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The gap between the number of children of color in care and the recruitment of minority foster and adoptive homes has triggered growing support for transracial adoption, culminating in the Multi-Ethnic Placement Act (MEPA) and the Interethnic Adoption Provisions (IEP) legislation. Although MEPA and IEP focus on eliminating barriers to transracial placements, they do not address support for families that choose to adopt transracially. A lack of professional literature exists in this area. This study explores a number of trans-racial placements and adoptions, with the goal of identifying, from the perspective of the families interviewed, potential services that would enhance such placements and adoptions.

The practice of racial and ethnic matching in foster care and adoption has been an issue of tremendous contention. Within the field of child welfare, support exists both for matching and for not making race and ethnicity a significant factor in placement decisions. The professional literature supports both of these conflicting positions. Others warn, however, that many of the previous studies should be interpreted cautiously due to methodological flaws or design limitations (Park & Green, 2000). Nevertheless, most relevant research supports racial matching as a practice ideal, although some literature suggests positive outcomes exist in transracial placement as well.

More specifically, numerous studies have noted that although children of color placed in white homes do as well as other adopted children on measures of general adjustment, racial and ethnic matching in adoption enhances the development of self-esteem, racial and ethnic identity, and coping mechanisms or strategies for living in a racist society (Johnson, Shireman, & Watson 1987; Shireman & Johnson, 1986; Silverman, 1993; Simon & Altstein, 1992). Furthermore, Shireman and Johnson (1986) and Johnson et al. (1987) found that three-quarters of white families adopting children of color lived in white neighborhoods and sent the children to predominantly white schools. Although the parents acknowledged the need for greater contact with people of color, they did not alter their lifestyles, and they tended to minimize the importance of race and downplay incidents of racial slurs or discrimination.

Controversy in social sciences research notwithstanding, racial and ethnic matching in adoption is the dominant philosophy among child welfare and social work professional organizations. For example, in the early 1970s, the National Association of Black Social Workers (NABSW) adopted a formal position against placing African American children with white families, and it continues to maintain this position (Bausch & Serpe, 1997; NABSW, 1993). The Child Welfare League of America's National Council of Latino Executives (1998) voiced opposition to the Multi-Ethnic

Placement Act (MEPA) and stressed including consideration of race in determination of the best interest of the child in placement and adoption decisions. The National Council on Adoptable Children indicated that the "challenge of parenting minority children can best be met by promoting same race adoptions" (Park & Green, 2000, p. 9). Furthermore, both federal legislation (i.e., the Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978) and state-specific legal agreements (i.e., Illinois Burgos Consent Decree of 1977) support language and cultural matching for specific groups in substitute care placements and adoption with established monitoring and reporting structures.

The racial matching practice ideal has been elusive, however, because the number of children of color in care greatly exceeds the number of available minority adoptive or foster homes. Several factors contribute to this situation. Overrepresentation of children of color in care exists due to higher rates of removal and longer stays in out-of-home care. Reasons cited in the literature for these phenomena range from racial bias in child welfare decisionmaking and service provision to increased risk and diminished resources (Derezotes & Poertner, 2001). Reasons cited for the shortage of minority foster and adoptive homes include barriers to developing them, such as worker attitudes, agency policies, inadequate recruitment efforts, and community misperceptions regarding adoption (Gilles & Kroll, 1991; Rodriguez & Meyer, 1990).

The number of children of color awaiting adoption continues to climb. National figures indicate that approximately 59% of children awaiting adoption are of color: 42% African American, 15% Latino, 1% Asian American, and 1% American Indian (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2001). This number dramatically surpasses the number of available minority adoptive homes. In recent years, this crisis has triggered growing support for freeing adoption across racial lines to increase access to adoption for children of color, while increasing efforts to recruit minority foster families (Barth, 1997; Bausch & Serpe, 1997;

Courtney et al., 1996; Craig & Herbert, 1997). This movement culminated in the passage of Howard M. Metzenbaum's MEPA, signed into law in October 1994. The supporters of this act present it as a vehicle to reduce the amount of time children of color remain in foster care awaiting adoption. In August 1996, federal legislators enacted the Removal of Barriers to Interethnic Adoption Provisions (IEP). This legislation repealed and replaced some provisions of MEPA, prohibiting any agencies receiving federal funds from delaying or denying the placement of any child on the basis of race, color, or national origin.

IEP also mandates that recipients of financial assistance from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services diligently recruit foster and adoptive parents, develop a plan for training adoptive and foster families of minority children, and increase the number of children who are adopted (Brooks, Barth, Bussiere, & Patterson, 1999). The act aims to reduce the number of minority children in substitute care by eliminating barriers to transracial placements and increasing foster and adoptive parent recruitment efforts.

Current Study

Although MEPA and IEP focus on eliminating barriers to transracial placements, they are silent on how families that choose to adopt transracially should be supported. Also, a lack of professional literature exists in this area. This study addresses this gap by exploring the current experiences of a number of children and families in transracial placements and adoptions, to identify, from the perspective of the families interviewed, common issues and potential services that enhance such placements and adoptions. The study addressed the following questions:

1. What are the primary concerns and issues identified by transracial adoptive families?
2. What supports do adoptive parents indicate are helpful to families that adopt transracially?

3. What training components for child welfare staff and foster
    and adoptive families can be developed or improved to sup-
    port children and families involved in transracial adoptions?

Method

Researchers conducted interviews with 20 youth and their adop-
tive parents in their homes. They interviewed the youth and adop-
tive parents separately. The researchers developed a guide for the
youth interview to include indicators of racial self-identification,
self-esteem, adjustment, peer relations, attitudes toward race, and
the nature and extent of contact with people of the same race.
They also designed adoptive parent interviews to elicit informa-
tion regarding family adjustment, nature of contact with people
and communities of the same race as the foster child, social sup-
ports, pre- and postplacement services, and attitudes toward race.
The decision to inquire into these areas was guided by previous
research and literature on transracial adoption. Three families that
had adopted transracially piloted the interview guides.

Sample Selection

The sample consisted of 20 families that had adopted a child of
another race. To be included in the study, the adopted child had
to be between 8 and 14 years of age at the time of the interview,
and the adoption must have occurred prior to October 1994. The
researchers selected this age range because the interview ques-
tions were not developmentally appropriate for children younger
than age 8. The researchers used October 1994 as the cutoff to
include only families that had adopted prior to the passage of
MEPA and to ensure that the children had resided in their adop-
tive homes for several years to minimize the presence of expected
initial adjustment issues at the time of interview.

The researchers recruited participants through local adoptive
parent support groups, which distributed project announcements
to their membership. The announcements requested that fami-

lies that met the aforementioned age and time of adoption criteria and were interested in participating in the study contact a member of the project team. The researchers selected the first 20 families that contacted the project team, met the criteria, and were available to be interviewed during the study period.

Sample Description

Household. Of the households, 18 had two parents present in the home. One family was headed by two same-sex parents, and two households were headed by a single parent. Most of the households (n = 17) had more than one child. The number of children in the household ranged from 1 to 13, with an average of 4.2. The reported household income ranged from $40,000 to $120,000 annually, with a mean of $60,638. A quarter of the families interviewed resided in Chicago, whereas the others lived in the suburbs of Chicago or outlying areas.

Children. Of the adopted children, 65% were male (n = 13). The children ranged from 8 to 14 years old. The most common age was 9 (n = 5), and the average age was 11. The age of the children at the time of adoption ranged from birth to 10.5 years, with an average of 2 years.

At the time of interview, the children had been in their adoptive homes between 4 and 14 years, with an average of 9.7 years. The majority (80%) of the children had been in at least 1 placement prior to their adoptive home, with an average of 1.6 placements. Thirteen indicated 1 prior placement, and three had 2 to 12 prior placements. Four reported no prior placement.

Parents identified 70% (n = 14) of the children as African American or biracial of African American and white parentage. The remaining children in the sample were either Latino (n = 3, 15%) or biracial (i.e., Asian or unknown and white) of non–African American parentage (n = 3, 15%).

Of the children interviewed, 60% (n = 12) attended public schools. An additional 35% (n = 7) were in private schools, and 1 child was being home schooled. Of the students, 25% were en-

rolled in special education programs, and 1 child attended an alternative school. Grade level ranged from second to ninth grade, with the most frequent being fourth.

Parents. Of the parents, 95% (n = 12) held undergraduate degrees, and 35% (n = 8) had graduate degrees. The most frequently represented occupation in the sample was educator (n = 6), followed by social worker (n = 3), computer analyst (n = 2), nurse (n = 2), banker, realtor, engineer, health care administrator, homemaker, horticulturist, and student (n = 1 each). Of the household heads, 19 indicated that they were white, and 1 reported being Latino.

Findings

Common Misperceptions

White parents who had adopted children of color were initially cautious about participating in the study. Most expressed worry that the study was part of their larger experience with other people who opposed transracial adoption. They were protective and sensitive because they often felt unsupported and frequently had to explain their family and correct erroneous assumptions. Two commonly mentioned mistaken assumptions identified by the participants were related to the perception that their family "deserved pity" and ideas concerning the parents' motivation for adopting transracially:

> It's an insult when people look at my family in a way to imply that they are "poor unfortunate little children." I don't like that response.

> People saw us as saints. They thought we were sacrificing our lives.

> They see us and think, "White liberal guilt."

> People wonder what our motivation was in doing this. We did have some instances when friends expressed their opinions and the friendship ended after that.

Visibility

Some of the children and parents identified a unique dimension of transracial adoption: visibility. Unlike children who were adopted by parents of the same race, the participants indicated that the visible racial difference within their family raised curiosity and questions. Some of the participants' reflections on this issue included the following:

> I think that a child of the same race may stay in that denial stage, not wanting to believe that they are adopted. It's not in your face all the time. It does get tiring, feeling like you're in a fishbowl the whole time.

> When people see me they wonder if I am adopted since my mom is white. Sometimes it's hard. It's harder being noticed.

> I carry a picture of our family with me in my wallet. I've done this ever since [my son] had a tantrum in the store. He was playing with something and when I picked him up to leave he threw a fit, struggling to get away to go back and play. Everyone looked at me as though I was kidnapping a child! They didn't think he was mine. I carry the picture in case I have to prove he is mine although it is less of an issue now that he is older.

Response of Extended Family Members

The parents described varying family responses to their decision to adopt transracially. Some described approval and encouragement from family members from the beginning, whereas others detailed a process of initial resistance with a movement toward acceptance and support over time. Others described persistent rejection by their family:

> We have had some family problems with my husband's mother. She believes that black people are inferior. She is

ignorant of racial issues. The kids don't want to go there, as she doesn't even know their names.

Our parents were thrilled. They thought it was a great way to create a family. Everyone has been great and very supportive.

They weren't quick to support the idea of a transracial adoption. However, I think things have changed now for the better.

Residence, School, and Community Factors

Three of the most frequently cited areas of concern identified by the parents were: (1) place of residence, (2) schools, and (3) thwarted attempts to engage or interact with individuals and organizations of their adopted child's race. Most study participants who had adopted transracially lived in predominantly white communities and sent their children to predominantly white schools, although some had initially lived in integrated communities. Some chose to move out of the city to more remote and less diverse communities. One family decided to home school to avoid problems with their children's peers. Several families lived in integrated communities and still reported some difficulties. A few participants indicated that they did not feel African Americans were supportive of them. To support their perceptions, they cited examples of feeling unwelcome in black barbershops and churches. The following quotes depict these concerns:

The hardest thing about the adoption has been finding a mentor family, finding black friends.

I think the biggest problem has been trying to educate people who don't feel that they need to be educated. For example, the teachers in the kindergarten don't understand that it was important to have dolls of all colors and races.

I've learned about the depth of prejudice that blacks have against whites. I already knew about the prejudice that exists from whites towards blacks, but this surprised me.

Some girls in [my daughter's] class made comments about her race. Our daughter didn't know quite how to handle it. Curly hair really bugs her. She wishes she had straight hair. She wants to be the same as everyone else, but on the other hand, she knows and accepts that she is different.

In our neighborhood, there are very few African Americans. There are only 1% to 2% of the kids who are African American in the school system. We don't really have ongoing contact with them just because they are people of color. There have to be commonalities beyond the issue of race for your child to want to develop a friendship.

Our son has chosen not to have many African American friends, but to me that is healthy because it says that he is choosing friends based on who they are, not on what they look like.

Some of the biggest challenges have involved getting access to her culture, her heritage, and her people.

The children's responses supported those of their parents regarding low to moderate involvement with peers of the same race, but the children's experiences differed from their parents'. Several indicated that they have had to deal with name-calling and other forms of racism in the predominantly white schools that they attend. Some of the children also expressed concerns about the communities in which they reside:

I would advise a family who wanted to adopt transracially to find out what the neighborhood is like where they are going to live and to see what kinds of kids are there. Talk to the neighbors about racial issues first. Make sure that people will not treat the kids as outcasts, but like normal children, which is what we are.

If we lived in a different neighborhood, I'd feel more comfortable. People wouldn't ask so many questions or call me names. I feel a little more comfortable around people who are my color because I know they won't call me names.

Racial Identity

The interviews with the children yielded additional information regarding their experiences with same- and different-race peers and their racial and ethnic identities. A significant number of the children indicated that other children, white or of color, as well as society in general, require them to choose a racial identity (and loyalty), whereas at home they felt they weren't forced to make these choices. Several children did express some ambivalence regarding their racial identity, and some responses indicated distance and negative perceptions regarding African Americans. The following examples demonstrate the diversity of responses:

I feel more connected to whites. I tend to hang around with more white people than black. I know this sounds kind of prejudiced, but the black people I'm around try to act "ghetto"—real tough and they speak Ebonics. It bothers me when my friends don't speak perfect English. I correct them. My dad used to correct my English. It's even the way you dress. I shop at Nordstrom's, Eddie Bauer, and Marshall Fields. I don't wear Nike and Tommy Hilfiger.

I walk past two public schools [on the way to private school], and black girls sometimes shout at me, "Trying to act all white" because of how I was dressed. I usually shout back, "I can be either way—watch me!"

Kids who have black moms ask me, "Does your mom ever hit you?" I say, "No it's not like you guys." They also ask me, "How much does your mom make?" I say I don't know and I don't care. They are always asking me if I have cable TV or what kind of TV we have. I feel different

from black people. I have different feelings. Like I'm more spoiled than they are. They get hit and I don't. I'm happy that I don't get hit like they do, but I'm sad for them.

I like being black. A lot of people I know are black, like Michael Jordan and Scottie Pippen.

When you think of black you think of teenage pregnancy, baggy pants, and being in a gang.

I'm two different races. Part black, part white is part of me. It doesn't make me feel better or worse. I feel equally close to both parts.

Just because you are different, the kids at school think it is weird. I pretend I am the same color as they are—white. Then I'm like everyone else.

Awareness of Race and Racism

Some parents indicated a significant awareness of racial issues before their decision to adopt, such as the parent who stated:

We have never tried to pretend that skin color didn't matter. Put it out there. Don't be in denial. It matters. It matters a lot. Love won't fix everything. You have this fantasy that love washes all the problems away. It doesn't.

For others, the adoption of their child led them to a greater awareness of racial issues. Very frequently, the parents described personal transformations that resulted from the adoption:

Transracial adoption will change your life forever. You will never be the same family you were before. It changes who you are. You are not the same person you were when you adopt a child transracially. I'm not just a white, middle-class mother anymore, but the mother of two black children. I've changed.

I never thought about race before. Now I'm really aware.

I think that it has really crystallized my commitment to fight racism.

Some children, however, indicated that their white parents didn't always recognize racism in schools or in some other experiences. They added that their parents sometimes avoided discussions of race or often tried to minimize their experiences of racism, rather than seeing it through the child's eyes. Two quotes from the parent interviews give voice to the latter issue:

At school, he was called a "nigger," and he didn't know what that meant. It was one boy and it was one incident. What I have seen more is that he is so highly athletic, so he is very popular. The other children don't seem to see his skin color....He is starting to feel different now. He has a mild concern that people may not like him because of his skin color, but it is more positive than anything else because people think he is like Michael Jordan. We talk about skin color in the family and I try to be sympathetic.

As far as transracial, it is a huge responsibility, because America is extremely racist. Some parents say, "I'm not out to change the world." That is so naive. You are out to change the world for your child. It's not just going to be nice. You don't want to pass it over when your child gets called a racist name, and give a sugar coating to it by saying something like "All children get called names." Some people [who have adopted transracially] say things like "Some children get called names because they wear glasses." That's a whole different issue than racism.

Importance of Culture

There was some diversity among participants regarding the importance they placed on transmitting their child's cultural heri-

tage, developing and maintaining contact with their child's racial and ethnic community, and fostering a strong racial identity. The following quotes capture the diversity of thought:

> If at all possible, you should move into an integrated neighborhood and send the kids to an integrated school. You should have friends of the same race as your children. You should have house decorations that honor their heritage and celebrate their ethnic heritage. Knowledge of their ethnic heritage is what gives them the armor they need.

> I don't think that there should ever be just one transracially adopted child in the family. Children need to know that there is support at home and to be able to look at another brown kid. It's not enough for the parents to love the child. They need to be able to look at others of the same race in the family. It's unfair to the child if there isn't.

> I think knowing your heritage is important, but I think as a human, being part of the world comes first.

> People say, "Stay in touch with his racial heritage." I don't even know what that is. What is his racial heritage? Some people say we are "denying him his culture," but from what I can see, if we hadn't come along, he would be dead. He was malnourished. He was neglected. What really is his culture?

Some children discussed their adoptive parents' lack of attention to race and culture, noting the limited information and contact they have with people of their same race. One child described it this way:

> My parents leave learning about race up to me. I've learned through school and observing others about African Americans. I watch what they do.

Other children and parents indicated that through the adoption experience, they have learned to be more accepting of differ-

ence and have a growing awareness, appreciation, and under-
standing of different cultures and races. One parent identified
becoming a multiracial family in the following way:

> It has been a gift. It has opened doors. It made us feel
> connected to more of the world. It has given us a reason
> to learn beyond ourselves. It has added to the way we
> create community, the way we expand our networks of
> communities. It has given us the gift of multiple languages.

Worker and Agency Practices

Many families indicated that they did not feel adequately sup-
ported in their decision to adopt transracially by the child wel-
fare or adoption workers they had encountered. Several partici-
pants stated that some of the social workers of color with whom
they had contact were opposed to the idea of transracial adop-
tion. A number indicated that these social workers made it more
difficult for them or gave them only minimal assistance in their
efforts to adopt. Others described a more subtle form of resis-
tance on the part of social workers: They assumed racial and eth-
nic family preferences and viewed families that wanted to adopt
transracially as curious. These ideas are conveyed in the words
of these parents:

> It is important that the law be observed that a child can't
> be kept from a permanent placement because of race, but
> there are some social workers that are refusing to obey
> the law. This needs to be addressed. The rules should be
> standardized and not left to the whim of young girls who
> do not have experience.

> The worker was racist. We've always had black foster kids,
> and she would move the kids out of our home every two
> years to make it more difficult to adopt them.

> They tried to be helpful, but they were out of their ele-
> ment. They had this "healthy white infant mentality." They

seemed to view us as desperate for wanting to adopt a child of color.

Several participants indicated that generally there was less expense involved in adopting an African American child than in adopting a white child due to subsidies and public rather than private agency involvement. They reported that these practices were commonly known among adoptive parents and agency workers and felt that this contributed to a perception that they were "lower class," "desperate," or "cheap":

> At that period the [state child welfare agency] was pretty much closed to the idea of transracial adoption. Private agencies had these babies and had to find somebody for them. I know that they had reduced fees to adopt a bira-cial baby. I think that it demeans the whole process. It makes it seem like these kids are no good, certainly not as good as a healthy white infant.

> Social workers should not make us feel so strange, or view us as desperate or poor for wanting to adopt transracially.

The parents, who communicated their interest in examining issues of race and culture and in providing their child with ongo-ing contact and information about their ethnic and racial group, also conveyed their frustration with the lack of resources. All but a couple of parents voiced disappointment with the information, training, and support they were given. Most families expressed dissatisfaction with the workers and agency programming in this regard. These parents described workers who were unprepared to assist them and workshops that were shallow and inadequate. Others reported having to develop their own resources to get needed information and support. Some of the specific responses of the parents included:

> I was lucky. I had a good [state] worker and a good pri-vate agency worker. It took a year and a half to adopt him. I was very lucky with the process, but the workers weren't

particularly helpful about race issues. It wasn't with the workers that I dealt with on race. You can't learn these things out of a book. Unless they have children or unless they are aware of the African American culture, it's very hard to teach, and I don't know if there is an answer to that. We are so tired of hearing hair care and skin care. That is not the only thing that makes up a black child, but that is what we were offered in our private agency to cover transracial issues.

We got our answers on our own. We asked our friends who are black.

We were lucky with the school we found for the girls. It has been a godsend. They learn Spanish; they study and celebrate the Latin American culture.

I'm tired of trainings where they have you list stereotypes. I want to hear more about how to deal with racism. I want to know how to be there for my child. I think I know what to do when I see overt racism, but what about more subtle racism? I could use more stories of how children success-fully deal with race issues.

We need to learn how to cope with others' questions about the adoption and the fact that people tend to stare. Cop-ing mechanisms are important to develop, and the classes don't help with that.

They were supportive in that they did whatever we asked of them, but looking back, I can see that the information that we got from them about different races was very sketchy and incomplete. There was a meeting before the adoption to prepare us for questions which might come up, and then after, we met a couple of times with groups and chatted with one another. It would have been a lot more helpful to hear from someone [transracially adopted] who is now in their 20s perhaps or with more experience.

It was all on a very superficial level how they wanted us to maintain our child's heritage. For example, they asked us, "Do you have any pictures of black leaders in your home?" To which we answered, "No and we don't have any pictures of white leaders in our home either!" On the other hand, they never mentioned anything like institutionalized racism. We had to figure that out later on our own.

It would be nice to have particular parenting classes. I think sometimes white parents don't understand that a black child is a target. Racism is subtle and not always overt. White families need to be tuned into the pressures that a black child experiences. The agencies need to have classes by people who are knowledgeable in this area. They need to know about racism and how it manifests itself. It can be subtle exclusion. We had to take our son out of the preschool because he was always the one assumed to be the cause of trouble.

The social workers really didn't talk about it. Things weren't really brought up in relation to the race of the child.

There have been a couple of foster moms that I have gotten to know well. If we have any questions specific to race issues, I can call these moms, who are black and can offer me insights.

Suggested Resources and Supports

Although families clearly articulated the absence of meaningful support and pre- and postadoptive services, they were able to just as clearly identify resources, information, and training that would be useful to families who adopt transracially and the social workers who assist them. Some of the most frequently voiced recommendations included:

- Give parents a list of resources where they can purchase toys, books, clothing, art work, films, and magazines that

provide affirming representations of their child's racial and ethnic group and their culture.
- Provide or identify where families can take classes or access reference materials concerning their child's racial and ethnic group history, culture, food, and celebrations.
- Pair families with a "cultural mentor" or "cultural guide" family of the race or ethnicity of their adopted child. These families can serve as cultural educators and provide links to individuals and organizations in their child's racial and ethnic community.
- Provide a newsletter to connect families who have transracially adopted as a forum for information exchange and ongoing support.
- Provide transracially adopting families with listings of local and national resources, events, camps, and other relevant programming.
- Educate workers to see transracial adoption as a viable option for some families. Teach them how to support such families.
- Provide families with parenting classes that address how to raise a child of color in a racist world. The classes should assist families in recognizing racism, supporting their child in developing a positive racial and ethnic identity, and fostering coping mechanisms for the family and child to deal with institutional racism (e.g., schools) and individual racism (e.g., friends and extended family).
- Develop a forum that helps white adoptive parents recognize and combat their own racism and that of their families and friends.

The families expressed tremendous appreciation for the other adoptive or foster families they met along the way, either by chance or purposefully through adoptive parent support groups. The participants seemed to suggest that the more meaningful and useful information, support, and advice they received came from other adoptive parents, rather than agency workers or programs.

Similarly, these families were generous with their advice and support for others considering transracial adoption. Some of the most frequently expressed recommendations were:

- Adopt more than one child of color, so the children will have someone else in the family who "looks like them," can share experiences with them, and can support them.
- Try to make connections with other families that have transracially adopted. This allows parents to support and learn from each other and allows the children to see that other families are like theirs.
- Have networks of friendships and relationships with people of color before you adopt. Don't wait until the child is in your home to connect with others who are racially and ethnically different from you.
- Consider carefully where you will live. Although opinions were widely diverse about the best type of community, all agreed that families adopting transracially should give serious thought to where they live and reflect on the rationale for the choice they make.

Conclusion

The importance of cultural and linguistic competence or appropriateness of child welfare services has gained heightened attention in the past decade (e.g., McPhatter, 1997; Pierce & Pierce, 1996; Williams, 1997). Most of the literature in this area has focused on cultural competence or responsiveness at the level of the practitioner, service program, or agency. This discussion, however, is rarely extended to include the cultural competence of foster and adoptive parents, who are part of the child welfare team.

Recently, Vonk (2001) conceptualized a three-part definition of cultural competence for transracial or transcultural adoptive parents: (1) racial awareness (i.e., sensitivity to racism and discrimination), (2) multicultural planning (i.e., development of opportunities for the child to learn about and participate in his or

her culture of birth), and (3) survival skills (i.e., the ability of parents to prepare their children to cope with racism). These dimensions of cultural competence for transracially adoptive parents correspond directly with the themes presented by the parents interviewed in this study and their recommendations regarding resources and information. These training content areas, if incorporated into pre- and postadoptive programming, would facilitate the development of cultural competence. In an era in which adoption legislation has focused on eliminating barriers to transracial placements, it is imperative to address how families that choose to adopt transracially should be supported.◆

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