looking for approximately 20-25 respondents who would be willing to participate. Due to time constraints, a separate mailing is the most desirable. I would be willing to assume the costs of this mailing, but understand that confidentiality would not allow you to provide me with a list of names so that a mailing could be done by myself.

You may respond to me through e-mail at bey@runestone.net, or at 320-986-2070. My mailing address is 4147 Westridge Lane SW, Hoffman, MN. 56339. A post office box number will be established on the campus of Augsburg College for respondents once approval has been gained.

Should you have further questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me. I should return from work on Monday evening at about 8 p.m. and could be reached after that time at the phone number given.

A prompt reply would be most appreciated. Should the board determine that this request be approved, a written statement to that effect is necessary. However, it would be helpful for me to have a verbal answer in the next several days should it take some time for such a written statement to be sent.

Thank you very much for considering this request.

Sincerely,

Pam Beyer
Augsburg MSW Student

Enc

Appendix B

January 07, 1998

Pam Beyer

RE: Minnesota Adopted Korean (MAK) Mailing

This letter is to confirm our interest in assisting you in your research project. Specifically, the MAK Board has agreed to allow you to make use of our mailing list on the following conditions: solicitation will be for educational purposes only and the approval will be for this one time use only. Additionally, to ensure the confidentiality of our members we are asking that the correspondences be delivered to our Board who will then forward them to our members. We can forward the correspondence to our members immediately upon receipt from you. Your information should be sent to us "ready to mail", i.e. stamped and addressed. Although this will result in some time delays we feel it is necessary to protect our members privacy. If this is not agreeable to you, we would suggest that you allow us to include your request in our next newsletter where we could then directly refer qualified members to you. However, this option would mean that it would not be until the end of February or early March before you might get any inquiries from our next newsletter. This route, although slower, may yield better results for you. With this in mind we look forward to assisting you in your endeavor by whichever method you choose.

Respectfully Submitted,

*Melannie Gushwa*Melannie Gushwa
MAK Board Member

January 22, 1998

Appendix C

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Melanie Gushwa, Co-Chair
Minnesota Adopted Koreans
P. O. Box 141191
Mpls., MN 55414

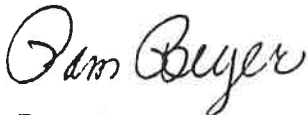
Melanie,

Augsburg's Institutional Review has approved of my research study of Korean adoptees. As a part of your approval and conditions for use of MAK's mailing list, you have requested a letter to accompany the questionnaire. Enclosed is a copy of the Consent Letter that has been approved as well by the IRB. Hopefully this will adequately explain and accompany the questionnaire.

At this time I am waiting for several small changes to be approved, and after that I will be in contact with you to communicate an estimate of the time schedule ahead.

Hopefully this gives you an overview of the status of this study for now. Again, thank you so much for your assistance. I will be in touch relatively soon.

Sincerely,



Pam Beyer
Augsburg MSW Student

Enclosure

AUGSBURG



C • O • L • L • E • G • E

Appendix D-83

Pamela Beyer
4147 Westridge Lane SW
Hoffman, MN 56339

Professor Michael Schock
Institutional Review Board
Augsburg College
Minneapolis

January 27, 1998

Dear Pamela Beyer,

I have considered your current changes to your research proposal, "Interracial adoption: A look at the self-esteem and racial identity of Korean-adoptees in America". Your changes meet the requirements for protecting participants in your research. You have been approved for your research as proposed. Your IRB approval number is 97-27-03. Please use this number on your consent forms or letters and all other official documentation related to this research.

You have requested a temporary mail box at Augsburg College. The mail box number assigned to this research is 405. You have also requested clearance to set a time limit on the return of the surveys. This is acceptable to the board.

As a reminder, this IRB number must go on all participant related material. Good luck with this interesting research. If you make other substantial changes in your research, please advise the IRB in writing prior to engaging in the revised research.

Sincerely,

Michael Schock

cc. T. Bibus

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK

Campus Box #51 • 2211 Riverside Avenue • Minneapolis MN 55454 • Tel. (612)330-1189 • Fax (612)330-1493

Korean Adoptee Consent Letter

You are invited to be in a research study on interracial adoption. You were selected as a possible participant because you were adopted from Korea. We ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

This study is being conducted by the researcher as a part of her master's thesis at Augsburg College.

Background Information:

The purpose of this study is to identify what Korean adoptees' perceptions are about their interracial adoption and how it has impacted the development of their self-esteem and racial identity. The research questions are: How do Korean adoptees perceive interracial adoption has impacted their self-esteem and identity? How did their adoptive parents affect the development of these adoptees' self-esteem and racial identity? Focus for this study will be on 18-22 year olds Korean adoptees who were adopted before the age of 5 into European American homes.

Procedures:

If you agree to be in this study, we would ask you to complete the enclosed questionnaire, requiring approximately one hour of time. You may return the questionnaire to the researcher in the self-addressed stamped envelope provided. Please return it by March 13, 1998.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:

Filling out this questionnaire could bring to the surface a variety of thoughts and feelings. Some of these may be troubling.

There are no direct benefits to participate in this study.

Indirect benefits may be having an avenue to express thoughts already existing, and the knowledge that this information could be utilized for the benefit of future adoptees.

In the event that this research activity causes a need for counseling or mental

health services, a toll free crisis mental health telephone number is available for your limited use. You may phone Children's Home Society of MN at 1-800-952-9302 during the day for crisis counseling. Payment must be provided by you or your third party payer for seeing a mental health professional of your choice. (Health insurance, Medical Assistance, etc.)

Confidentiality:

The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report we publish, we will not include any information that will make it possible to identify you. Research records will be kept in a locked case; only the researcher will have access to the records.

Raw data will be destroyed by September 1, 1998.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Minnesota Adopted Koreans (MAK) or Augsburg College. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw anytime without affecting those relationships. You may refuse to answer any question and still be part of the study.

Contacts and Questions:

The researcher conducting this study is Pamela L. Beyer. You may direct any questions to her at P.O. Box 405, Augsburg College, 2211 Riverside Avenue, Minneapolis, MN 55454. The student's advisor is Anthony Bibus III, Ph.D., Augsburg College, 2211 Riverside Avenue, Minneapolis, MN 55454. Phone: 612-330-1746.

Statement of Consent:

I have read the above information. If I have had questions I have asked them, and I have received answers. (Completion and return of the survey implies that you have consented to participate in this study.)

Signature of Investigator _____ Date _____

Interracial Adoption Questionnaire for Korean Adoptees
(IRB # 97-27-03)

Using a scale of 1-5, rate each of the following statements.

- 1 means you strongly disagree
- 2 means you disagree
- 3 means you are unsure or are neutral
- 4 means you agree
- 5 means you strongly agree

- ___ 1. I feel good about who I am.
- ___ 2. I wish that I had remained in the country where I was born.
- ___ 3. I am proud of being a Korean.
- ___ 4. I am happy that I was adopted into a family that is not Korean.
- ___ 5. I feel close to my adoptive parents.
- ___ 6. I believe I have had major difficulties due to being adopted by parents who are not Korean.
- ___ 7. I am happy to be in America.
- ___ 8. I have wondered about my birth parents.
- ___ 9. I can talk to my parents about being adopted.
- ___ 10. I believe I am attractive.
- ___ 11. I feel comfortable around Korean people.
- ___ 12. I feel comfortable around European American or "white" people.
- ___ 13. Having Korean friends has been important to me.

My age is:

18 19 20 21 22

I think of myself as: (Please circle most accurate assessment of yourself)

- | | |
|--------------------|---------------------|
| 1) Have no thought | 4) Korean-American |
| 2) American | 5) Just as a person |
| 3) Korean | 6) Don't know |

Which of the following areas do you believe have been the most problematic due to your interracial adoption? Check all that apply. Check twice those that you wish to emphasize.

- | | | |
|---|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> birth family relationships | <input type="checkbox"/> friendships | <input type="checkbox"/> dating |
| <input type="checkbox"/> self-esteem | <input type="checkbox"/> job searches | <input type="checkbox"/> same race adult role models |
| <input type="checkbox"/> identity | <input type="checkbox"/> extended family relationships | <input type="checkbox"/> acceptance in neighborhood |
| <input type="checkbox"/> school functioning | <input type="checkbox"/> participation in sports | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> other, please list:
_____ | | |

Which of the following activities did your parents involve you in? Check all that apply.

- | | | |
|---|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> teen groups | <input type="checkbox"/> culture camps | <input type="checkbox"/> language camps |
| <input type="checkbox"/> viewing videos | <input type="checkbox"/> ethnic trinkets | <input type="checkbox"/> ethnic music |
| <input type="checkbox"/> eating ethnic foods | <input type="checkbox"/> travel to birth country | <input type="checkbox"/> friendships with Koreans |
| <input type="checkbox"/> family discussions | <input type="checkbox"/> ethnic festivals | <input type="checkbox"/> birth family search |
| <input type="checkbox"/> magazines, books, etc | <input type="checkbox"/> dance classes | <input type="checkbox"/> tae kwon do |
| <input type="checkbox"/> counseling | <input type="checkbox"/> ethnic plays | <input type="checkbox"/> other, please list:
_____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> language classes | <input type="checkbox"/> workshops | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> ethnic neighborhood | <input type="checkbox"/> birth family contact | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> adoptive family groups | | |

Please indicate by circling those activities from the list that were most helpful.

What has been the most important to you, in the development of your self-esteem?

What has been the most helpful to you, in the development of your identity?

What can you identify as the missing link or greatest loss, if any, for you in your experience as an adoptee from Korea?

What specific characteristics should social workers look for in people who want to adopt children from another race, culture, or nation other than their own?

What should social workers encourage parents to do when adopting interracially?

What else should social workers do when providing services to Korean Adoptees?

Any other comments that you would like to make please do so on the back.

